



Stockport Sunday School

February 2023 Newsletter 35



Just over a week ago, I was privileged to take part in the Holocaust Memorial Day service at Stockport War Memorial, arranged by the Borough Council. The small acappella choir I sing with had been asked to provide appropriate music for what is always a very moving experience.

The annual event commemorates the day when the notorious Auschwitz concentration camp was captured by the Allied forces, and its prisoners released. It also remembers other countries where genocide has taken place in more recent times - Bosnia, Darfur, Cambodia, Rwanda for example.

The Stockport service is particularly moving because there are people in the congregation who were personally affected by the persecution, and share memories of their experiences.

Lest we think this is about past history, the current experience of the Ukrainian nation is a stark reminder of man's inhumanity to man, particularly brought home for me by the words and music of one of the pieces we sang: 'The prayer of the children', prompting memories of the TV news reports showing families with young children fleeing from the Russian advance 12 months or so ago.

Such situations are a warning of the danger of populations following charismatic 'strong' leaders, who have little or no concern for the damage and harm caused by their power.

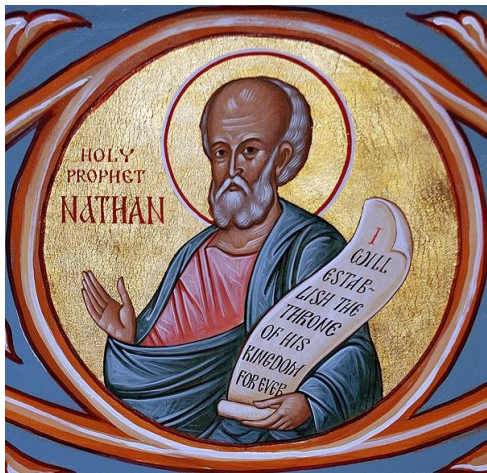
It is hard to understand how such people can distance themselves from the suffering they cause, feeling no sense of guilt. It is said that 'all power corrupts', and, unfortunately, all too often that is true. What is more, it can impact on people who are generally very far from being evil.



David Walker,
Bishop of Manchester

I have been reading, in recent days, some Bible commentaries by David Walker, the Bishop of Manchester, about the life of David - the shepherd boy who became King of Israel. He was also a charismatic leader; in some ways a 'man of the people' - which caused King Saul to be jealous of his popularity

David was a successful leader in battle, a talented musician, with a strong commitment to doing God's will, as shown by the psalms he wrote. Yet, in his private life, he fell victim to coveting the wife of one of his military leaders and arranging his death so that he could marry her.



Only when he was condemned for his sin by the prophet, Nathan, and then faced losing his new-born son, did David acknowledge the error of his ways. He truly repents, fasting and praying for the life of his child, who nevertheless died.

With such a background, it seems to be surprising that, historically, David came to be honoured as one of Israel's greatest leaders, and a man of God. The answer probably is that he did acknowledge his wrongdoing and learnt from it. He accepted God's judgement and sought to re-establish his relationship with God.

When David was praying for his son, the Bible account says he fasted, but doesn't directly refer to the practice of 'sackcloth and ashes', which was a common means of expressing grief in ancient times. In fact Jesus uses the term when denouncing the cities that rejected His teaching - saying that even the notorious inhabitants of Tyre and Sidon would have repented in sackcloth and ashes if they had seen Jesus' miracles.

I mention this, because in a couple of week's time, it will be Ash Wednesday - the beginning of Lent. In some churches, it is customary to create ashes from the palms given out on Palm Sunday, mix them with oil and at the Ash Wednesday services to make the mark of the cross on the foreheads of the worshippers to indicate penitence.

Traditionally, it's a time for Christians to think about their relationship with God. A period of self appraisal; to see if there are parts of our lives and habits which may have fallen short of what they should be. They won't be the extreme failings of dictators or errant kings; but there may be things which are weakening our service to God, and our care for one another.



And the account of David's failings and forgiveness can be a source of comfort for us all.



So, after Shrove Tuesday, (traditionally a day of eating up the goodies in the larder and fridge,) let's pause, and make time and space to think what we can do over the following

40 days to bring us closer to our loving God.

It is the love of God that makes Him the sworn enemy of sin.

- G Campbell Morgan

There is nothing round the corner which is beyond God's view.

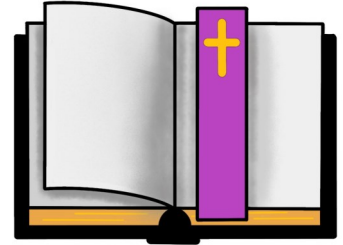
- J Charles Stern

SAD NEWS

We were all sorry to hear of the death of Jean Hughes. Jean, her brother Jack and her sister Mavis attended Sunday School from an early age, brought to School by their mother who was a scholar in the Ladies' Class. She remained a valued and active member of the School for many years until she moved to Welwyn Garden City to be near to her daughter and her family, where she became an active member of the local church.

Jean had a smile for everyone. She was a talented writer and crafter. She shared these talents with others and encouraged them, arranging local festivals.

All members of her family are in our thoughts and prayers at this time.



DONATION

Thank you to Dorothy Heselwood (née Hill) for the generous donation she sent to SSS, along with a Christmas card to all members.

Dorothy is the daughter of the late John Hill, a regular past member, who will be remembered as the master of ceremonies at the School dancers and also a regular attender in the Men's Class.

Joyce Sellers

DONATION

Thank you to Mrs Olive Gosling for the donation in memory of her husband, James G Gosling, our late Senior Inspector. Olive is in a residential home now on Bramhall Lane, Davenport. She celebrated her 100th birthday on 29th December 2022 and is gradually settling in there and looks forward to receiving the newsletter from Compass Point.

Judith Higgins took over the role of Senior Inspector for several years when James died then Walter Stead took over after she decided to step down as her work at Francis House meant she couldn't always attend services and meetings.

Joyce Sellers





HAPPY BIRTHDAY

There are no February birthdays, but we send Happy Birthday wishes to Judith Curry who celebrates her birthday on 5th March.



ELECTION OF INSPECTORS

Margaret Forster, one of our Senior Teachers, was in the chair.

The meeting opened with prayer.

Margaret outlined the work of the Inspectors, arranging and preparing services, monitoring the buildings administration and security. She thanked them for their continued loyalty and dedication.

She asked for a proposal that the Inspectors be re-elected to serve for another year. This was proposed by Jean Norton and seconded by Cath Brown. The proposal was passed unanimously.

Margaret informed the Inspectors of their re-election, thanked them for their work and offered them each the hand of friendship.

Walter Stead replied on behalf of the Inspectors, thanking everyone for their support.

The meeting closed with prayer, the grace and Vesper 2.



FUTURE SERVICES

The next dates for our services are:-

February 5th - BIBLE SUNDAY

Speaker - Sandra Woodhead

February 12th - Garth Higgins

February 19th - Walter Stead

February 26th - Wendy Hill

March 5th - Judith Higgins

March 12th - to be confirmed

March 19th - Mothering Sunday

Speaker Sue Shilito



SERVICES



SUNDAY 8TH JANUARY 2023

Judith took the service on January 8th two days after Epiphany, the date on which Christians celebrate the visit of the Magi to Jesus.

This event is celebrated every year on January 6th in the Chapel Royal at St James' Palace, when gold, frankincense and myrrh are ceremoniously placed on the altar.

All we really know about them is what is written in Matthew 2 verses 1-12. They were wise men who had travelled from the east seeking a new born King. They asked at Herod's palace because that is where they expected to find a King. They brought gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh.

In the seventh century they suddenly acquired names and countries of origin. Gaspar (later known as Caspar) from Europe, Melchior Asian and Balthasar African.

Much later they began to appear on our Christmas cards (possibly in the mid 1600s).

Since then, many myths and legends have grown up about these mysterious men. Judith told us the story of the fourth wise man. A story with a message - God does not want rich gifts from us, what He asks of us is that we love Him and love our neighbours and show them compassion, an echo of the parable of the Good Samaritan or the last verse of our final hymn:-

*What can I give Him, poor as I am,
If I were a shepherd I would bring a lamb
If I were a wise man, I would do my part
Yet what I can I give Him, give my heart.*



6.1.2013 Arrival of the 3 Magi on camels at the living nativity in Prague after walking through the centre as part of the annual procession, the Three Kings Day Parade

SUNDAY 15TH JANUARY 2023

There was a short service on January 15th because of the election of Inspectors. Garth took the service, his reading was Psalm 9.

He had been looking at his 2023 diary and asked how many of us read the small print against some dates noting events that had taken place on these dates in the past. Few of us read them.

Garth then asked us if we knew what had happened on the following dates:-

- January 15th 1559 - Queen Elizabeth I was crowned in Westminster Abbey
- January 14th 1984 - Madonna performed her single 'Holiday' on the hit dance show 'American Bandstand'
- January 13th 2021 - archaeologists discovered the oldest known animal cave painting in Indonesia. It is of a wild pig believed to have been drawn 45,500 years ago



- January 12th 1976 - English crime novelist and playwright, Agatha Christie, died
- January 10th 1985 - Sir Clive Sinclair launched his battery powered tricycle, the 'C5'

Although several of these events were in our lifetimes, no-one knew the correct answers.

I wonder what events in 2023 will be recorded for future diaries?

The meeting for the Election of Inspectors is recorded later in this newsletter.

SUNDAY 22ND JANUARY 2023

When Walter took the service on January 22nd, he started by asking how many of us kept pets, especially cats or dogs or both.

The question had been prompted by listening to the sermon of the Bishop of Stockport at a baptism and confirmation service. He said there is a significant difference between cats and dogs.

A dog always looks up to his master or mistress because he thinks they are god.

A cat thinks it is god and we exist to serve it.



Human beings can behave in a similar way. At one extreme there are those who, like cats, believe they are special and in control. Walter quoted from the poem 'Invictus' by William Henley.

"I am the master of my fate, I am the captain of my soul".

This quote is often misunderstood. He is not saying we control our fate but we do control how we respond to life's challenges.

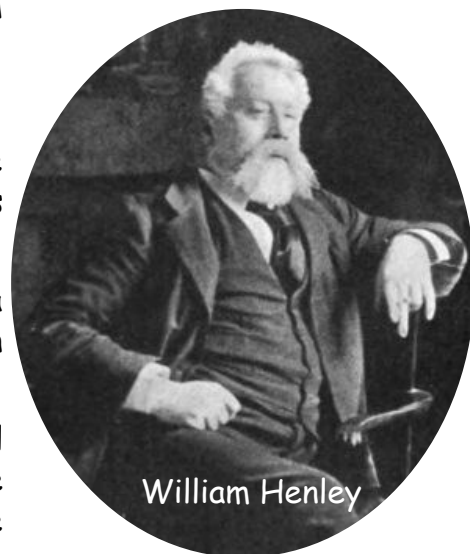
There are other people more like dogs who are looking for a God, someone to guide, protect or comfort them when needed. The majority of people are a mixture of the two.

Walter read from the first two chapters of John's gospel describing how different people were drawn to Jesus at the beginning of His ministry. Some like Andrew and John came to Jesus seeking truth and guidance; someone whose words they could trust. There are many good and caring people in the world today who follow Jesus, give to charity and care for others but who do not perhaps see the need for any religious connection. They don't appreciate the understanding, goodness, motivation and self discipline that being a committed follower of Jesus brings. We are not 'cats', we are not God.

For most people, the decision to commit to Jesus grows out of a developing understanding, for others, it comes as an immediate call as to Peter, Philip and later on St Paul.

Our fate is in God's hands and we all have our individual faith journey to make.

Let us all keep our minds and hands open to His prompting so that His will may be done on earth as it is in heaven.



SUNDAY 29TH JANUARY 2023

There was a short service on January 29th followed by the AGM.

Judith Higgins took the service. As she had noticed some small sights recently in her garden that some plants were beginning to produce new shoots she based her service on plants mentioned in the Bible. Most of the verses she looked at were familiar but we were surprised at the gaps in our knowledge.

Judith had always thought that Moses had been hidden in a basket amongst the bullrushes, but on re-reading his story in Exodus found that the basket had been woven from bullrushes and was hidden amongst the irises that grew on the banks of the Nile. She was relieved to know that she was not the only one to have this misconception. It was interesting to revisit 'well known Bible passages and find out more about them.



LANCASHIRE HILL SUNDAY SCHOOL



Recipe

Pear and blue cheese toasts with salted brown butter honey

Serves 2

1 pear, unpeeled, very thinly sliced

½ a lemon, juiced

100g salted butter

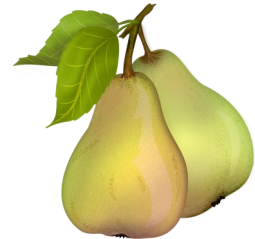
2 tbsp runny honey

4 small slices of sourdough bread

120g blue cheese

2 thyme sprigs, leaves picked

10g toasted pecan, finely chopped



Put the pear slices in a small bowl and toss with the lemon juice.

Melt the butter in a small pan over a medium heat and cook for 6-8 minutes or until brown and nutty. Add the honey, turn off the heat and vigorously whisk until the honey is melted and combined with the butter. Cover and keep warm.

Toast the bread lightly. Spread each slice thickly with the blue cheese. Drain the pear slices, patting them dry, and then top each toast with a few slices. Give the brown butter honey a final whisk, and then drizzle over the toasts. Scatter with the thyme leaves and pecan, and serve.



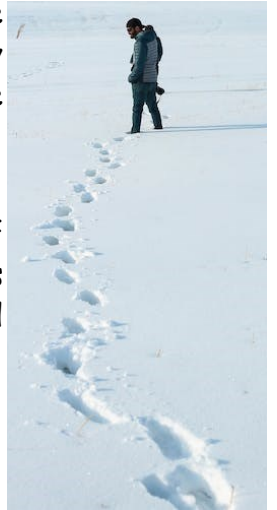
Kites Group

Tickets are now available for our 2023 production, 'Kites through the decades past and present', on www.kitesgroup.com.

"SNOW"

When I opened my curtains this morning, I found a wonderful surprise out there in the garden. During the night, it had snowed and my usually very green garden, had been transformed into a glistening, white fairy-land. Each bush and shrub had its mantle of white, and the early sun was bringing out a sparkle, which reached as far as I could see.

Later on, I went out into the garden and was fascinated by the array of footprints across the lawn. There were pawprints of cats, smaller ones of squirrels, larger ones, possibly a fox and, of course, numerous bird tracks. I couldn't resist finding a patch of virgin snow and making my own tracks - the first human ones in the garden today. It was the child in me, still wanting to escape and have fun!



At the front of my house were tracks of large feet leading from the middle of the road to my doorstep. My milk-man, of course!! He probably made the tracks at 5.00am when he delivers milk to my road.

Some of my happiest, "snowy memories" are of all my family, including Mum and sometimes a friend's little girl, setting off in the car early in the morning, complete with hats, scarves, gloves, wellingtons and, **OF COURSE SLEDGES**, to

Lyme Park. We would quickly park and then rush to find the best "sledging slope", before it got too busy. When we were all frozen and exhausted, we squashed into the car and enjoyed our hot soup, hot chocolate and ginger cake. Wonderful!

Sadly, those days are long gone and now, sometimes, the re-action of most over-65's is "Oh dear, where is the de-icer?", "Will we have to defrost the car?", "Is it safe to walk to the shops?", "I hope that it's not slippery!"



However, those distant memories of fun in the snow at Lyme, will never fade. How lucky we were to have had such experiences! Just one more thing to appreciate in our wonderful world.

Margaret Morris-Jones



DATES FOR THIS MONTH

21ST FEB: SHROVE TUESDAY, PANCAKE DAY

Ever wonder why we eat pancakes just before Lent? The tradition dates back to Anglo-Saxon times, when Christians spent Lent in repentance and severe fasting.

So on the Tuesday before Ash Wednesday, the church bell would summon them to confession, where they would be 'shriven', or absolved from their sins, which gives us Shrove Tuesday. At home, they would then eat up their last eggs and fat, and making a pancake was the easiest way to do this. For the next 47 days, they pretty well starved themselves.

Pancakes feature in cookery books as far back as 1439, and today's pancake races are in remembrance of a panicked woman back in 1445 in Olney, Buckinghamshire. She was making pancakes when she heard the shriving bell calling her to confession. Afraid she'd be late, she ran to the church in a panic, still in her apron, and still holding the pan.

Flipping pancakes is also centuries old. A poem from Pasquil's Palin in 1619 runs: "And every man and maide doe take their turne, And tosse their Pancakes up for feare they burne."

Some people have noted that the ingredients of pancakes can be used to highlight four significant things about this time of year: eggs stand for creation, flour is the staff of life, while salt keeps things wholesome, and milk stands for purity.

Shrove Tuesday is always 47 days before Easter Sunday and falls between 3rd February and 9th March.



22ND FEB: ASH WEDNESDAY; MOURNING OUR SINS

Lent begins with Ash Wednesday. But why 'Ash' Wednesday? The reason has to do with getting things right between you and God, and the tradition goes right back to the Old Testament.



In the Old Testament, the Israelites often sinned. When they finally came to their senses, and saw their evil ways as God saw them, they could do nothing but repent in sorrow. They mourned for the damage and evil they had done. As part of this repentance, they covered their heads with ashes. For the Israelites, putting ashes on your head, and even rending your clothes, was an outward sign of their heart-felt repentance and acknowledgement of sin. (See Genesis 18:27; 2 Samuel 13:19; Job 2:8, 30:19; Isaiah 58:5; Jeremiah 6:26; Jonah 3:6)

In the very early Christian Church, the yearly 'class' of penitents had ashes sprinkled over them at the beginning of Lent. They were turning to God for the first time, and mourning their sins. But soon many other Christians wanted to take part in the custom, and to do so at the very start of Lent. They heeded Joel's call to 'rend your hearts and not your garments' (Joel 2:12-19). Ash Wednesday became known as either the 'beginning of the fast' or 'the day of the ashes'.

The actual custom of 'ashing' was abolished at the Reformation, though the old name for the day remained. Today, throughout the Church of England, receiving the mark of ashes on one's forehead is optional. Certainly, the mark of ashes on the forehead reminds people of their mortality: "Remember that you are dust and to dust you will return..." (Genesis 3:19)

The late medieval custom was to burn the branches used on Palm Sunday in the previous year in order to create the ashes for today.



22ND FEB: ASH WEDNESDAY, A GOOD TIME TO ADMIT YOU ARE SORRY

Have you done something which haunts you? Which makes you feel restless and defensive, every time you think of it? Why not deal with it this month, and put it behind you? Whatever your mistake has been, consider what the Bible has to say to you:

'I have not come to call the virtuous but sinners to repentance' (said Jesus). (Luke 5.32)

'Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and He will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon. (Isaiah 55.7)

'Yet even now, says the Lord, return to me with all your heart, with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning; rend your hearts and not your clothing. Return to the Lord, your God, for He is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love, and relents from punishing.' (Joel 2:12-13)

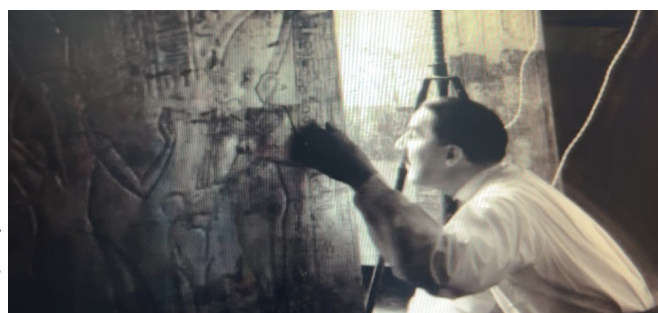
God is inviting you to come to Him this Ash Wednesday. What a wonderful offer! Make the most of it and remember how the prodigal son was welcomed back by his compassionate father.

EGYPT

Did you know that on 16th February 2023, it will be 100 years since the discovery of Tutankhamen in the Valley of the Kings? This was the day that the archaeologist, Howard



Carter, broke the seal on the tomb.



Several months earlier in November 1922, he and the Earl of Carnarvon, had peered through a small hole, and Carter had described seeing 'wonderful things', which indeed they turned out to be.



Such treasures, laid up with the mummy of a dead pharaoh were intended to provide security in the afterlife, the tomb of Tutankhamen was unique in that it hadn't been plundered previously by thieves. But Jesus had advice on this very subject, which we can find in Matthew 6:19-21:

"Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."

WONDERFUL THINGS

Mister Carter
And the Earl
Went off to Egypt, hot
Just as they'd planned
They dug the sand -
And look at what they got!

*Wonderful things, glorious things
Of silver and of gold
Marvellous things, beautiful things
And very, very old!*

Mister Carter
And the Earl
They peered into the gloom
And what they spied
Deep inside
Was Tutankhamun's tomb:

*Wonderful things, glorious things
Of silver and of gold
Marvellous things, beautiful things
And very, very old!*

Mister Carter
And the Earl
They shouted out for glee!
For twenty years
Through lots of tears
They'd hoped this sight to see:

*Wonderful things, glorious things
Of silver and of gold
Marvellous things, beautiful things
And very, very old!*

Our treasure, too
Is stored for us
In Heav'n, not underground!
And when we die
Both you and I
Will hear the angels' sound:

*Wonderful things, glorious things
As promised by the Lord
Marvellous things, beautiful things
Our Father kept His Word!*

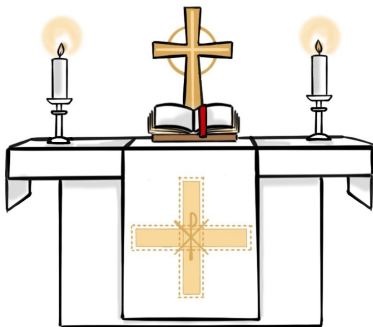
By Nigel Beeton



SMILE LINES

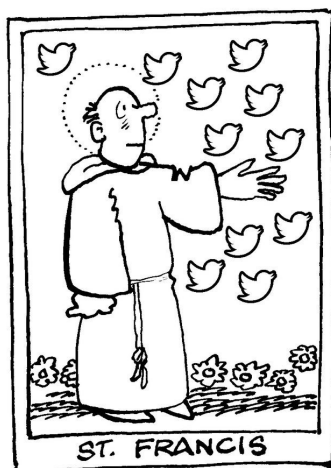
Judgement?

This true story concerns the visit of a visiting preacher to a little village chapel... 'He was a few minutes into his sermon when, without warning, about twenty square feet of thick and decayed Victorian plaster fell from high on one wall and crashed into a group of empty pews below. As the dense fog of dust began to settle, and it became clear no one was injured, the minister prepared to resume his sermon. Then he paused, and looked heavenward and in a slightly pained voice, asked: "Was it something I said?"'



GIVING UP FOR LENT

At the end of the pre-Lent sermon, the vicar suggested, as an example to the rest of the community, that the congregation should worship in an unheated church for the whole of Lent. As they made their way into the chill Sunday air the vicar addressed one member of the congregation, asking what she had decided to give up for Lent. "Church," she replied firmly.



He's been updated. He's now the patron saint of tweeting!



PUZZLES

		9	8		6	5		
				7				
1		8				4		6
2								5
	3			6			4	
4								3
5		4				9		2
				8				
		6	7		9	1		



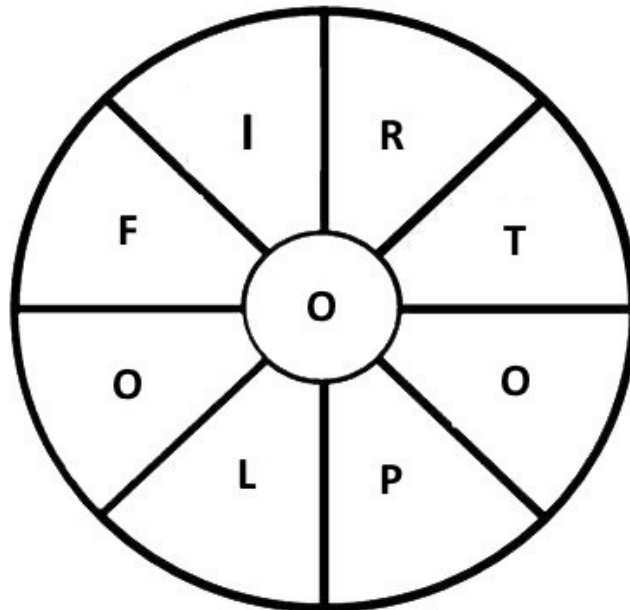
Sudoku

WORD WHEEL

How many words can you make using the letters in the word wheel?

Words must be four letters or more, each word must contain the central letter O. Plurals and proper nouns are not allowed. There is at least one nine letter word.

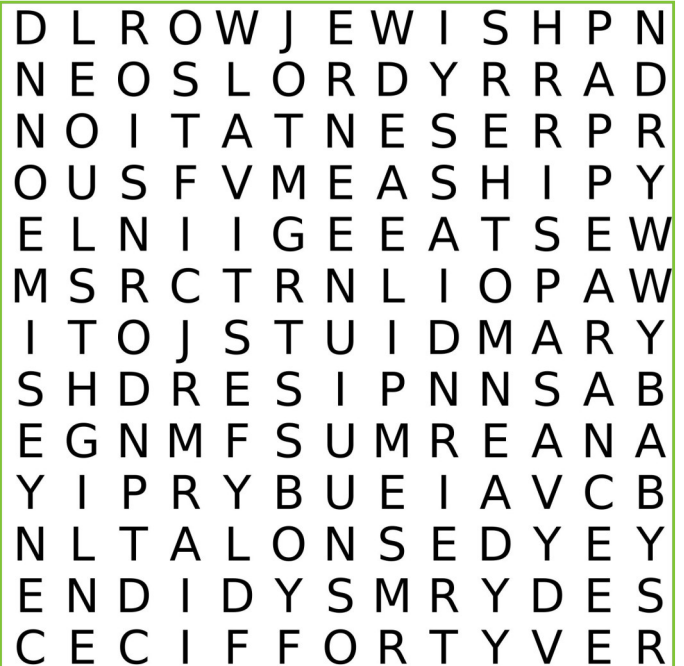
Good score 11+ Excellent 18+



WORDSEARCH

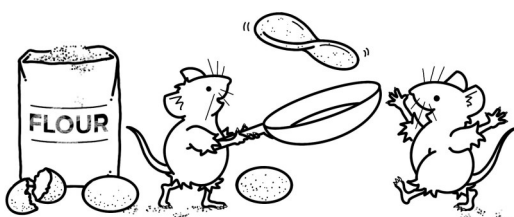
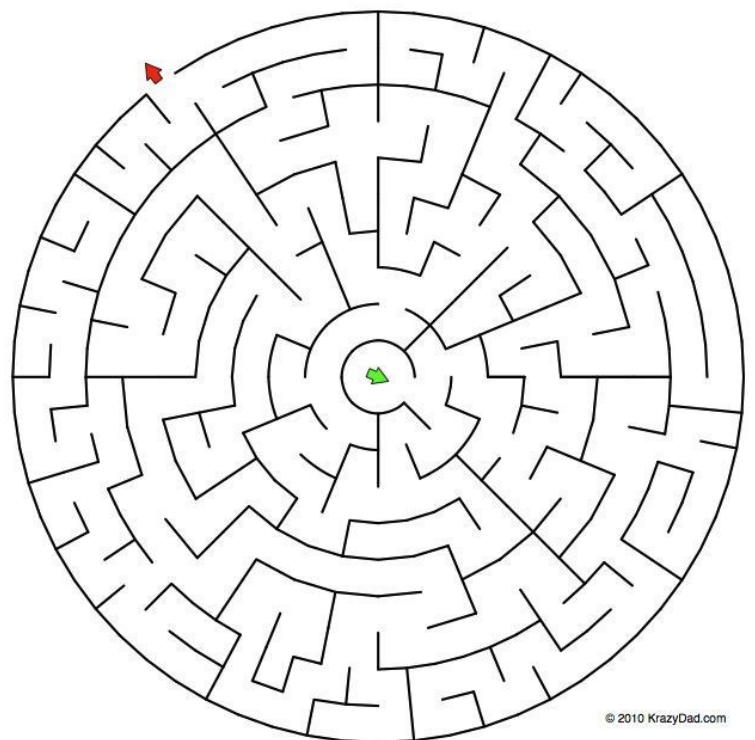
Can you find in this grid the words shown in **BOLD CAPITALS** in the Bible passage below? The words can be found in any direction.

In New Testament times **FORTY DAYS** old was an important age for a **BABY BOY**: it was when they made their first '**PUBLIC APPEARANCE**'. **MARY**, like all good **JEWISH MOTHERS**, went to the Temple with Jesus, her first male child - to '**PRESENT** him to the **LORD**'. At the same time, she, as a new mother, was '**PURIFIED**'. Thus, we have the **FESTIVAL** of the **PRESENTATION** of Christ in the **TEMPLE**, 40 days after Christmas. **JESUS** is described in the Bible as the **LIGHT** of the **WORLD**, and so early Christians developed the tradition of lighting many candles in celebration of this day. The Church also fell into the custom of blessing the year's supply of candles for the church on this day - hence the name, **CANDLEMAS**. The story can be found in Luke 2:22-40, where **SIMEON** makes his great declaration of faith and recognition of Jesus. Simeon's '**NUNC DIMITTIS**', is embedded in the **OFFICE** of **EVENING PRAYER**.



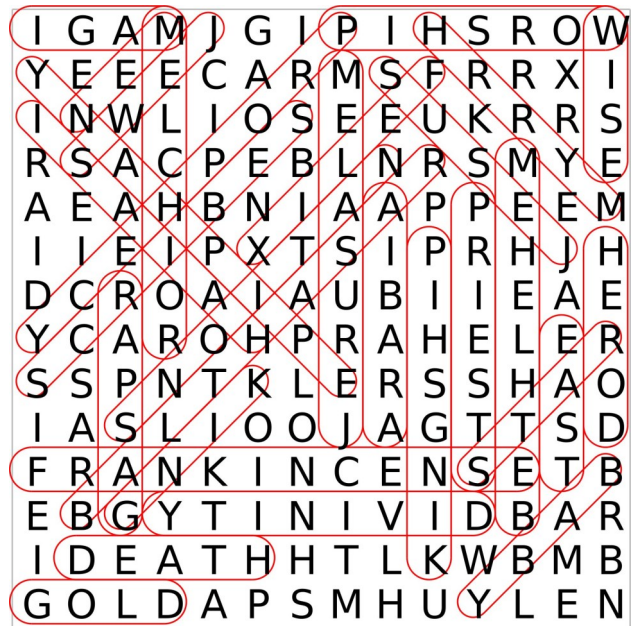
MAZE

Can you find your way out of this maze? Start at the green arrow in the centre and exit the maze at the red arrow?



ANSWERS FROM LAST NEWSLETTER

4	5	7	6	6	9	1	8	2
6	3	1	4	2	8	7	9	5
9	8	2	5	1	7	3	6	4
2	4	3	9	7	6	8	5	1
5	7	8	1	4	3	6	2	9
1	6	9	2	8	5	4	3	7
7	1	6	8	9	2	5	4	3
3	9	4	6	5	1	2	7	8
8	2	5	7	3	4	9	1	6



SUDOKU ANSWERS

WORDSEARCH ANSWERS



“He moved here after the PCC voted to lower the church heating bill. He says it is warmer out here.”



“But look”, said Martin, “Maltesers have hardly any chocolate on”