



Stockport Sunday School

February 2024 Newsletter 46



As is our tradition, this is the time of year when we hold our annual Bible Sunday Service.

It is an important occasion because the Bible is the foundation on which our faith is based.

Throughout the church year, many of our services are based on well known verses from the Bible. However there are inevitably chapters and verses which rarely come to our attention; passages which can be of help to us on our journey of faith.

In this context, the use of published daily Bible notes can often introduce us to previously unknown Gospel passages, and provide new understanding, encouragement and guidance as we seek to live out our lives in accordance with our Lord's teaching.

In a recent series of commentaries I was reading, the author likened our faith journeys to "crossing an unknown land with the aid of the Bible as a map and compass". It was a phrase that caught my attention and gave food for thought.

We might well have different levels of skill when it comes to map reading, but from experience, it is a great help if you are familiar with where you are starting from - and are you looking in the right direction ?.

I well remember, when I was working, we had a visitor to our office in Stockport from our South African company in Johannesburg. While he was with us, he needed to attend a business meeting in Warrington and asked us for directions, so we directed him to the M62 and to head west. That seemed pretty straightforward, and off he set. It was only when he saw signs for Bradford that he realised he was heading east!



His sense of direction had misled him. I could sympathise. On a visit to Sydney Harbour in Australia and taking in the views, I spent most of the day thinking I was looking north and upstream, when in fact I was looking south. My sense of direction, normally pretty reliable, had let me down. I think it was because I subconsciously assumed the sun at midday was in the south, whereas in the southern hemisphere, it is in the north!

It was a lesson for me that our established experiences are not always the right starting point for new situations.

And that applies to everyday life, and also our faith.

The religious leaders of Jesus' time, could not accept that he was telling them to look for God in a different direction; from a different starting point, with God as the loving Father who is not bound by man-made laws.

And perhaps we may have mental blocks on other issues. Reading other people's insights into scripture can open our eyes too.

In another Bible Reading comment, the writer was looking at the Book of Haggai - one of the shortest Old Testament books, which records God's call to the people of Israel, to rebuild the Temple, following their return from captivity in Babylon.

God's concern was not primarily about the absence of the restored building, but that the people had lost the concept of having a focal point for worship. They had been so busy rebuilding their homes that, understandably perhaps, they had not given time or thought to their spiritual wellbeing.



Haggai's task was to tell them that the time had come to take up the task, and to set to work, which they did. It was a daunting task - but it was achieved.

This particular commentary was a reminder that we too have to be open to God's prompting, and to act accordingly.

If the time is right, we can succeed.

More generally, for us as followers of Christ, the message from these extracts is straightforward.

Firstly, to remind us that we have the means to maintain our sense of direction in serving God, by Bible reading, and prayer.



Secondly, worshipping in fellowship together helps us to keep a check where we are in our journey of faith; to make sure we are looking in the right direction.

Together they are important ways for us to contribute to allowing God's will to be done on earth.

Something to think about as we approach Ash Wednesday and the start of Lent in a couple of weeks time!

No man ever said, at the end of his days, 'I have read my Bible too much, I have thought of God too much, I have prayed too much, I have been too careful with my soul.'

- J C Ryle

Happy moments, praise God. Difficult moments, seek God. Quiet moments, worship God. Painful moments, trust God. Every moment, thank God.

- Anon

Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength, and with all your mind; and love your neighbour as yourself.

- Jesus Christ



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.

Norman Sellers decided not to stand again and he was thanked for his work as an Inspector and class leader for many years. Margaret asked for a proposal that the remaining Inspectors be re-elected. This was proposed by Judith Curry and seconded by Joyce Darvil and was passed by the members present.

Margaret informed Walter and Judith of their re-election, (as Stuart was absent working, abroad) 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 and also thanking Norman for his many years of service.

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



FORTHCOMING SERVICES

February 4th	Bible Sunday - speaker Adrian Nottingham
February 11th	Garth Higgins
February 18th	Walter Stead
February 25th	Judith Higgins Committee Meeting
March 3rd	Wendy Hill and Judith Hadfield
March 10th	Mothering Sunday - speaker Sandra Woodhead
March 17th	Speaker Tony McIntyne
March 24th	Palm Sunday - Garth Higgins



SERVICES



SUNDAY 7TH JANUARY 2024

Walter Stead and Judith Higgins took this service.

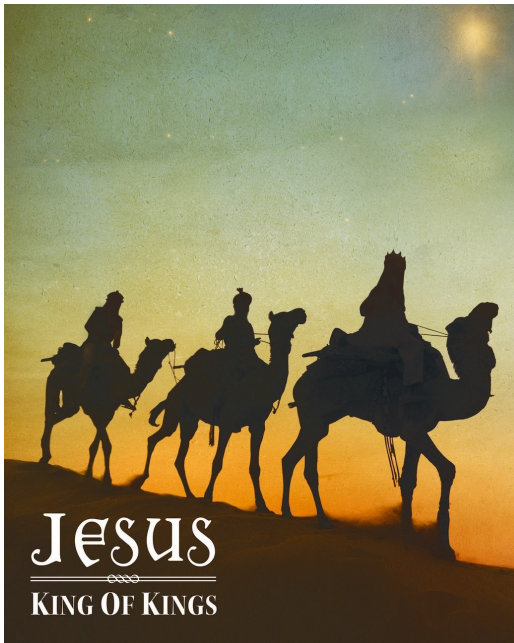
Walter said that Epiphany marked the official end of Christmas. Twelve days after Christmas is a time when we take down the Christmas decorations.

At Epiphany we celebrate the visit of the wise men to Jesus and a time when we also mark the first public miracle of Jesus.



EPIPHANY

The Bible does not tell us where the wise men came from, but it may have been Persia. They were astrologers, men of learning. They knew of the Jewish scriptures and prophecy and thought the appearance of the new start meant the birth of a king. He said their journey would have been hard both physically and mentally and read T. S. Eliot's poem, 'The Journey of the Magi'. (see next page)



Judith said the Bible told us little about the men except that they were wise and the gifts they carried.

Many myths and legends have grown up around the Christmas story. Judith told two stories about the wise men. In the first, the men discussed why they had chosen the gifts they carried. The first thought that the baby would be a great king so a gift of gold was appropriate. The second thought the baby would be a great high priest worshipped throughout the world, incense would be his gift. But the third man thought the child would grow up to be the one who by sacrifice of his own life would save the world for such a person, myrrh would be the gift.

As it happened, they were all right, Jesus would be King, God and Saviour.

The second story was about a fourth wise man who set out alone. He carried three precious jewels for the baby, a pearl, an emerald and a ruby. He journeyed for many years and although he heard stories of Jesus, he never managed to meet up with Him. Once he stopped to help a very sick man, taking him to an inn to be cared for and paying the innkeeper with the emerald. He arrived in Bethlehem as Herod's soldiers were slaughtering the young children and helped a woman who had hidden her baby by giving her the ruby to repair her home after the soldier's visit and build a new life for her son. The pearl was used to buy a boy who was being sold as a slave and return him to his mother. In Jerusalem he heard that Jesus had been arrested, tried and condemned to death. At last he might see Him as He walked to Calvary. The streets were busy and the man saw a tile fall from a

THE JOURNEY OF THE MAGI

By T.S. Eliot

A cold coming we had of it,
Just the worst time of the year
For a journey, and such a long journey:
The ways deep and the weather sharp,
The very dead of winter.'
And the camels galled, sorefooted, refractory,
Lying down in the melting snow.
There were times we regretted
The summer palaces on slopes, the terraces,
And the silken girls bringing sherbet.
Then the camel men cursing and grumbling
and running away, and wanting their liquor and women,
And the night-fires going out, and the lack of shelters,
And the cities hostile and the towns unfriendly
And the villages dirty and charging high prices:
A hard time we had of it.
At the end we preferred to travel all night,
Sleeping in snatches,
With the voices singing in our ears, saying
That this was all folly.

Then at dawn we came down to a temperate valley,
Wet, below the snow line, smelling of vegetation;
With a running stream and a water-mill beating the darkness,
And three trees on the low sky,
And an old white horse galloped away in the meadow.
Then we came to a tavern with vine-leaves over the lintel,
Six hands at an open door dicing for pieces of silver,
And feet kicking the empty wine-skins.
But there was no information, and so we continued
And arriving at evening, not a moment too soon
Finding the place; it was (you might say) satisfactory.

All this was a long time ago, I remember,
And I would do it again, but set down
This set down
This: were we led all that way for
Birth or Death? There was a Birth, certainly
We had evidence and no doubt. I had seen birth and death,
But had thought they were different; this Birth was
Hard and bitter agony for us, like Death, our death.
We returned to our places, these Kingdoms,
But no longer at ease here, in the old dispensation,
With an alien people clutching their gods.
I should be glad of another death.

roof. He pushed a young boy clear, but was hit and fatally injured by the tile. As he lay dying his one regret was that he had not been able to give his gifts to Jesus. Then he seemed to hear a voice, telling him Jesus had received the gifts.

No emerald, however flawless, is as valuable as the compassion shown to a sick man. No ruby, however rare, is as acceptable to God as a baby saved from Herod's soldiers and no pearl, however lovely, is as beautiful in the sight of God, as a child saved from slavery.

Just stories, but each one with a message.



SUNDAY 14TH JANUARY 2024



Cheshire Regiment Cap Badge

Garth's service was inspired by a small Gideon version of the New Testament with Psalms that he uses.

He had received it at St George's Church when he attended a service to commemorate the part played by the 6th Cheshire Regiment in the St Julien Day battle in 1917.

It prompted Garth to ask, "Who was St Julien?"

The saint is also known as St Julien of Le Mans. Born in the fourth century into a noble family legend says that on the night he was born his father saw pagan witches lay a curse on the baby that he would kill his parents.

When he found out about the curse, Julien left the family home. He walked to Galicia where he met and married a 'good woman', a wealthy widow.

Twenty years later his parents set out to find their son. In Galicia, they met a woman for shelter after their journey. She invited them into her home and offered them her own and Julien's bedroom to sleep in.

Whilst Julien was out he had been told (by the devil) that his wife was being unfaithful, when he returned home he found a man and woman asleep in his bed and killed them thinking they were his wife and her lover. When he found out the truth, he vowed to spend the rest of his life doing charitable work.



After a pilgrimage to Rome, Julien and his wife came to a river crossing. There they built a hospice to welcome sick and weary travellers and helped people across the river.

One traveller wrecked the hospice during the night and Julien refused to take in anyone else, but soon after Jesus visited the hospice in the guise of a poor traveller. When Julien tried to turn Him away, Jesus revealed who He was and forgave Julien his sins.

SUNDAY 21ST JANUARY 2024

Walter expressed his concern for the condition of the world today, the invasion of Ukraine, the conflict in Palestine and at home the concern with ever increasing immigration, legal and illegal and the growth of political parties and groups who hold extreme views.

Walter spoke of the Mirfield community of the Resurrection, an Anglican monastic order. He told us of the work of Trevor Huddleston, a member of the order who served for them with the Anglican Church in South Africa at the time of Apartheid. He campaigned against apartheid and influenced the young Bishop Desmond Tutu and was honoured by Nelson Mandela. He led a distinguished life of a true Christian encouraging all to work to overcome oppression and injustice. A latter day prophet speaking truth to power.



Walter's talk had been prompted by a sermon by Peter Hall at St George's. Walter's reading was Micah 3 verses 5 - 12. When we see injustice in the world how should we react? Desmond Tutu once said if you are neutral in situations of injustice you have chosen the side of the oppressor. Micah would have agreed. He spoke out about injustice, the rulers, priests and prophets who had oppressed the innocent prophets are supposed to give God's word to the people.



King Hezekiah

God had seen the prophets give preference to the wealthy telling the people what they wanted to hear. Micah spoke out strongly against them and issued God's warning. Micah says he pays attention to God's voice and delivers his words. The message from God is that there are things happening that are outrageous, rulers are taking bribes, priests are teaching for a fee and prophets are performing their duty for money.

Micah proclaimed that the whole of Jerusalem is perverted because of poor leadership and punishment is coming from God.

Fortunately King Hezekiah listened to Micah and punishment was delayed.

So what does this mean for us? We should not remain neutral to injustices that are happening.

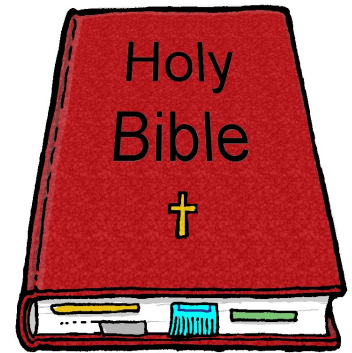
Food for thought and prayer for us all.

SUNDAY 28TH JANUARY 2024

Judith Higgins took as her theme, patterns. She had brought along two patterns, one a sewing pattern and the other a knitting pattern and stressed how important it is to follow the instructions carefully.

Life is a journey and we do have a helpful guide, the Bible, to help us on our way.

Towards the end of the service, she handed out copies of a little booklet that she had bought some years ago at a church craft fair. She thinks that the writer must have been a Christian with a good knowledge of the Bible and also a sewer. Each page of the booklet held an item used in sewing, a Bible reference and a short quote that linked the two. The title of the booklet was 'A Pattern For Life'. The idea of the booklet was that the reader would remember the sewing items which were a piece of elastic, a press stud, a button, a piece of felt, a piece of thread, a tape measure and a safety pin, which would then remind them of the Bible text. A helpful reminder of how we should live our lives.



Elastic - Expand Your Love To Include Everyone
Matthew 5:44

Press Stud - Put Some Snap Into Your Life
Colossians 3:16

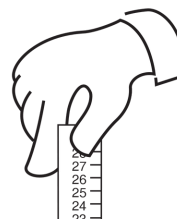
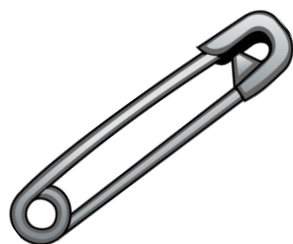
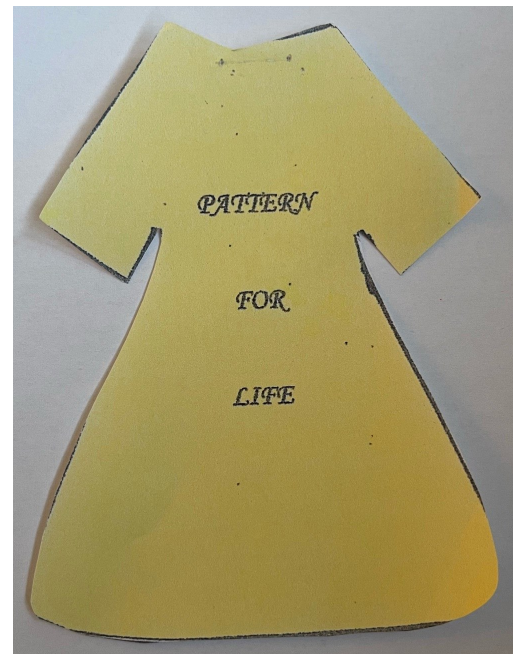
Felt - Let Your Message Be Felt
1 John 3:11

Button - Know When To Button Your Lip
Proverbs 10:19

Thread - Thread Your Work With Dependability
3 John 5

Measure - Measure Up To Your Calling
Luke 6:38

Safety Pin - Guard Against The Sharp Points Of Discouragement
Psalms 37:1-17



LANCASHIRE HILL SUNDAY SCHOOL



Recipe

Lime, feta and coriander sweetcorn

Serves 4 as a side

*1 shallot or spring onion, finely chopped or sliced
1 tbsp olive oil
200g frozen or tinned sweetcorn
1 lime, zested and juiced
small bunch coriander, chopped
75g feta
aleppo pepper or dried chilli flakes (optional)*



Fry the shallot or spring onion in the olive oil for about 1 minute until it starts to soften. Stir in the sweetcorn and cook for a couple of minutes until it defrosts and warms up. Add the lime zest and juice, coriander and plenty of seasoning.

Tip the sweetcorn into a bowl and crumble over the feta. Sprinkle on some Aleppo pepper or chilli flakes, if you like.



It is the love of God that makes Him the sworn enemy of sin.
- G Campbell Morgan

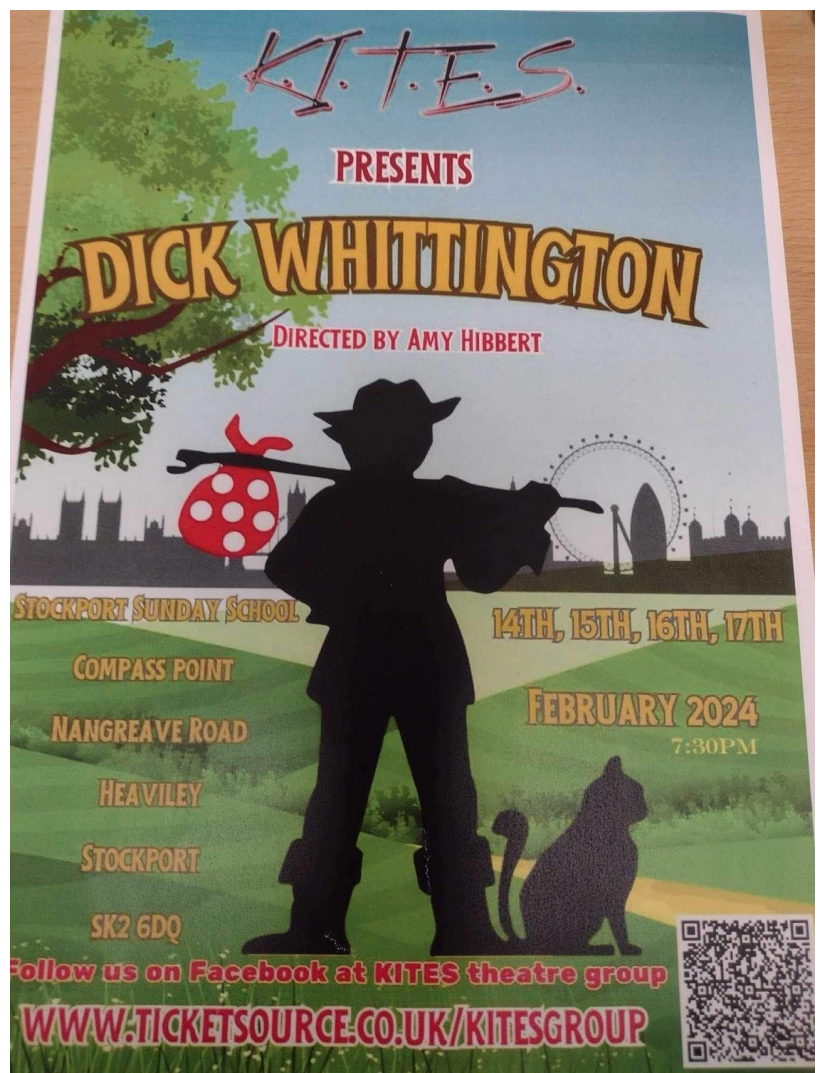
There is nothing round the corner which is beyond God's view.
- J Charles Stern

Jesus Christ is the key which unlocks the door of the prison cell of our own making and sets us free to live in the wide world of God's love and purpose.
- Kenneth Pillar

CANDLE AND CAROL SERVICE 2023

Thank you to everyone who sent pictures of your tiny candles.

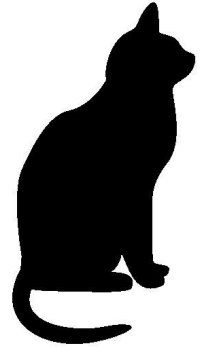




Kites Group

The Kites Group are busy preparing for their February 2024 show 'Dick Whittington' to be held at Compass Point. Tickets are available on www.kitesgroup.com.

I started to write rhymes and poetry when I was at Cale Green Junior School and wrote mainly about my cat, Timmy. One day, my mum noticed that in the Junior Stockport Express, there was to be a poetry competition for children aged 9 - 14. She encouraged me to enter, and, to my surprise, I won the competition (I was aged 10). However, when mum and I went to the Express office for my prize, I was very disappointed to receive a sewing set. I would much have preferred a book!



In later years, aged 15, I submitted a poem for the Stockport High School magazine and was thrilled when it was accepted.

Here it is, written on March 29th 1954, when I was 15.

The Streamlet

It gurgles through pebbles and winds over weeds,
It bubbles and trickles through rushes and reeds,
It sparkles and shimmers and twinkles like glass,
As, chuckling and singing, it curves through the grass.
It chatters by day and it whispers by night,
It ripples and gleams in the moon's silvery light,



The rain hisses down
and the stream shouts with glee,
As, prancing and dancing it flows to the sea.
It glides through the willows, past solitary terns,
Then darts into sunlight to weave through the ferns,
'Till twinkling and shining and gay as can be,
It winds round the hillock and down to the sea!



Margaret Morris-Jones

HOLY DAYS - 1ST FEBRUARY - SEIRIOL, SAINT OF PUFFIN ISLAND

You can find traces of old saints in most corners of the British Isles, but Seiriol is one of the only two saints connected to Anglesey, and certainly the ONLY saint connected to Puffin Island.

It was back in the 6th century that this gentle abbot first settled in Penmon, and built a little church. His ruined beehive cell still survives there today, as does the well from which he drew water, both for his own use, and also for baptising local people.

Like many other Celtic saints, Seiriol would have travelled by sea. So he felt comfortable near the coast on Anglesey, on low-lying land. Although he lived as a simple hermit, Seiriol soon attracted followers, and eventually he decided to establish a small monastery. He chose to build it on nearby Ynys Seiriol, now called Puffin Island.



That little monastery on Puffin Island saw some scary action in 632, when Edwin of Northumbria was chasing the Welsh king, Cadwallon, and ended up besieging him on the island. Cadwallon was finally conquered, and history moved on, but the monastic ruins of Seiriol's little monastery are still there today.

Seiriol seems to have been a purely local saint who never attracted a very great number of followers. The only known dedications to him are at Penmon and Puffin Island. But Seiriol's life and work are still a testimony today. He is a gentle and encouraging reminder of what an impact even a simple local Christian can achieve, by simply being faithful to Jesus Christ in the place where he is.

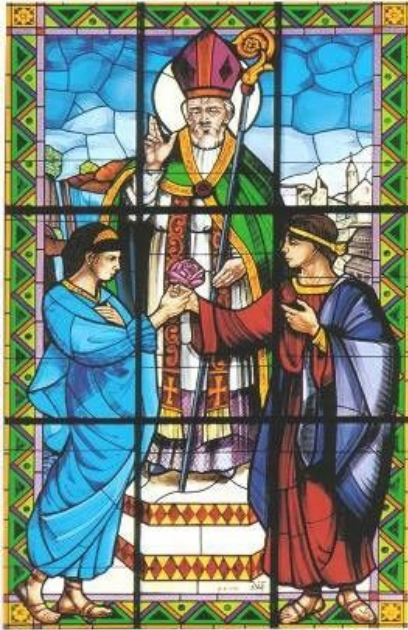
LENTEN VALENTINES'

This month both Ash Wednesday and Valentine's Day fall on the same day! The link between the two can be summed up in terms of the nature of real love! Lent, beginning on Ash Wednesday, focuses on learning to love God more, as we give Him space in our lives. This is what Jesus found when He was led into the desert by the Spirit to be tempted by Satan. (Luke 4:1-13).

Jesus was tempted to turn stones into bread. Yet loving God and His word comes before satisfying physical desires.

Satan tempted Jesus to worship him. However, worshipping God is an expression of loving God and serving Him.

St Valentine window in
Basilica of St Valentine in
Terni



Finally, He was tempted to put God to the test, by jumping off the Temple. Real love for God does not put Him to the test, but wants to obey Him.

Lent also teaches us how to live out the love of God in practical ways, as we follow Jesus in the way of the Cross. We see this clearly demonstrated in the life and death of Saint Valentine.

Valentine was a Christian who demonstrated the importance of sharing God's love with others. We know little about him, except that he was a priest who lived in the 3rd Century AD and that he was martyred on 14th February. Emperor Claudius felt that soldiers in the Roman Army were distracted from their duty by their wives, and so had attempted to outlaw marriage. It is believed that Valentine married couples in secret, which is why today we celebrate our love for one another on his day.

In trying to understand the meaning of her revelations from God, Julian of Norwich found:

*'What, do you wish to know your Lord's meaning in this thing?
Know it well, love was His meaning.'*

WHAT IS THE AIM OF LENT - LIFE ON A SPIN

Many years ago, at the Pleasure Beach at Blackpool, there was a certain 'ride' or amusement that was strictly for the physically fit. It consisted of a flat wooden disc about 20 feet in diameter and set at an angle of 45 degrees in the floor. When it began to rotate, the aim was to get to the centre where there was a pole. As the disc rotated faster and faster, everyone who failed to get to the pole got flung off. Nowadays there's probably a European Community regulation banning it as far too dangerous!



The principle of the game was a basic law of physics. When any wheel rotates, the outer rim moves fastest of all. Half way to the centre and you are moving a lot more slowly. And, at least theoretically, at the absolute centre will be a point which is totally still. That's why anyone who reached that pole could stand there quite comfortably.

We have just started the Church's season of Lent. It's generally thought of as being a time for giving up chocolate, wine, whatever. But it's really a time to remind us that in our own rapidly spinning world, God is the still centre.

All around God is motion, sound, change and decay - galaxies circling, seasons and years rotating, life developing and decaying. And at the still centre, where there is no variability, is God, the same yesterday, today and forever.

Only about seven weeks ago Christians worldwide were thinking of God getting involved in a special way in the ever moving and changing life of the world. And one great characteristic of Jesus was His stillness. Busy, harassed, injured people found someone with neither clever chat nor idle gossip, neither vulgar boasting nor loud opinion. His life always seemed to rotate round a still central point, which gave Him balance and authority.

"Be still then and know that I am God" wrote the Psalmist. Lent is a time for us to try and do just that - to find the still centre of God in our own individual lives.

Of course, we're all of us very much in the world, and must live our lives in all of its busyness. But it may do none of us any harm to be a little more silent than we often are - quick to listen and slow to speak. And the more silent spaces we give ourselves, the more we'll give that still, small voice within each one of us the chance to be heard.

The Rev Dr Gary Bowness



It was Lent, so they took it back



"Next Sunday I think I'll do a new take on the Parable of the Virgins and the Oil."

Your worst days are never so bad that you are beyond the reach of God's grace.
And your best days are never so good that you are beyond the need of God's grace.
- Jerry Bridges

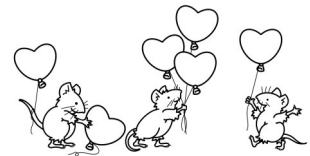
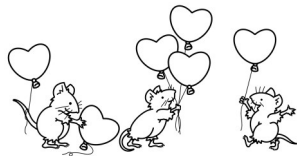
A man who loves his wife will love her letters and her photographs because they speak to him of her. So, if we love the Lord Jesus, we shall love the Bible because it speaks to us of Him.
- John R W Stott

PUZZLES

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



Sudoku

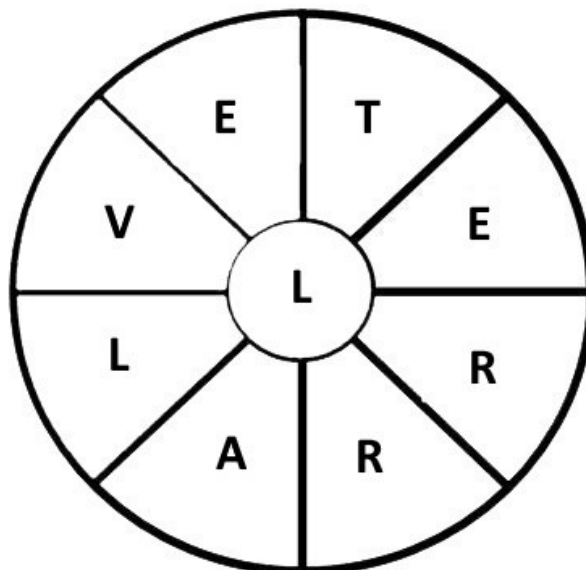


WORD WHEEL

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

Good score 13+ Excellent 20+



WORDSEARCH

Can you find in the grid the words shown in the list below? The words can be found in any direction.

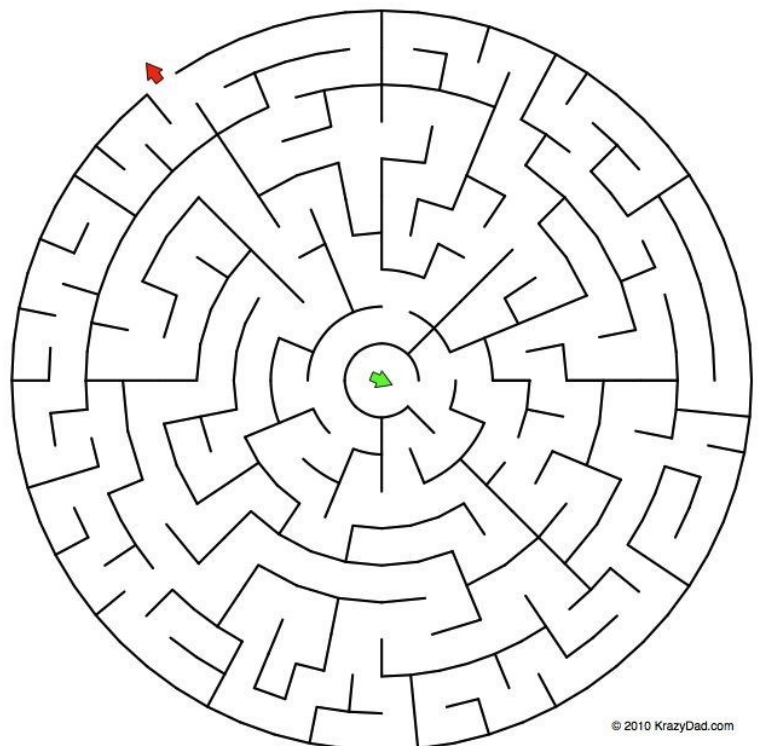
Angels	Mary
Baby	Present
Boyfriend	Presentation
Candlemas	Repentance
Fiancé	Restaurant
Girlfriend	Romance
Hearts	Rose
Hug	Temple
Kiss	Valentine
Love	Worship

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N L A A I B É P E N G A I
A R H S R C R R P R T S K
E E C H N T A E D D N R I
R O M A N C E S N T A E S
N O I T A T N E S E R P S
P F E L P R I N P M U E A
S R S T O R T T I P A N M
O L F S F V N P H L T T E
R G E Y T E E R S E S A L
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Y B A B N F A D O A R C N
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T E E R Y T G U H Y A E C
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February is the month of romance. Millions of Valentine cards will be sent in the next week or two, as we celebrate our romantic love for that special person in our lives. But there are other kinds of love to celebrate: and on Candlemas we remember Mary and Joseph taking their baby son to the temple to present Him to God. Jesus' whole life was a loving present to us from God. Through His death for us on the cross, and His resurrection, His love can now transform anyone's life. Romances can die, but God's love for us is always there. But it won't do us much good - unless we accept it!

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

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



SUDOKU ANSWERS

WORDSEARCH ANSWERS

