

Wilbraham St Ninian's United Reformed Church

Egerton Rd South, Chorlton-cum-Hardy,

Manchester, M21 0XJ

July - August 2018



God of golden fields and blue skies

THANK YOU FOR SUMMER

God of white waves and wet pebbles

THANK YOU FOR SUMMER

God of ripe plums and meadowsweet

THANK YOU FOR SUMMER

Thank you for warmth and beauty and

wonder

THANK YOU FOR LIFE

*Ruth Burgess: Bare Feet and Buttercups, Wild
Goose Publications, Glasgow 2008*

Interim Minister

Rev Alan Poolton

Secretary

Kath Lacy

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“Not in God’s Name”: Romans 13

Thursday 21st June was World Refugee Day. The U.N. refugee agency reported Tuesday that nearly 69 million people who have fled war, violence and persecution were forcibly displaced last year, a record for the fifth straight year. And lately we have seen deeply distressing images and audio of crying children being forcibly separated from their parents at the southern US border, imprisoned in cages and reportedly being forbidden to comfort one another. The USA is not alone in its brutal treatment of refugees and migrants - Australia has long detained migrant families indefinitely in dreadful conditions, Hungary has just passed laws criminalising anyone found helping migrants and we don’t have to look too far to see what the UK can do to people seeking asylum here.

US Attorney General Jeff Sessions justified his government’s appalling cruelty by citing Paul’s “clear and wise command” in Romans 13 to obey government laws because “God has ordained the government for his purposes” (Romans 13:1-7). Later, White House Press Secretary Sarah Huckabee Sanders said, “It is very biblical to enforce the law.” Does this mean that Paul is telling us we have a moral obligation to obey **every** government law, however repugnant? By this logic, did God ordain Hitler’s government to murder Jews, Roma, Communists, and homosexuals? And are we therefore obliged to “obey orders?”

Of course not! Sessions and Sanders are cherry-picking Bible passages to fit their agenda without referring to (or even understanding) the overall context of the quotation.

There are many examples in the New Testament when laws are judged by believers as unjust and are therefore not to be followed - look at Peter's response to the Sanhedrin when they ordered him to stop preaching about Christ: "*But Peter and the apostles answered, 'We must obey God rather than men.'*" (Acts 5:29). Jesus himself breaks any number of religious laws. It couldn't be any clearer that the Bible and Jesus embraced "welcoming strangers" - e.g. Deuteronomy 10:17-19, the parable of the Good Samaritan and much of the book of Matthew. Jesus even uses that as a litmus test in terms of the last judgment. He says the way we treat strangers is the way we treat Jesus (Matthew 25:31-46).

By stopping at Romans verse 7 and not continuing on to verse 10, Sessions misses the larger framework within which Christian obedience to the civil law must take shape. By tying together civil law and divine law, Paul simultaneously encourages his readers to be law-abiding citizens and outlines a theological basis for holding civil leaders to account. God's call to respect and care for foreigners is a law from a higher authority. Immediately after encouraging the Christians in Rome to be law-abiding citizens, Paul writes, "the one who has loved another has fulfilled the law...Love does no wrong to the neighbour; therefore, love is the fulfilling of the law" (Rom 13:8-10). If, as Paul says, "all authority comes from God" then any actions that violate that ultimate law - love of neighbour - depart from God's higher law, and so would lack any actual authority, since "all authority comes from God."

The intentional separation of children from their parents, the demonisation of Roma people, the criminalisation of those who would help migrants, the indefinite detention of asylum-seekers cannot be justified as consistent with that law of love. It is not biblical - to defend it at all is intolerable. To defend it with scripture betrays a profound and unacceptable distortion.

No, absolutely not in God's name. And also, we pray, not in ours.

Wishing you all a happy and restful summer, *Mel*

News Round up

Family & Friends' News

A reminder that **John Piper's** farewell party is rescheduled for Saturday 14th July at Shaw St Paul's Church, with a short service followed by a buffet. Details are on the wall at the back of the church. Please let Kath Lacy know this weekend if you are planning to go, as she needs to give numbers to the organiser before 30th June.

Walt Johnson had his interview with NW Synod on Friday 22nd June. The panel comprised Rev Alison Termie, Wendy Smith and Mal Breeze and the interview lasted around an hour. After the interview, the panel reflected, and Walt was called back very soon after. The panel agreed without hesitation to put Walt's name forward to the Assessment Conference in November 2018. Walt would like to thank the other elders and both congregations for all their support. We wish Walt every success in his calling.

Chris Burton and **Walt Johnson** will attend the URC General Assembly in Nottingham 6 – 9 July 2018. We look forward to their reporting back at Elders' and Church Meetings.

Church News

We still have no details about how the proposed "Missional Partnerships" will look or how they will function in our corner of the NW Synod. Cumbria and Lancashire, are up and running; however South Area is still negotiating with its remaining ministers, which could take between 6 and 18 months. The proposed Steering groups have not yet been established. Several churches have made the point that these could have been established months ago and made useful progress, not least in getting to know one another!

Rev Marion Tugwood and Jean Mullineux from the Synod resources Pastoral Committee will visit the Elders' Meeting on July 16th to discuss the missional partnerships and the manse fund proposals. Kath Lacy had written to the committee on behalf of the Church Meeting, asking for transparency in the acquisition and deployment of churches' Manse funds.

Christian Aid Week

George and Mel are pleased to announce that Wilbraham St Ninian's raised **£456.34** for the Christian Aid Week 2018 appeal.



The money came from the Coffee Morning on 19th May (when a car and bus collided and brought proceedings to a dramatic end), Good Neighbours' coffee morning, sale of cakes and generous donations from church members and friends. **Thank you to everyone who contributed time, money and cakes. You are making a real difference to the lives of some of the world's poorest people.**

Christian Aid Week 2018 focused on stories from Haiti, where Christian Aid works with local partner KORAL to build homes strong enough to withstand natural disasters such as the 2010 earthquake and Hurricane Matthew in 2016. Of the 700 houses they built after the 2010 earthquake, just one needed to be repaired after Hurricane Matthew.

Holy God,
In your Kingdom the strong need the weak,
the rich are transformed by the poor,
the fortunate are welcomed by the homeless.
Your Kingdom is built by those who expect their God to come.
Amen.

Dates & Rotas

July 1	Worship Group led by Chris Burton Communion
July 8	Worship Group led by Ella Burton
July 15	Walt Johnson
July 22	Rev Fleur Houston
July 23	Elders' Meeting 7:30pm at church
July 29	United Service at Chorlton Methodist Church
August 5	Songs of Praise service
August 12	Worship Group led by Mel Hall Communion
August 19	Dave Fraser (NW Synod Mission Enabler)
August 26	Rev Valerie Davies
September 2	Rev Sue Rowe

Open Church: the church is open for quiet reflection and prayer every Thursday between 10:00am and 12:00pm

The next church meeting will take place on Sunday September 16th at 1.45pm.

Readers & Readings

Taken from "Roots on the Web" 2018 Revised Common Lectionary Year B

July 1	Sue Posada	<i>Lamentations 3:22-33; Psalm 30; 2 Corinthians 8:7-15; Mark 5:21-43</i>
July 8	Kevin Meade	<i>Ezekiel 2.1-5; Psalm 123; 2 Corinthians 12:2-10; Mark 6:1-13</i>
July 15	Cathy Morgan	<i>Amos 7:7-15; Psalm 85.8-13; Ephesians 1:3-14; Mark 6:14-29</i>
July 22	Chris Burton	<i>Jeremiah 23:1-16; Psalm 23; Ephesians 2:11-22; Mark 6:30-34,53-56</i>
July 29	At Chorlton Methodist	<i>2 Kings 4:42-44; Psalm 145:10-18; Ephesians 3:14-21; John 6:1-21</i>
5 August	Joyce Henry	<i>Exodus 16:2-4,9-15; Psalm 78:23-29; Ephesians 4:1-16; John 6:24-35</i>
12 August	Kath Lacy	<i>1 Kings 19:4-8; Psalm 34:1-8; Ephesians 4:25-5.2; John 6:35,45-51</i>
19 August	Barbara Williams	<i>Proverbs 9:1-6; Psalm 34:9-14; Ephesians 5:15-20; John 6:51-58</i>
26 August	George Morton	<i>Joshua 24:1-2a,14-18; Psalm 34:15-22; Ephesians 6:10-20; John 6:56-69</i>
2 September	Kevin Meade	<i>Deuteronomy 4:1-2,6-9; Psalm 15; James 1:17-27; Mark 7:1-8,14-15,21-23</i>

**** Please check readings with the preacher in good time before the service ****

Thank you to Kath Lacy for producing the Readers' Rota and Preaching Plan.

URC Daily Devotions

Each day the URC sends a “Daily Devotion” to the inboxes of about 2,500 people: a scripture reading accompanied by a short meditation and prayer. The devotions are written by a large team of volunteers: serving ministers, church-related community workers, church elders, retired ministers and others.

On BBC2 on June 24th, at 1:55pm "**Songs of Praise**" featured the Daily Devotions from the URC! The programme had the theme "The Power of Prayer" and included an interview with Rev Andy Braunston, who began the project while ministering at Wilbraham St Ninian's. Rev Dr Susan Durber, who both writes and uses the Devotions as part of her own spiritual discipline, is also interviewed.



You can sign up to receive the Daily Devotions by going to

<https://devotions.urc.org.uk/>

(and you can read previous Devotions there too)

If you'd like to receive the devotions as a booklet in PDF format – so you can print them off for yourself or for members of your church who'd like them but don't have access to the Internet please ask Mel Hall or email Andy Braunston via dailydevotions@urc.org.uk and request this.

This month's Devotions are looking at the Book of Ruth.