



Stockport Sunday School

February 2025 Newsletter 57



Over the last couple of weeks we have certainly experienced the onset of real winter weather, with snow, ice, fog and floods across the country.



The excitement of Christmas and New Year is past and life is back to normal day to day activities.

It's a sombre time of year. For some it is especially so.

Last week, January 27th, was Holocaust Memorial Day, which marks the liberation of the notorious Nazi Concentration Camp at Auschwitz - Birkenau 80 years ago.

It is a day when Jews and Gentiles alike recall the horrors of the persecution of the Jews and other groups of people by the Nazis prior to and during World War 2. Not just in Germany, but in the countries the Nazis occupied, and often aided and abetted by members of the local populace.

It threatened the fabric of civilisation then, and discrimination and persecution must still be resisted every day, wherever and however it arises.

In the UK, the anniversary day was marked by a commemorative Day of Remembrance on the BBC, in London, and other special events elsewhere.

In Stockport, it has been the custom to hold a service in the War Memorial, where Holocaust survivors, understandingly well on in age, describe their own experiences, which are invariably very moving.

At a personal level, the father of a close friend of our family was one example of those who had to leave home and country to escape the pogroms; in his case, by having to walk from Lithuania to the UK.

The Holocaust remains as a harsh reminder of Man's inhumanity to Man, which sadly did not finish in 1945. Since then, we have seen similar occurrences in Kosovo, Bosnia, Cambodia, Rwanda, and Darfur.



Especially in recent times, our world often feels fragile and vulnerable and we cannot afford to be complacent.

Back in the 1940s, Pastor Martin Niemöller was a German priest who initially supported the Nazi party, believing they could revive the nation, until he realised the threat it held.

He wrote these words as an apology for his earlier inaction which have since become well known.

First they came for the socialists, and I did not speak out - because I was not a socialist.

Then they came for the trade unionists, and I did not speak out, - because I was not a trade unionists.

Then they came for the Jews, and I did not speak out - because I was not a Jew.

Then they came for me, and there was no one left to speak for me.

What are the messages for us in today's world?



Pastor Martin Niemöller

Well, to realise that the descent from what we may hardly consider as prejudicial comments to physical estrangement and worse is a slippery slope. Words can be very damaging, and where we encounter verbal prejudice we need to speak out.

Our Lord's command for us to love our neighbour. This was exemplified by his parable of the Good Samaritan. In a modern context, in Israel nowadays it would be a good Palestinian, or, swapping roles, a good Israeli, who stopped and gave aid. I believe there are still many of those people, and in our own communities, who would act in a similar way.

Prejudice, conflict and bloodshed can be overcome if we, the general public, are prepared to speak out and support those leaders who seek to achieve justice peacefully.

It can be done; we just have to look back and remind ourselves about what was achieved in times of what seemed to be insurmountable conflict and potential violence in Ireland and in South Africa in our lifetimes.

So, as followers of Christ, let us work and pray that the causes of future Holocausts can be avoided by peoples and nations gaining a better understanding of one another, in the cause of peace and mutual respect in our troubled world.



Hatred and bitterness can never cure the disease of fear; only love can do that. Hatred paralyses life; love releases it. Hatred confuses life; love harmonises it. Hatred darkens life; love illumines it. - *Martin Luther King*



Whenever you read the Gospel, Christ Himself is speaking to you. And while you read, you are praying and talking to Him. - *St Tikhon of Zadonsk*



The pages of history are strewn with the wreckage of nations. - *President Richard Nixon*



HAPPY BIRTHDAY

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



SHOE BOXES



122 boxes were collected from Margaret Forster's home, they included those donated by members of Sunday School as well as those Margaret had collected from friends and other churches. There were also four large bags of hats and scarves which are handed out to families - thank you to all those who have been busy knitting all year. This year our boxes will probably be amongst those going to Ukraine. 60,000 boxes were collected by Teams 4 U this year.



ELECTION OF INSPECTORS

This took place after the service on Sunday 12th January.

Margaret Forster led the election.

The three standing Inspectors were re-elected by the members.

Unfortunately Stuart Dean could not be present as he was working in America.

Margaret welcomed Walter Stead and Judith Higgins back into the meeting and confirmed their re-election and thanked them for their work for the School.

Walter replied and thanked everyone for their support.

The meeting closed with prayer and the grace.



FUTURE SERVICES

The next dates for our services are:-

February 2nd - BIBLE SUNDAY
Speaker - Rita Waters

February 9th - Judith Higgins

February 16th - Cath Brown

February 23rd - Walter Stead

March 2nd - Margaret Forster

March 9th - Judith Higgins



SERVICES



SUNDAY 5TH JANUARY 2025

January 6th is Epiphany when Christians celebrate the visit of the magi. It is celebrated in different ways in different parts of the world. Judith Higgins explained some of these customs. The presentation of the gifts of the magi is re-enacted every year on January 6th at The Chapel Royal at St James' Palace in London when the traditional gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh are ceremonially placed on the altar. Judith had asked four members to bring up examples of the gifts of the magi and asked them to read out what they might represent today:-



Margaret Jones offered gold

Judith Hadfield offered frankincense

Cath Brown offered myrrh

Walter Stead brought a fourth gift, the gift of the twenty first century.

Judith read two poems, 'We've come a long way since that first Christmas night' and 'Gifts of Christmas' and told the story of a man learned how to give his heart to Jesus.

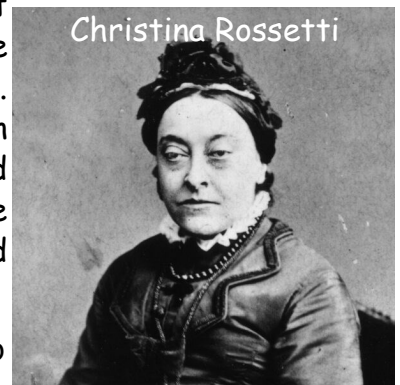
Thank you to everyone who took part in the service.

SUNDAY 12TH JANUARY 2025

Walter asked if we were enjoying the cold weather - were we surviving it? Children were really enjoying the snow. Today most of us enjoy living in warm homes but the older members remembered houses heated by one coal fire and ice on the inside of bedroom windows.

Walter read T.S. Eliot's poem, 'Journey of the Magi', in which he imagined what might have happened on their journey. They had studied old Biblical text and set out to find the baby born to be king of the Jews. He imagined the bitter cold and camels lying down in the snow. Hostile villagers. They began to travel at night. The wise men believed the birth of this child would change everything and brought him rich gifts. They were obviously rich men but were seeking knowledge not wealth. We should use our wealth and knowledge to help others.

Walter spoke of Christina Rossetti's poem which was turned into the carol, 'In the bleak mid winter'. The last verse tells of the gift we can give the Christ child - 'give my heart'.



SUNDAY 19TH JANUARY 2025

The pictures on TV of the horrific fires in Los Angeles prompted Judith Higgins to look at some of the times fire is mentioned in the Bible.

The first ones that came to mind were from the life of Moses. Moses was attracted to a bush that was on fire but not consumed. God spoke to Moses from the bush telling him to lead the Hebrews out of Egypt. This is not the only mention of fire in Moses' story. In one of the plagues sent to Egypt, God sent thunder and hail and fire ran along the ground. In the wilderness, God sent a pillar of fire to lead them at night. Moses called the people to Mount Sinai which was covered in smoke as God descended in fire to give Moses the ten commandments.

One day, on Sinai Mountain, he saw a burning bush that didn't burn up. Now God had got Moses' attention, He said,



In these stories, God used fire to attract the attention of Moses, the pillar of fire was a tangible sign that God was always with His people.

The next example was when Elijah challenged the prophets of Baal to show himself by receiving their sacrifice. When Elijah called God to accept His sacrifice, God sent down fire from heaven to receive the offering. The people turned from the worship of Baal to worship God.



On another occasion, God used a man made fire to demonstrate His presence and power when He saved Shadrach, Meshack and Abednego from a fiery furnace.

God also used fire to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah when the people sinned without repentance but He showed mercy to Lot and his family.

The final example of fire was the tongues of fire that rested on the heads of the disciples as they received the Holy Spirit.

In these examples, God used fire in different ways, to attract attention, to show His constant presence to the Jews in the wilderness, to show His presence and power in the story of Elijah, to punish those who sin without repentance and finally to show the presence and power of the Holy Spirit.

Fire purifies, consecrates, destroys and brings judgement.

SUNDAY 26TH JANUARY 2025

Walter took this service, basing his talk on a book of sermons by a friend, David Alcroft, who had been a lay preacher at St Georges Church.

He asked what leads us to think of a particular hymn as a favourite? Is it the music or the words or because we associate it with a particular occasion. There are so many good hymns and songs we can learn from them and sometimes see new things in familiar ones. Psalms set to music, hymns and spiritual songs have been part of worship for a long time. We are continuing a long and helpful tradition. He looked at the words of 'Make me a channel of your peace', a prayer asking to be a better servant of Christ, to love others rather than impose our views on them, to become channels of God's peace.

St Patricks Prayer of Peace is a timeless expression of humility, love and service to others.

Lord, make me an instrument of your peace:

Where there is hatred, let me sow love;

Where there is injury, pardon;

Where there is doubt, faith;

Where there is despair, hope;

Where there is darkness, light;

Where there is sadness, joy.

O divine Master,

Grant that I may not so much seek to be consoled as to console,

To be understood as to understand,

To be loved as to love.

For it is in giving that we receive,

It is in pardoning that we are pardoned,

And it is in dying that we are born to eternal life.

Amen



1ST FEB: BRIGID OF IRELAND, COMPASSION AND LOVE

Brigid, you could say, was the female Patrick of Ireland.

Historical facts about this first abbess of Kildare (d.c. 525) may be scarce, but her 'Lives', written from the 7th century, tell many anecdotes and miracles which over the centuries have become deeply rooted in Irish folklore. Brigid came from a village near Kildare, of parents of humble origin, and is said to have been baptised by Patrick and became a nun at an early age. She is credited with founding the monastery of Kildare, a powerful influence for Christianity in Ireland.

The miracles attributed to Brigid show her to have been a woman of great compassion and generosity. There are stories of how she could multiply food, especially butter, for the poor. Other stories tell of her changing her bathwater to beer, in order to satisfy the thirst of unexpected visitors. Even her cows gave milk three times the same day, to enable visiting bishops to have enough to drink.

Brigid's cult grew rapidly in Ireland, where it became second only to that of Patrick. In England, there were at least 19 ancient church dedications in her honour (the most famous is St Bride's Fleet Street). There is also St Bride's Bay, Dyfed, which underlines the strong connection between Irish and Welsh Christianity. St Brigid is patron of poets, blacksmiths, and healers. She is usually depicted with a cow lying at her feet, which recalls her phase as a nun-cowgirl.



LANCASHIRE HILL SUNDAY SCHOOL

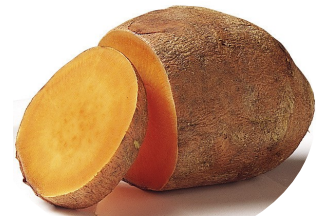


Recipe

Squash and sweet potato soup

Serves 6

2 tbsp olive oil
2 onions, roughly chopped
2 garlic cloves, crushed
small piece of ginger, peeled and grated
2 tsp ground cumin
1 tsp ground turmeric
500g butternut squash, cut into chunks
500g sweet potato, cut into chunks
1 litre vegetable stock
croutons and coriander leaves, to serve



Heat the oil in a pan over a medium heat and cook the onions, garlic and ginger for 10 minutes, until the onions have started to soften. Add the cumin and turmeric and cook for 2 minutes more.

Add the squash and sweet potato and cook, stirring, for 3-4 minutes.

Add the stock and bring to a simmer. Cook for 20 minutes until all the vegetables are soft, then blitz using a hand blender until smooth, thinning the soup out with a splash of water or more stock, if you like.

Top with croutons and fresh coriander to serve.



Kites Group

The Kites Group are busy preparing for their February 2025 show Cinderella 2 to be held at Compass Point. More details and tickets are available on www.kitesgroup.com.

'JANUARY'



I was very soon rewarded
by a flap and by a flurry -
a black-bird and a blue-tit
both landed in a hurry.

On a cold and frosty morning
to my garden I did go
and scattered crumbs and bird-seed
upon the glittering snow.



My bird-table was popular;
A robin came along
And very soon, three pigeons
All joined the merry throng!

My final little visitor -
A squirrel, fast and hearty.
My snowy January day
Had started with a party!



But today, it's all quite different.
No snow is to be seen,
The sun is shining brightly,
(my windows need a clean!) 🥲

I've refilled my bird-feeders,
and cleaned my bird-bath out.
Is spring on the horizon?
Oh! That I really doubt!



However, what a difference
in just one week we find,
the freezing snow and icy paths,
we've left it all behind!!

(for now!)

Margaret Morris-Jones

WHAT IS CANDLEMAS?

There are three reasons for this festival, which is held each year on the second of February.



Firstly, it's the halfway point between the shortest day and the Spring Equinox, so from that date on the daylight hours get longer.

In pre-Christian times, this day was known as the 'Feast of Lights' and celebrated the increase strength of the life-giving sun as Winter gave way to Spring.

Secondly, it's when we remember Mary and Joseph taking their baby Jesus, to the Temple forty days after His birth.

And the third reason? It's directly linked to the name of the feast - Candlemas. It was so named because on that day each year all the candles for the coming year were brought into the church to be blessed at a 'mass'. Remember that candles were important in those days, not only because there were no electric lights; people thought they gave protection against plague and illness and famine.



In many churches on this feast there will be a procession of the whole congregation with lighted candles - often inside the whole building, going into every 'dark' corner. Everyone carries their own lighted candle, which they are encouraged to take home and light there also.

One of the prayers that may be used is this:

*Blessed are you, Lord our God, King of the universe.
You make our darkness to be light.
For with You is the well of life
and in Your light shall we see light.*

Christ is often called the 'Light of the World' who came to bring light, hope, and peace into our darkness. Have a think about those places that are dark for you and perhaps you do not like going there or will not go there. Perhaps they are too painful or scary.

Just pause for a short time with a lit candle and imagine Jesus going there for you or with you. Lighting your way. Making it safe. He came to give us life - and life to the full - even in those dark places.

Look back, and remember He was with you. Stand still, and realise He is with you. Walk forward, and trust: He will be with you always.

- Margaret Silf

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Hatred and bitterness can never cure the disease of fear; only love can do that. Hatred paralyses life; love releases it. Hatred confuses life; love harmonises it. Hatred darkens life; love illumines it.

- Martin Luther King

13TH FEBRUARY - MODOMNOC AND THE BEES OF IRELAND

Legend tells us that it was St Modomnoc who first brought bees to Ireland, in the early 540s AD.

Although it's more likely that the bees had drifted over from Britain after the last Ice Age all by themselves, certainly Modomnoc did his bit to help them.

Modomnoc was a 6th century abbot, probably one of the royal O'Neill family of Ireland. When he sailed over to Wales to study under St David in his Pembrokeshire monastery of Menevia, he was given the duty of caring for the bees of the monastery.

This he did so well that the bees must have grown very fond of him, because when he was setting sail to return to Ireland, a swarm of his bees settled on his ship and went back with him. Thus apiculture - and hopefully lots of honey - was introduced to Ireland.

Even the Martyrology of Oegus the Culdee (c800) records that it was "in a little boat from the east over the pure-coloured sea my Domnoc brought ... the gifted race of Ireland's bees."

In time, Modomnoc, and presumably his bees, settled in Tibberaghny (Co. Kilkenny). Today, there are about 3,500 - 4,000 beekeepers in Ireland.



STOCKPORT BEE HIVE IMAGE

Walking through Stockport after adding the above article to the newsletter, I passed the mural on the wall of the old BHS building and I noticed the beehive image below representing 'industry', an image I hadn't noticed before.

WINTER NOW

'Tis winter now; the fallen snow
Has left the heavens all coldly clear;
Through leafless boughs the sharp winds blow,
And all the earth lies dead and drear.

And yet God's love is not withdrawn;
His life within the keen air breathes;
His beauty paints the crimson dawn,
And clothes the boughs with glittering wreaths...

O God! Who giv'st the winter's cold,
As well as summer's joyous rays,
Us warmly in thy love enfold,
And keep us through life's wintry days.

From a poem by Samuel Longfellow 1819-92



SMILE LINES

Hearing

A tiny lady was the guest preacher. A few minutes into her sermon, she paused and said: "Can you all hear me at the back?" A kind voice replied: "We can hear you fine. But sadly, we can't quite see you."



Visit

The new vicar was doing the rounds to meet his parishioners. At one house where he knocked, a woman inside called out: "Is that you, Angel?"

The vicar hesitated and then called back: "No, but I'm from the same department."

Chocolate

A lovely heart-shaped box of chocolates was received on Valentine's Day by a young student from her new boyfriend. On the enclosed card was the inscription: 'To Helen, with all my allowance.'



Experience

"Dad," asked little Ted, "what does a man's better half mean?"

"Usually," his father said, "she means exactly what she says."

Boots

My young daughter needed new boots. When her friend arrived one morning in a lovely pair of new boots, I asked where she had got them. "At the store," she answered.

"Which one?" I asked patiently.

She looked confused, and then down at her boots. "Both of them," was her reply.



Those notices which didn't come out quite right...

Notice in health food shop window: Closed due to illness.

Spotted in a safari park: Elephants, please stay in your car.

In a Laundromat: Automatic Washing Machines. Please remove all your clothes when the light goes out.

This coming Sunday our special service will be gin at 11:00am.

When parking on the north side of the church, please remember to park on an angel.

Jean will be leading a weight-management series Wednesday nights. She's used the programme herself and has been growing like crazy!

The King's Bras will present a concert at our church this evening at 6:00pm.

PUZZLES

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



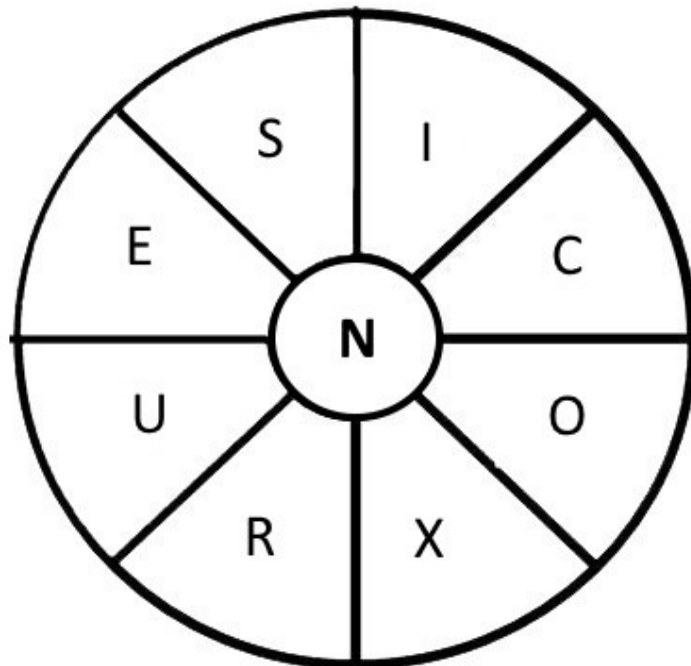
Sudoku

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

Good score 12+ Excellent 19+



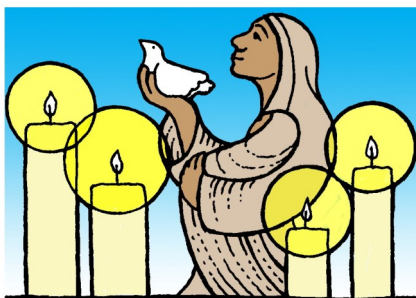
WORDSEARCH

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

February opens with **CANDLEMAS** - the **NAMING** of Jesus in the **TEMPLE**. **SIMEON** and **ANNA** praised God to see the promised Messiah, sent by a loving God to save his people. February also celebrates the **LOVE** between men and women: **VALENTINE** cards and **WEDDING** fayres abound. 'Love' as in social compassion is also remembered: **FAIRTRADE FORTNIGHT**, **HOLOCAUST** Memorial Day, World **LEPROSY** Day, **EDUCATION SUNDAY** and National **NEST BOX** Week.... Love is truly needed by everyone!

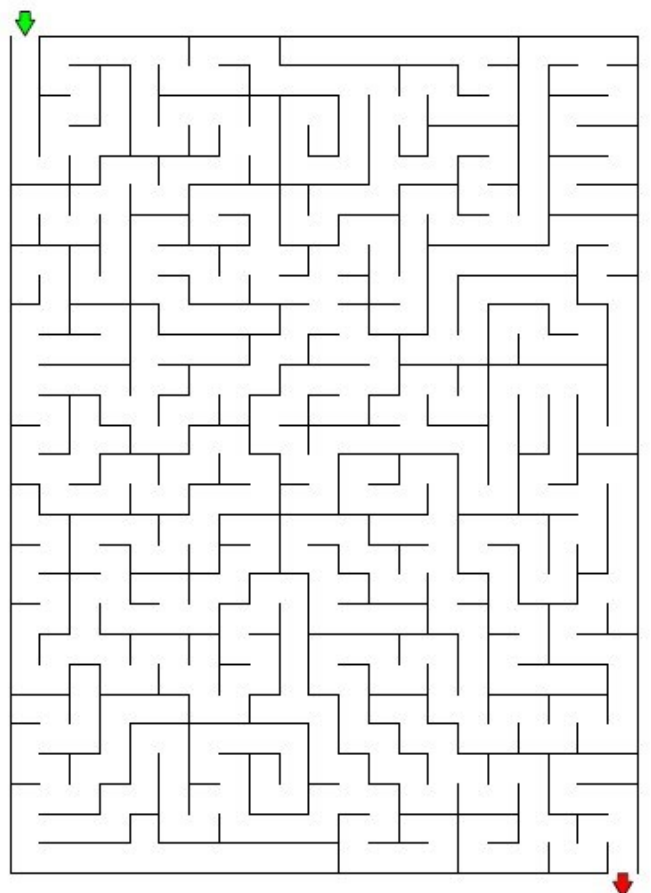
CHRIST
ROMANCE
MATTHIAS
COFFEE
BANANAS
CHOCOLATE
JUSTICE
POVERTY
MARRIAGE

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



MAZE

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



ANSWERS FROM LAST NEWSLETTER

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



SUDOKU ANSWERS

WORDSEARCH ANSWERS

