



Stockport Sunday School

December 2023 Newsletter 44



We are now into December and when it comes to preparing for Christmas, I expect that for most of us there will still be plenty to do.

Sooner or later, our thoughts turn to the task of finding suitable presents to give. The well-prepared, forward thinking of you may have already done the bulk of your shopping. Especially if you are a teacher, the recent school half-term break may have been a good opportunity to get ahead in this respect.



But, if you are like me, October seemed to be a bit too early to try to enter into the festive spirit.

Then all of a sudden the days are passing at an ever increasing rate and time is running out.

Perhaps this year will be different - but somehow I doubt it.

The word 'present' is quite an interesting one.

At this time of year, not surprisingly, we automatically interpret it as meaning a gift.



Of course, words are an essential part of our everyday lives. They are the basis of our communication with each other, as well as a source of enjoyment - be it prose, poetry; or for fun, - crosswords, scrabble, word searches - to mention just a few.

But the definition of the word 'present' takes up nearly a full column in the New Oxford Dictionary of English. It has differing meanings, depending on whether it is a noun, adjective or verb, and the context in which it is being used.

As well as meaning 'gift', present can also mean a point in time, 'the present' for example, the time in which we are living.

Or being in a place at a certain time - as a response to a roll call or school morning register - 'Present Miss'

And then it can be used to indicate giving something formally - "I present you with this well earned certificate", for example.

I sometimes think foreign students of English must despair of the ambiguities of our language. I'm certainly glad it is my native tongue and I don't have to learn it from scratch!

It also struck me that 'multi-meanings' could be the basis of a new party game at Christmas - drawing up a list of English words which can have three or more meanings - but make sure you have a dictionary to hand to resolve disputes!

Going back to my opening comments, if we are getting involved in the practical and commercial aspects of the run-up to Christmas, we should also be mindful that we are now in the church's season of Advent. It's a time when, as in Lent, we are called to think about the reason for the coming time of rejoicing.

Going back to the dictionary, the word 'advent' is defined as 'the arrival of a notable person or event'.

In the Christian church it is used with reference, of course, to the birth of Jesus, the ultimate 'notable' event for all mankind.

The adjective derivative of 'advent' is 'adventitious' which in some ways is more appropriate. It has the sense of an event coming from 'outside', rather than arising by human design or inherent nature. For, in Christian terms, the birth of Jesus is an event ordained by God, beyond our earthly world.

Our Lord's birth, and his life amongst our human race, is God's great gift; His 'present' to each and every one of us, in this, our 'present' time.



In the account of the Nativity, God is 'presenting' His son to all people; on an occasion announced by angels; enacted by means of Mary and Joseph, soon to become refugees in a foreign land; witnessed by humble workers from the fields; worshipped by wise men, foreigners from distant lands. A series of events very different from how the religious and secular authorities would have envisaged the coming of the Messiah in those days.

An amazing happening, with underlying messages for a fallen world; as it was two thousand years ago, and still is in our present turbulent times.

With this in mind, in the coming days, as we busy ourselves with our preparations for the Christmas festivities, let's also make some time to think about the importance of God's blessed gift of Jesus, to us, His people. A present given to all, regardless of our levels in society, nationality, colour or any other characteristic that distinguishes us from one another.

Remembering that the coming of Jesus, our Lord, is for each of us the way to God's eternal kingdom.

And, with that in mind, may you and your families, and all who are close to you, have a happy and fulfilling Christmas time.



CHRISTMAS FAIR

On a fine Saturday we opened our Fair at 11am. The room looked full of stalls and, thanks to Stuart, the coloured lights were up.

80 visitors joined us and perused all the stalls finding things to buy. The 'bacon butties', tea cakes, tea and coffee sold well and it was very busy in the lounge with people meeting others whom they may not have seen for a long time - many shared past memories.

Thank you to everyone who supported us.

Many, many thanks to all the helpers who made the Fair possible - it does take a lot of work beforehand and during the day.

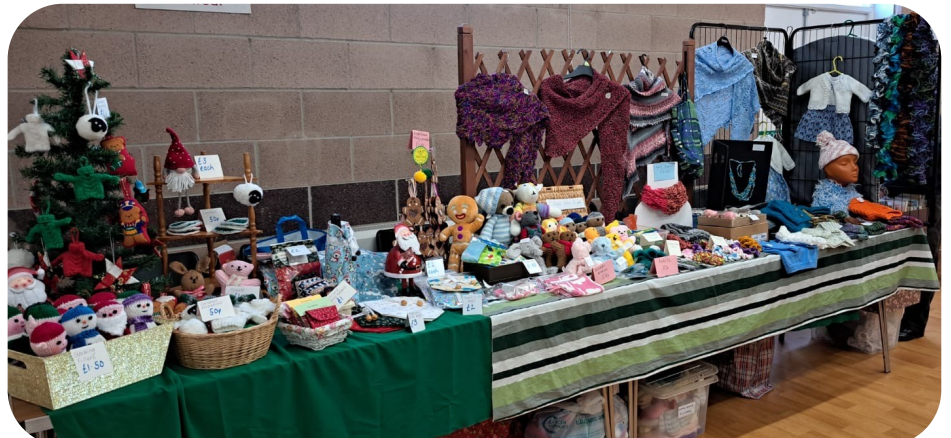
Special thanks to the kitchen team who never seemed to stop - Joyce had very rosy cheeks cooking at the grill!

Judith and Don

A huge 'thank you' to Don and Judith Curry for all the hard work that they put in to make the fair a success, not just on the day itself, but in all the preparation work they do, including collecting goods for the fair in the weeks leading up to it, it is much appreciated and the day was enjoyed greatly by those attending the fair.

Thank you also to anyone who helped in any way at all to make the day possible, from the setting up and clearing away, to the donating and buying of goods for the stalls and the café, to those selling on the stalls and in the café (apologies to the ladies in the café, you were so busy we didn't manage to get a photograph of you or the lounge, which was always very busy with customers), and of course to all those who were able to come and support the fair. It was a lovely day, the start to the Christmas season, and at a time when people are having to cut back with all the rising costs, an amazing amount of £774 was raised for the School.

Judith Higgins





KNIT 'N' NATTER CHRISTMAS TREE

The ladies of the Knit 'N' Natter group created a lovely Christmas tree for St George's Christmas Tree Festival, titled "LIGHT" Up the World'. The tree was beautifully decorated with knitted lanterns of many different colours. Some of the lanterns even had knitted snow covering the tops. The tree itself was finished off with a lit up decorative open star and lots of white lights. A lot of work, as always, must have gone into designing and creating this tree, it was gorgeous to see it all lit up, and to see many people admiring it. Thank you ladies, for all the hard work you put in to create this amazing tree. Each year you create a newly themed tree and once again you must all have worked many hours to create such a stunning tree.



HAPPY BIRTHDAY

HAPPY BIRTHDAY

We wish 'Happy Birthday' this month to:-

Judith Higgins on December 4th
and
Don Curry on December 16th
and
Joan Heald on January 10th

CONGRATULATIONS

Congratulations to the ladies of the Knit 'N' Natter Group. Their Autumn Fair was well attended and raised £500 for St Ann's Hospice.



every day makes a difference



CHRISTMAS POST FOR SUNDAY SCHOOL MEMBERS

Once again, the post box will be out again in the entrance hall of Compass Point for members to post their Christmas cards to each other. The post box will be out on Sunday 10th and Sunday 17th December.

THANK YOU

Once again, a big 'thank you' to Cath Brown who has created our Advent wreath again, for us to light the candles each week up to Christmas. It is very much appreciated by everyone each Sunday.



STAMPS

As you start to receive your Christmas cards over the following month, please remember to save your stamps for Margaret Forster to send off to raise funds for charity. When cutting the stamps off your envelopes please leave a good border all the way around. They can be put in the box in the entrance hall at School for Margaret to collect. Thank you.



SERVICES



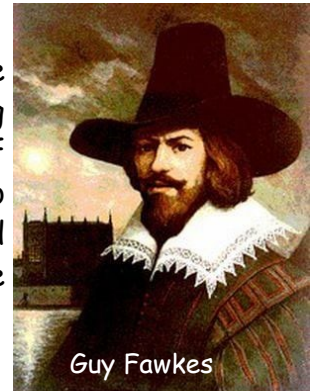
SUNDAY OCTOBER 29TH

Garth took this service and as Ken Dean was ill, Elizabeth played hymns from discs for the hymn singing.

As usual Garth's service was a pot pourri of subjects ranging from legends about Halloween when evil spirits are about. They are afraid to come out on All Saints Day, the day dedicated to those who have died.

He also told us about Guy Fawkes. He had been born in York but became a soldier in Spain. In the army, he learned a lot about handling explosives. Because of this knowledge, he was recruited by a group of Catholics who planned to blow up Parliament along with King James who they considered a heretic. They hoped when the King died England would become a catholic country. After his capture Guy Fawkes remained true to his friends and refused to name his fellow conspirators.

Thank you Garth and Elizabeth. We hope that Ken will feel better soon.



Guy Fawkes

SUNDAY NOVEMBER 5TH

When Walter led the service, he began by asking us how we would reply to the question, "What nationality are you?", some replied British others English.



Queen Elizabeth I

Walter looked back on the events that led to the idea of Britain being formed.

Up to the Middle Ages there was constant conflict between England and Scotland.

Things came to a head when Queen Elizabeth I died without a direct heir, the only candidate with a valid claim was James VI of Scotland. He was invited to address Parliament on November 5th 1605, his objective to unite England and Scotland to the benefit of both. But there was a group who wished to disrupt this and in the chaos that would follow facilitate an invasion by Spain and restore Catholicism in England. Guy Fawkes, born in Yorkshire, had spent time as a mercenary in Spain where he learned about the use of explosives and also committed to the Catholic faith. He was recruited by the group who planned to blow up the King and Parliament.

When he was arrested he was tried and executed as a traitor.

Our own history shows people so easily repeat the errors of their forebears, for example, the Scottish invasion of England in 1745 to claim the crown for Bonnie Prince Charlie. The Irish uprising in 1649 and in our time the 'Troubles' in Northern Ireland leading to an attempt to assassinate Margaret Thatcher.

What of today's threats to peace. There is the ongoing conflict between the Ukraine and Russia and the horrendous events between Israel and Palestine an enmity going back before the time of Christ. The concept of a 'place for Jews' in Palestine was put forward by the British Government in 1917. After the Holocaust the need for a Jewish homeland where they could feel safe was recognised but war soon broke out again.

The hope was that the two nations could co-exist but the pressure of extremist views on both sides has led to the current situation.

There are more encouraging signs we can look back on e.g. the way at the end of WW II the allies and the Americans in particular helped both practically and financially in reconstructing the war torn lands.

Walter closed with the reading John 4 verses 7 - 26, the story of Jesus, a Jew meeting with the Samaritan woman at the well when she accepts Jesus as the Messiah and Jesus' assurance that everyone has the same value in God's eyes.

Thank you, Walter, it is interesting to see how history repeats itself.



Stained glass from St Malo Cathedral depicting Jesus meeting the Samaritan woman at the well

SUNDAY NOVEMBER 12TH REMEMBRANCE SUNDAY



Thank you to Beryl Manley who had put out a display of knitted poppies and to Alan Bowdon for his wonderful display of military regalia including drums, flags, helmets and badges and to Judith Curry for bringing articles about School members who had served in the war.

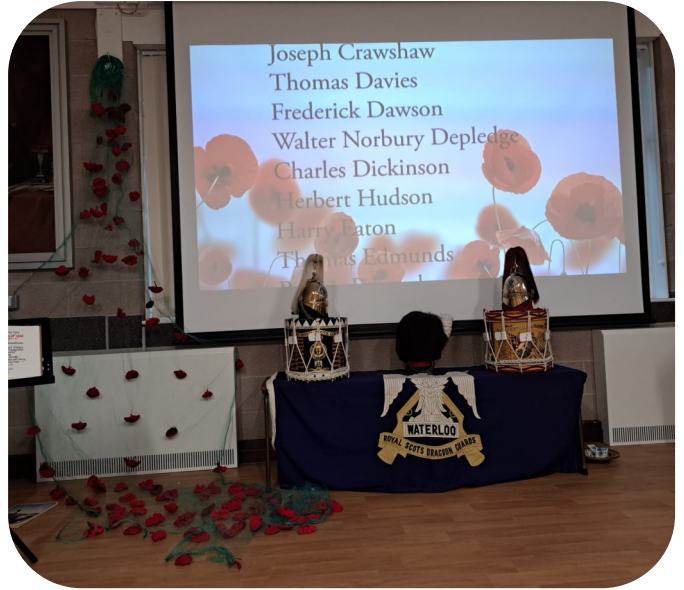
We were pleased to welcome Stuart Dean as our speaker for this special service, in which we remembered those who serve to protect our democratic freedom and freedom of speech. Stuart asked how many members were wearing poppies - almost everyone.

Stuart told us how the poppy had developed over the years.

The first poppies had silk petals and a wire stem. In the 1930's, silk was kept for the top petals but the lower petals were made of lawn. During World War II two designs were available silk or card. In 1950, the petals were made of felt, 1967 saw the bitumen centre used and in 1987 the green leaf was added. In 2023 the plastic free poppy was developed. Nine years ago saw the display of large poppies around the Tower of London.



Looking over Gold Beach, the names of 22,442 soldiers...



Pictures of Remembrance Sunday alongside some images of the memorial



Looking over Gold Beach, the names of 22,442 soldiers...

Images of the D-Day memorial, France



1920s Cotton

1930s SATEEN

1940s Cardboard

1950s Felt

1960s Fabric

1980s Paper & Plastic



2023 Plastic-free

The development of the poppy through the decades



SUNDAY 19TH NOVEMBER

SHOE BOX SERVICE

We were pleased to welcome several members from Davenport Methodist Church to the Shoe Box Service on November 19th. Beryl Manley took the service and showed a DVD of children receiving boxes. Margaret told us about the start of the organisation and the way the boxes were sorted at the warehouse. The Shoe Box appeal has been going for over 25 years, and over that time will have brought joy, even for a moment, to thousands of people around the world. At the end of the service the boxes were blessed before starting their journey. Thank you to everyone who contributed in any way to making up a shoe box. This year 136 boxes were collected from Margaret Forster from local Stockport churches, 20 of those boxes were from Sunday School. This year Teams 4 U will be sending the boxes to Ukraine, Moldova, Georgia, Bosnia and Romania. We are sure the boxes will put a smile on the faces of all those who receive a box, showing them that people around the world are thinking about them.



T4U



FUTURE SERVICES

The next dates for our services are:-

December 3 rd	Walter Stead
December 10 th	Christmas Lunch Christmas Post Christingle Service - Judith Curry and Judith Higgins
December 17 th	Christmas Post Candle and Carol Service - members of Lancashire Hill
December 24 th	NO SERVICE
December 31 st	Officials' Service
January 7 th	Officials' Service
January 11 th	Garth Higgins



PREPARATIONS

Christmas is a time for making plans. Presents to buy, cards to send, decorations to put up, food to order, travel arrangements to make... the list goes on and on. But whether our plans are ambitious or simple this Christmas, we still dread anything going wrong.

Yet plans seemed to fall apart that first Christmas. Mary and Joseph had planned to marry and set up home together in Galilee. Then Mary had become unexpectedly pregnant, and they were summoned to Bethlehem for the census. So instead of a comfortable Galilean home amongst family, they were suddenly parents, all alone in a place fit for animals!

The shepherds had expected another routine night on the hills of Bethlehem. But the angel's message and a heavenly choir changed everything, and they went to search for the Christ-child instead. Their change of plans brought them great joy!

The Eastern men had expected to find the 'King of the Jews' in a royal palace. But the star by-passed Jerusalem and took them to Bethlehem. Then their plans changed again, when they were warned in a dream to avoid Herod, and slip home another way.

The Holy Couple then had another upset of plans: Joseph was warned in a dream NOT to go home to Galilee, but to flee for safety in Egypt instead.

At first sight, all these changes display a chaotic mix of circumstances. But behind it all, God was working out His divine purposes. When Jesus was born, all the Old Testament prophecies of His coming were fulfilled. Nothing happened by chance. Into a messy world God brought to us His Son, to be our Saviour.

We worship a great and loving God who not only planned that first Christmas but is also preparing for our stay in His eternal home.

The plans God makes are wise, and they always succeed! (Isaiah 28:29)

LANCASHIRE HILL SUNDAY SCHOOL



Season's Greetings

Everyone at The Triangle would like to wish all readers a happy and peaceful Christmas and prosperous New Year.



Kites Group

The Kites Group are busy preparing for their February 2024 show 'Dick Whittington' to be held at Compass Point. More details and tickets will be available soon on www.kitesgroup.com.



Recipe

Red cabbage, pear and walnut salad

Serves 4

- 1 tbsp grapeseed or sunflower oil***
- 2 red onions cut into wedges***
- 1 small red cabbage***
- 2 pears (you could use apples instead)***
- 75g walnuts***

DRESSING

- 1 tbsp dijon mustard***
- 1 tsp runny honey***
- 1 tbsp white wine vinegar***
- 3 tbsp grapeseed or sunflower oil***

Put the oil into a frying pan and gently fry the onions until they are cooked but still crisp, then sprinkle with salt and pepper.

Cut the red cabbage into 5mm slices and finely slice the pears. Fry them both in a dry pan for a few minutes. Roughly chop the walnuts, and then mix all the salad ingredients together in a mixing bowl.

For the dressing, whisk together the mustard, honey and vinegar. Now drizzle in the oil and season with the salt and pepper.

Fold the dressing into the cabbage salad and season to taste with salt and pepper then serve.

I thought that this Christmas, instead of writing a poem of my own, I would choose a few of my favourites from one of my many Poetry Books. This has proved to be more difficult than I had thought, as there are so many beautiful, poignant poems to choose from. However, I hope that you enjoy the ones that I have finally decided on. (I'm afraid that I have no author for the first one.

1. "And Did It Happen"

1. And did it happen
that in a stable long ago
a weary couple,
whom no-one seemed to know,
should choose a manger,
despite the danger,
to hold and hallow the Lord below?



2. And did it happen
that, in the stillness of the night
the woman laboured
to let God see the light,
and bathed him and blessed him,
breast-fed, caressed him,
the world incarnate whose time was right?



3. And did it happen
that news of this first reached the poor,
compelled by angels
to tiptoe to the door
and see no trappings,
just linen wrappings,
a child for certain and God for sure?



4. And did it happen
that all of this was meant to be,
that God, from distance,
should choose to be set free
and show uniqueness
transformed in weakness,
that I may touch Him and He touch me?



2. "What The Donkey Saw"

No room in the inn, of course,
And not much in the stable,
What with the shepherds, Magi, Mary,
Joseph, the heavenly host -
Not to mention the baby
Using our manger as a cot.
You couldn't have squeezed another cherub in
For love or money.



Still, in spite of the overcrowding,
I did my best to make them feel wanted.
I could see that the baby and I
Would be going places together.

U. A. Fanthorpe



3. Christmas 1970

A little girl called Silé Javotte
Said, "Look at the lovely presents I've got."
While, a little girl in Biafra said
"Oh, what a lovely slice of bread."

Spike Milligan

Margaret Morris-Jones

THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD

During the month of December, people are 'counting down' to Christmas Day in an ever-increasing variety of ways.

In my childhood we had a simple card with a traditional picture of a manger scene with doors marked with the countdown numbers and a picture of the different characters behind each. If my parents had extra money to spend, they would buy one with shiny snow made of sparkles!

These days you can pay hundreds to have a gift for each day from toys to jewellery. And don't fret, your pets can have their own also!

Churches don't normally count the days, but they do note the four Sundays before Christmas Day. They give each of those four 'advent' Sundays a theme and light a candle each time. One for the first week, two for the second and so on.

Unlike the secular world, the church counts up, and not down. It increases the light as we get nearer to Christmas Day and then adds an extra light on that day. So, a total of five candles.

Churches vary in their use of colour in the candles. Some will use all white, whilst many only use white for the Christ-light on Christmas Day and 'colours' on the four Sundays.

There again they vary; some use all purple - originally the most expensive colour - as we prepare for The King. In a more modern style, some use blue - perhaps recalling the most associated colour for Jesus' mother Mary. But perhaps reminding us of creation and that we are surrounded by God's love as the earth is surrounded by the blue sky.

And again, others will change the colours for each Sunday, often giving the third Sunday to be pink as we are over half-way through Advent and it is known as *Gaudate* - Joyful - Sunday. Or there are those who make the fourth Sunday pink, as that one is often dedicated to Mary and it's a 'girly' colour.

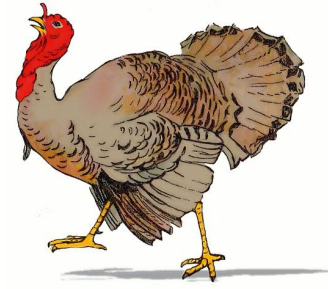


SMILE LINES

TURKEY

He ate so much over the holidays that he decided to quit cold turkey.

Which side of the turkey has the most feathers?
The outside.



SUMS UP CHRISTMAS

Three phrases that sum up Christmas are: 'Peace on Earth'; 'Goodwill to Men'; and 'Batteries not included'.

RED

What's red and white, red and white, and red and white? Father Christmas rolling down a hill.



STRONGER

Statistics prove we're all getting stronger. Fifty years ago, you needed an estate car to hold £50 worth of Christmas presents. Twenty-five years ago, it took two people to carry £30 worth of Christmas groceries - now a five-year-old can do it.

CHILDREN'S VERSION OF THE CHRISTMAS STORY

- When the three wise guys from the east side arrived, they found Jesus in the manger.
- When Mary heard that she was the mother of Jesus, she sang the Magna Carta
- Jesus was born because Mary had an immaculate contraption.



SNOWMAN

What do you get when you cross a snowman with a vampire? - Frostbite.

FATHER CHRISTMAS

Of course, I had expected that by the age of seven it was inevitable that my son would begin to have serious thoughts about Father Christmas. Sure enough, one day near Christmas he suddenly said: "Mum, I know something about Father Christmas, the Easter Bunny and the Tooth Fairy." Taking a deep breath, I asked him what that might be. "Easy," he said, "They are all nocturnal."



PUZZLES

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



Sudoku



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.

The story of 'SILENT NIGHT'

This much-LOVED **CAROL** comes from **AUSTRIA**, where it was **FIRST SUNG** as **STILLE NACHT, HEILIGE** Nacht on Christmas Eve, 1818. It was written by **FATHER JOSEPH MOHR**, a **YOUNG PRIEST** at St Nicholas parish church, in the village of Oberndorf bei Salzburg. As Christmas 1818 approached, he asked the local schoolmaster, Franz Xaver Gruber, to compose a **MELODY** for his carol. Gruber was **ORGANIST** in the nearby village of Arnsdorf, and so was happy to oblige. On **CHRISTMAS EVE** they presented the carol to the church during the **MIDNIGHT MASS**. The carol went on to become loved world-wide; and the **VERSION** sung by **BING** Crosby is the **THIRD** best-selling **SINGLE** of all time.

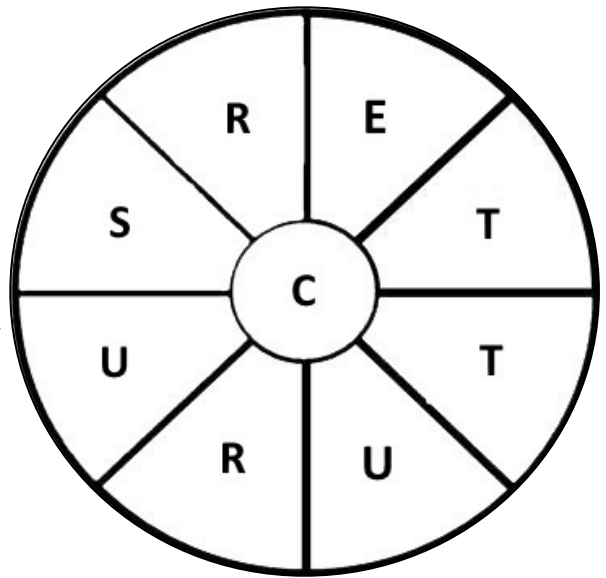
M	O	H	R	L	A	A	M	A	S	S	T
R	T	N	E	L	I	S	T	I	L	L	E
Y	E	M	G	L	I	A	N	R	D	N	E
J	L	B	I	N	G	M	M	T	T	O	M
I	O	A	L	D	U	T	L	S	G	I	E
T	V	S	I	T	N	S	E	U	E	S	L
O	E	I	E	T	S	I	N	A	G	R	O
Y	D	N	H	P	R	R	G	A	E	E	D
O	A	G	I	P	H	H	I	H	C	V	Y
U	I	L	O	R	A	C	T	F	T	H	E
N	D	E	D	O	T	A	D	R	I	H	T
G	C	A	G	A	F	R	A	E	H	A	U

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 C. Plurals and proper nouns are not allowed. There is at least one nine letter word.

Good score 6+ Excellent 11+



NATIVITY QUIZ

- Where did Mary and Joseph live before Jesus was born?
a) Nazareth b) Bethlehem c) Jerusalem
- What was the name of the angel who told Mary she would have a child?
- What did Joseph do for a living?
- Who was the Roman ruler when Jesus was born?
- Why did Mary and Joseph go to Bethlehem?
- How did Mary and Joseph travel to Bethlehem?
- Why couldn't Mary and Joseph find a place to stay?
- Where does the Bible say Jesus was born?
a) In a stable b) In hay c) In a manger
- According to the Bible, which animals were specifically mentioned as being present in the stable when Jesus was born?
a) sheep and a donkey b) cattle and a donkey c) donkey, sheep and cattle d) None
- What does the angel say to the shepherds when they tell them to go to Bethlehem?
- The wise men travelled to Jerusalem. a) northward b) southward c) eastward d) westward
- What did the Wise Men follow to find Jesus?
- How many Wise Men visited baby Jesus?
- What gifts did the wise men bring for Jesus?
- Who spread the news about baby Jesus throughout Bethlehem?
- What is the City of David also known as in the bible?
- Which of the gospels tell the story of the Nativity?
- What does Jesus' other name, "Immanuel", mean? a) God with us b) Son of God c) He who is God d) Chosen One
- How many days after the birth of Christ did Joseph and Mary give him the name Jesus?
- Jesus was born on the 25th of December. True or false?



ANSWERS FROM LAST NEWSLETTER

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

H	T	H	G	I	E	F	I	F	S	B	L	E
S	N	P	I	L	G	R	I	M	A	G	E	R
A	I	A	H	C	R	A	E	R	N	N	A	E
T	R	A	N	S	L	A	T	I	O	N	N	M
M	E	S	S	I	A	H	C	R	D	W	A	A
T	S	R	E	I	O	U	T	E	N	E	H	I
N	S	C	H	L	D	A	A	V	P	T	T	N
I	A	A	O	O	P	R	U	O	I	V	A	S
A	T	M	R	T	E	I	I	L	O	E	N	U
S	E	T	T	T	L	C	C	C	U	O	D	S
W	N	U	E	N	A	A	A	S	S	N	R	E
I	T	P	N	E	L	P	N	L	I	E	J	
P	H	O	N	O	U	R	E	D	P	D	W	T



SUDOKU ANSWERS

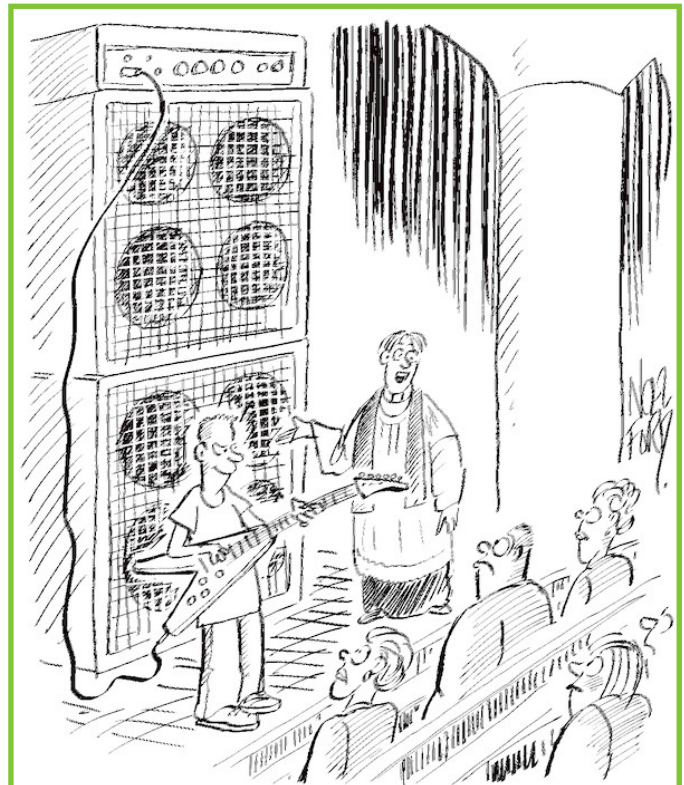
WORDSEARCH ANSWERS



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



Sara preferred to let people work out the hymns for themselves



"For the next part of our carol-service, Nigel, the verger's nephew will play his interpretation of Silent Night..."