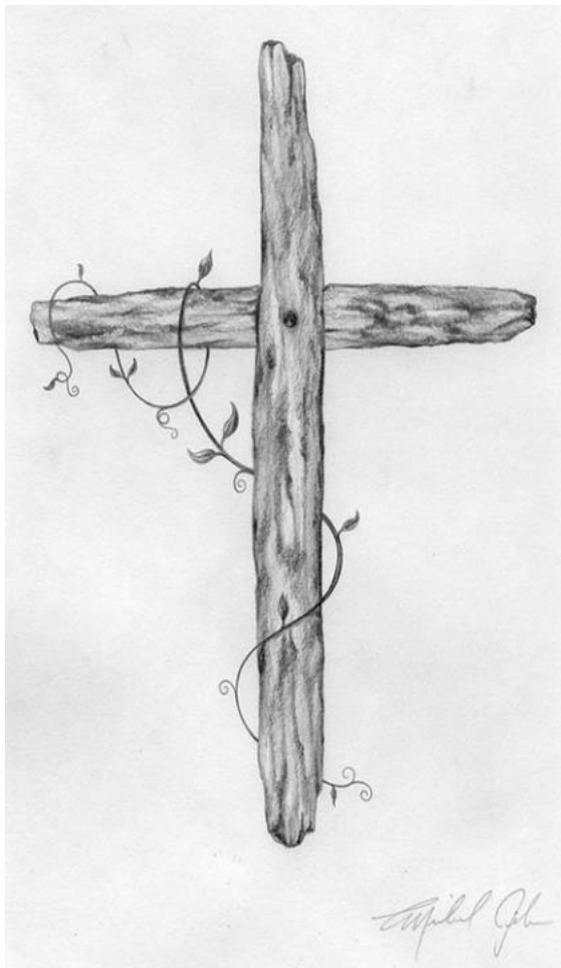


# Wilbraham St Ninian's United Reformed Church

*Egerton Rd South, Chorlton-cum-Hardy,  
Manchester, M21 0XJ*

*March 2019*



Challenge us, Lord, in our giving and receiving.

Empower us, Lord, when decisions need to be made.

Accompany us, Lord, on every step of life's journey,

this week, this Lent and always.

**Amen.**

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Secretary

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## In the Wilderness



This month we enter the season of Lent. Lent is a time of deep personal and spiritual reflection. It is also a time when we take the space to reflect on our relationship with God and a time of preparation for Easter.

Sunday 10<sup>th</sup> March's Lectionary passage describes how Jesus was "led by the Holy Spirit" into the wilderness, where, for forty days, he fasted and was tempted by the Devil.

How can Luke's account of Jesus' temptation guide us through the wilderness places of our own lives this Lent? Jesus' temptations were, of course, very far from our own "fasts" from chocolate, alcohol, social media, or in your editor's case, crisps!

These encounters with the devil test Jesus' very vocation and identity. Twice the devil says to him, 'If you are the Son of God, do this.' Above all, these tests reveal Jesus' relationship to power and show what it meant for him to be the Son of God.

Jesus was at his most vulnerable, starving from the hunger of fasting for 40 days. So, it is not surprising that his first test, at his point of greatest weakness, is to turn stones into bread. Satan is tempting Jesus to use his authority as the Son of God to meet his own most basic personal needs and desires.

The second temptation appeals to the expectations that others may have of Jesus - to embrace the political and military power that some expected of a Messiah: *"<sup>5</sup> Then the Devil took him up and showed him in a second all the kingdoms of the world. <sup>6</sup> 'I will give you all this power and all this wealth,' the Devil told him. 'It has all been handed over to me, and I can give it to anyone I choose.'"* (Luke 4:5-7)

Jesus' third temptation is a frankly unhinged challenge to throw himself off the highest point of the Temple like some divine superhero, to "prove" to the world that he is God's Son - "*not even your feet will be hurt on the stones*" says the Devil.

Jesus resists all three tests by leaning on the teaching of Moses in Deuteronomy. The devil also quotes scripture in this exchange, but, despite his vulnerability, Jesus resists misusing his God-given power for his own needs. He resists the expectations being placed on him by everyone around him and he resists misusing his relationship with the divine.

Jesus entered the wilderness full of the Holy Spirit, and was even led into the wilderness by the Holy Spirit. Luke doesn't say the Spirit left or abandoned him there either. Jesus was not alone in his time of temptation and neither are we.

*'For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathise with our weaknesses, but we have one who in every respect has been tested as we are, yet was without sin.'* (Hebrews 4:15).

Jesus' 40 days in the wilderness mirror the 40 years of Israel's wilderness wandering. It is where Israel was forged and formed. Is it in the wilderness that the Church is forged, formed, refined? Is the Church today exposed as complacent, compliant and willing to compromise itself for power? Or is it known for trusting in the power of love, equality and right relationship?

The beginning of the Lenten journey is often epitomised by reflecting on what we can give up, rather than what we can take up. However, Lent can also be a time to motivate us to prepare for what it is we can do to further God's Kingdom and the message of the Gospel. We can but try!

*Every Blessing,*

*Mel*

# News Round up

## Family News

We have exciting news from **Kevin Meade**, now safely ensconced in Springhead. He writes:

“Kim gave birth to 8lb 4 oz baby boy on 3rd February. His name is Ry James and both he and his mum are doing well. Not much happening on our house as we are waiting for someone to fit new attic ladders before we can blitz the landing and complete the bedrooms. Kim's house is quite habitable although still lots to do!

Hope you and everyone at WSN are fine. I have been attending the local Congregational church here in Springhead which has a vibrant and out reaching congregation, has a coffee morning every Wednesday and lunch once a month after the service. They also try and help the homeless of Oldham with donations and more hands-on help.”

We send our congratulations to Kim, Kevin, Jo, and family as they embark on life as parents and grandparents.

Some sadder news from **Jean Hunt**, whose husband **Shaun**, has been on hospital having tests. Sadly, Shaun has been diagnosed with Motor Neurone Disease, and remains in hospital. Jean's brothers have both travelled to Manchester to support their sister at this difficult time. Please keep Jean and Shaun in your prayers. May the Loving God hold them in God's healing presence and may they know the deep peace of Christ.

## Church News

The **World Day of Prayer** service was held at Wilbraham St Ninian's on Friday March 1<sup>st</sup>. This year's theme was devised by women from Slovenia and is called “Come - Everything is Ready!” Thank you to Kath Lacy for her capable organisation, and to everyone who participated from Wilbraham St Ninian's and from the other Chorlton churches.

The organ-maker Makin's serviced the organ and demonstrated their new midi sequencer unit on Friday 18<sup>th</sup> January to the satisfaction of everyone (but mainly Fiona!). We have bought the unit and Makin's have provided training. Fiona has been spending time in church recording hymns and the new unit was successfully used in a recent service. Chris Burton has backed up and indexed the recordings on the church computer and plans to train Mel and Ella to operate the sequencer.

## Missional Partnership

There will be an advertisement soon for two ministerial vacancies within our Missional Partnership. Walt Johnson and Kath Lacy have been conscientiously attending all meetings of the Steering Committee, and report that the Partnership now has a clearer idea of the sort of person who would be suitable. At present, Elders and members of the Steering Committee are working on ideas for a Job Description for new ministers, though at present "superhero" seems to be the best description!

Mel and Kath attended a very interesting Worship Training morning at Roby URC, facilitated by Dave Fraser, our Mission Enabler, and Rosalind Selby, Principal of Northern College.

## Asylum news

It is with the greatest pleasure that we learnt that **Ruth Anigbere** has been successful in her recent appeal for asylum in the UK.

This has been a long and stressful process for Ruth, a national of Nigeria, and has involved some very persistent, skilled and dedicated legal support from her caseworker and her barrister to challenge the Home Office's initial decision and finally get it overturned and remade by the Upper Tribunal of the asylum court. Now Ruth, and her three sons, Gaius, Nathan and David, can look forward to a life of safety and freedom in the UK. God bless you, Ruth!

# Dates & Rotas

March 3	Dr Adrian Curtis
March 6	Ash Wednesday service led by Walt Johnson & Mel Hall 7:30pm
March 7	Open Church Quiet reflection and prayer 10:00am – 12:00pm
March 10	Rev Sue Rowe
March 14	Open Church Quiet reflection and prayer 10:00am – 12:00pm
March 17	Worship Group led by Chris Burton
March 17	Church Meeting 1.45 preceded by a faith lunch
March 21	Open Church Quiet reflection and prayer 10:00am – 12:00pm
March 24	Rev Fleur Houston
March 28	Open Church Quiet reflection and prayer 10:00am – 12:00pm
March 31	United Service at Chorlton Methodist 11:00am <b>Mothering Sunday</b>
May 31	Open Church Quiet reflection and prayer 10:00am – 12:00pm
April 7	Stewart Graham

# Readers & Readings

Taken from "Roots on the Web" 2019 Revised Common Lectionary Year C

March 3 <b>Transfiguration</b>	Chris Burton	<i>Exodus 34:29-35; Psalm 99; 2 Corinthians 3:12-4.2; Luke 9:28-36</i>
March 10 <b>Lent 1</b>	Joyce Henry	<i>Deuteronomy 26:1-11; Psalm 91:1-2,9-16; Romans 10:8b-13; Luke 4:1-13</i>
March 17 <b>Lent 2</b>	Ella Burton	<i>Genesis 15:1-12,17-18; Psalm 27; Philippians 3:17-4.1; Luke 13:31-35</i>
March 24 <b>Lent 3</b>	Barbara Williams	<i>Isaiah 55:1-9; Psalm 63:1-8; 1 Corinthians 10:1-13; Luke 13:1-9</i>
March 31 <b>Mothering Sunday</b>	At Chorlton Methodist	<i>Joshua 5:9-12; Psalm 32; 2 Corinthians 5:16-21; Luke 15:1-3,11b-32</i>
April 7 <b>Lent 5</b>	Chris Burton	<i>Isaiah 43:16-21; Psalm 126; Philippians 3:4b-14; John 12:1-8</i>

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

**Thank you to Kath Lacy for producing the Readers' Rota.**

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## **Church Meeting**

**Sunday March 17<sup>th</sup>**

**At 1.45pm in the church**

**Please put the date in your diaries**

There will be a faith lunch after the morning service and before the meeting – all are welcome to partake of the feast!

## Looking Ahead to Lent and Easter

### **Ash Wednesday**

**Wednesday 6<sup>th</sup> March 7.30pm**

Ash Wednesday service with Communion,  
led by Walt Johnson and Mel Hall

### **Maundy Thursday**

**Thursday 18<sup>th</sup> April** (*time to be announced*)

Seder Meal and Communion service  
led by Walt Johnson and Chris Burton

### **Good Friday**

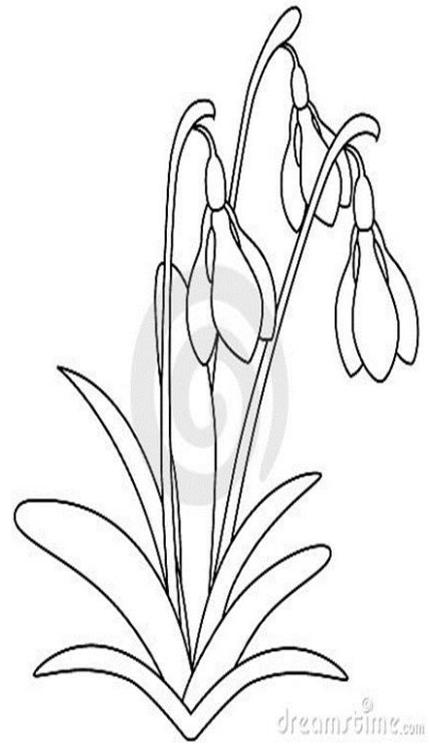
**Friday 19<sup>th</sup> April 3pm**

Good Friday service led by Walt Johnson

### **Easter Sunday**

**Sunday 21<sup>st</sup> April 10.45am**

Joint Communion service with the afternoon congregation  
led by Rev Tony Burnham



## “Uprooted and Displaced” Exhibition

Christian Aid is highlighting the plight of peoples who are “internally displaced”, that is, people who have fled their homes due to war, famine or natural disaster, and are living as refugees in their own country. These people attract significantly less money and have a less secure status than people who are refugees living in a different country from their own. Christian Aid is campaigning to get the UN to take action to improve the rights and conditions of internally displaced peoples.

Chorlton Methodist Church (Manchester Rd) are holding an exhibition, “Uprooted and Displaced”, at the church on **Saturday 18<sup>th</sup> May** (the end of Christian Aid week). This includes stories and photographs of displaced peoples, with accompanying activities such as thoughts and prayers, candle-lighting and we hope to have a Christian Aid representative to give a talk about the campaign.

Please put the date in your diary and come along – it will be really interesting and thought-provoking.