



Stockport Sunday School

March 2025 Newsletter 58



I think it fair to say we are living in 'disturbing times'.

We have the conflict in Ukraine and the Middle East; ever more severe natural disasters around the world, attributed to global warming; and the rise of far-right political parties in Europe and elsewhere spreading fear and confusion.

But there is now another potential threat to society causing concern for those with an eye to the future, - namely the rapid rise in the use of Artificial Intelligence and its impact on our daily lives.

The fear is that its power may grow so much that we find ourselves unable to control it.

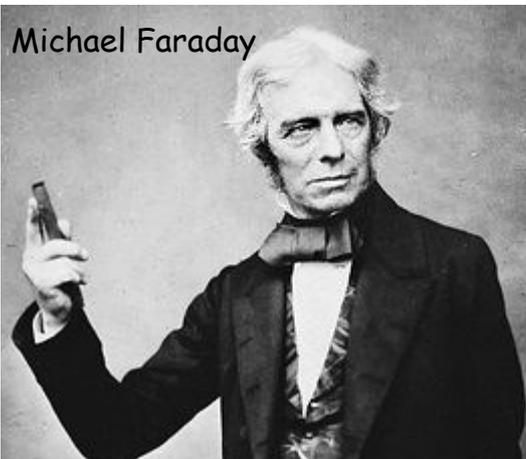
It may sound like science fiction, but it is in fact the subject of serious scientific and social research.

And, perhaps surprisingly, it was the theme for a series of commentaries for the Bible Reading Fellowship's recent issue.

The contributors were people with direct involvement in the subject, - scientific researchers, computer specialists, medical experts, clergy, ethicists and philosophers



Michael Faraday



They were brought together under the banner of the 'Faraday Institute for Science and Religion', named after the famous 19th century British Physicist Michael Faraday whose work was sustained by his Christian faith.

It is an interesting group of writings by Christians with their own particular insight into the subject, but I found one contributor's comments especially thought provoking. He asked the question " If AI makes all information readily available to everyone and anyone, what do we have to offer to the following generations?

He goes on to make the point that information, by itself is not the same as knowledge.

Nor is it the same as understanding and even less so than wisdom.

If you want people to take a particular course, like loving their neighbour, for example, you can tell them to love one another, but how do you teach them the way to do it?

To do that, he takes as his example Jesus, who taught His disciples by His own way of life when He dwelt amongst us. As indeed He still does for His present-day followers.

Jesus showed us how to do it, and asks us to follow His example, by living a life that shows how to be kind, caring, patient, and forgiving.

And perhaps most importantly in our present times, hopeful.

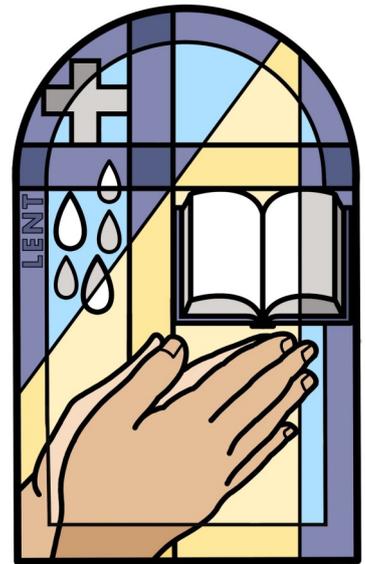
Showing not just by our words but by our presence and actions in practical ways; our compassionate love for them in their need. The personal touch!

Computer technology may have much to offer mankind in material ways.

But in the end, we, as individuals and as a nation, are measured by how we follow our Lord's teaching; how we contribute to making the world a better and happier place for all.

And God only has us to carry out this task, to take on the responsibility.

Something for us to consider in the coming days as we enter the Church's season of Lent and self-appraisal.



APOLOGIES

Last month we wrongly put in the newsletter that there were no birthdays in February, when actually it was Margaret Morris Jones' birthday on 9th. Margaret always provides a great piece of work for the newsletter, which we know is much appreciated and enjoyed by everyone. We are very sorry Margaret for this omission and hope that you had a lovely birthday.



HAPPY BIRTHDAY

HAPPY BIRTHDAY

Happy Birthday wishes this month to:-

Judith Curry 5th March



'Abide in Me as I abide in you. Just as the branch cannot bear fruit by itself unless it abides in the vine, neither can you unless you abide in Me... If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ask for whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. - John 15:4,7

PANCAKE DAY

Pancake Tuesday is March 4th in the lead up to Lent.



LENT

This year Lent runs from Wednesday March 5th until Thursday April 17th.

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, 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.

MOTHERING SUNDAY

Mothering Sunday this year is on Sunday 30th March and we are pleased to, once again, welcome Rita Waters to come and speak to us on this day. Many of you will have heard her speak before at Sunday School and we are very much looking forward to hearing her again.



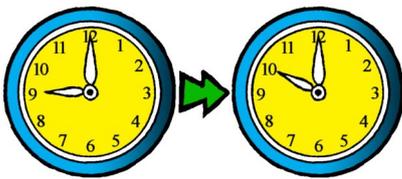
CONGRATULATIONS KITES

Congratulations to everyone involved in the production of the Kites' pantomime 'Cinderella 2 Magic and Mischief'.

Once again the show was a 'sell out' every night. It was lovely to see so many children involved and enjoying taking part in the pantomime alongside the adults, the youngest member was toddler Oakley-John who played Wolfie and definitely managed to steal the show with his dance moves. The audience appreciated the hard work put in by all the cast and all those involved with the scenery, costumes and erecting and removing the stage and lighting. Well done everyone.



CLOCKS GO FORWARD



This year the clocks go forward on Sunday 30th March. Officially they say the change happens at 1am on Sunday morning, however, most people will change their clocks the night before or wait until the next day to update clocks (some electronic devices will do the update automatically), although if you have an alarm clock set, you will need to ensure the time is changed for your alarm to continue functioning and giving the correct time to you.



KNIT 'N NATTER SPRING FAIR

The Knit and Natter group are holding their Spring Fair on Tuesday April 15th from 11am to 4pm. This event is in aid of Parkinson's UK, so why not bring along family and friends to enjoy this fair and support a worthy cause.



Spring Fair

15th April, 2025

1.30pm -3.30pm

Compass Point, 96 Nangreave Rd

Stockport, SK2 6DQ

In aid of

Parkinson's UK

Various stalls including

Toys & Crafts

Raffle & Eater Tombola

Bric a brac, Knitwear

Refreshments



SERVICES



BIBLE SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 2ND

We were pleased to welcome back Rita Waters as our speaker for Bible Sunday. Her theme for the service was praise and she based her talk on Psalm 150.

Her Bible readings were Psalm 150 and Colossians 3 verses 12 - 17.

Why should we praise God?

- Because of who He is
- Because of when He is
- Because of where He is
- Because He acts throughout history
- Because of how He acts
- Because He made us His instruments of worship



He acts in powerful ways. God created the world and throughout history He did things man cannot do, the Bible records His miracles of nature - God moved water, calmed storms and healed the sick.



How can we worship God when He is in heaven and we are on earth? God is everywhere and with us wherever we are. We can praise Him wherever we are, Rita loves to praise Him in the open air.

We can praise God with music, with instruments or voices.

During the service we sang the hymns, 'All Creatures Of Our God And King', 'All Hail The Power Of Jesus' Name', 'At The Name Of Jesus' and 'All My Hope On God Is Founded.'

Thank you, Rita, we hope to see you back again soon.

SUNDAY FEBRUARY 9TH

Judith Higgins took this service. She said that a large part of our services was hymn singing and prayer.

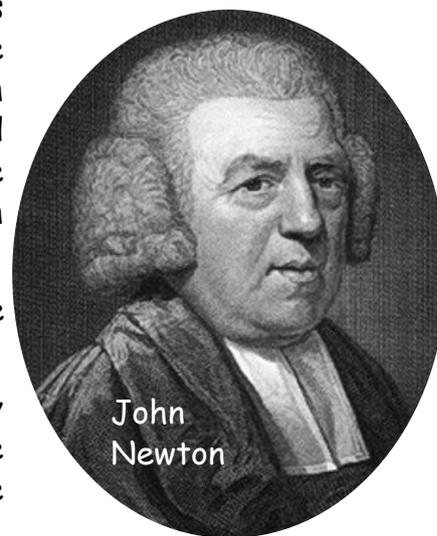
Two hundred years ago only psalms were allowed to be sung at services. She told us of the important part John Newton played in having hymn singing introduced into services.

Newton was the captain of a slave ship and not a religious man, but turned to God during a fierce storm when he prayed to God and the storm abated. When poor health meant he had to leave the sea, he became an ordained Church of England minister and began to write hymns. He met William Wilberforce an MP who was working to abolish the slave trade. Newton helped him.

We sang two of Newton's hymns, 'Glorious Things Of Thee Are Spoken' and 'Amazing Grace'.

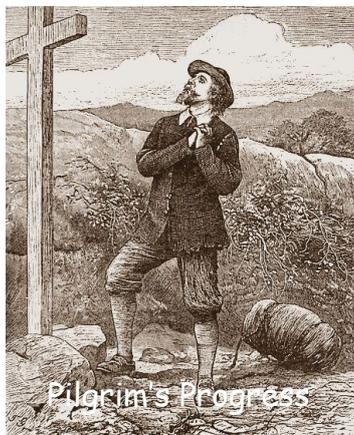
We then spoke of prayer. We can use prayers written by others or speak to God in private using our own words. We heard the passage from Matthew when Jesus taught the disciples how to pray.

Judith also said that during our meetings we also developed friendships with other members and spoke of the value of friendship and helping and supporting others. She spoke of some friendships mentioned in the Bible, David and Jonathan, Paul and Timothy and Jesus' friendship with the disciples and Francis of Assisi who wanted to become a friend to everyone.



John
Newton

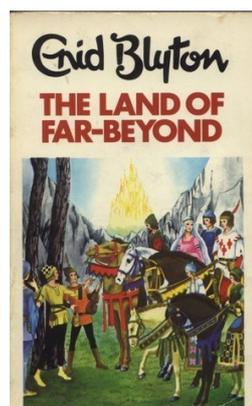
SUNDAY FEBRUARY 16TH



Cath Brown and Janet Moore took this service. Their theme was pathways and reaching a destination.

Cath spoke about the book 'Pilgrim's Progress', written by John Bunyan, a non-conformist minister whilst he was in prison for his religious beliefs. The book is based on a dream Bunyan had about a man called Christian and his journey to the Celestial City and the people who helped or discouraged him on the journey, people with names like Faithful, Talkative, Pliable, Hope, Piety, Prudence and Charity. Although the book was written in the seventeenth century, we can still recognise these characteristics in people we meet today.

We listened to a recording of the 'Irish Blessing' sung by 'The Priests'.



Janet Moore read the 23rd Psalm from the Good News Bible and John Chapter 14 verses 1 - 3. She then read the final chapter of Enid Blyton's book, 'The Land Of Far Beyond', a book written for children based on Pilgrim's Progress, about three children making a journey from their home in the City of Turmoil to the land of Far Beyond and how they finally entered when the Prince of Peace lifted their burdens.



The Priests

Thank you, ladies, for an interesting service.

SUNDAY FEBRUARY 23RD

Walter spoke about the Old Testament families of Abraham and his son Isaac.

God had called Abraham to move to Canaan and promised he would become the father of a great nation. Abraham put his trust in God and was even prepared to sacrifice his much loved son when he thought that that was what God wanted.

Isaac's wife, Rebekah, gave birth to twin sons, Esau and Jacob. Although they were twins, they were very different. Esau was a strong outdoor man, a hunter and his father's favourite.



Isaac is tricked into giving away Esau's birthright to Jacob

Jacob, a quiet natured, home loving man was his mother's favourite.

There was sibling rivalry and yet Esau was prepared to give up his birthright to Jacob in exchange for some stew, showing a lack of judgement and disregard for Abraham's covenant with God. Later Jacob and Rebekah plotted to trick Isaac with giving Jacob Esau's birthright. Esau threatens to kill Jacob, who goes to stay with Rebekah's relative, Laban, where he agrees to work for him for seven years if he can marry Laban's daughter, Rachel, but Laban tricks him into marrying her older sister. Jacob, Leah and Rachel are forced to escape when there is trouble for Laban about the ownership of their flock. The two men are eventually reconciled. Now Esau is pursuing Jacob with an army. Jacob prays to God to remind Him of His promise that Jacob's line will prosper. Eventually Jacob and Esau meet and are reconciled, but there are more

problems ahead for Jacob.

What can we learn from this drama? Abraham's trust in God and obedience to Him in extreme circumstances. Is our faith strong enough in times of challenge?

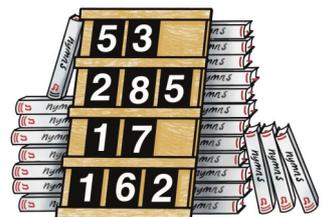
The young Jacob was untrustworthy, someone we would not respect but despite such weakness, God still used Jacob for His purpose or establishing Israel.

God did not give up on him and He will not give up on us.



SERVICES

March 2 nd	Margaret Forster
March 9 th	Judith Higgins
March 16 th	To be arranged
March 23 rd	To be arranged
March 30 th	Mothering Sunday Rita Waters



LANCASHIRE HILL SUNDAY SCHOOL



Recipe

Mushroom paprikash stew

Serves 4

Vegetable oil, for frying

1 onion, thinly sliced

1 red pepper, thinly sliced

800g white button or chestnut mushrooms, thinly sliced

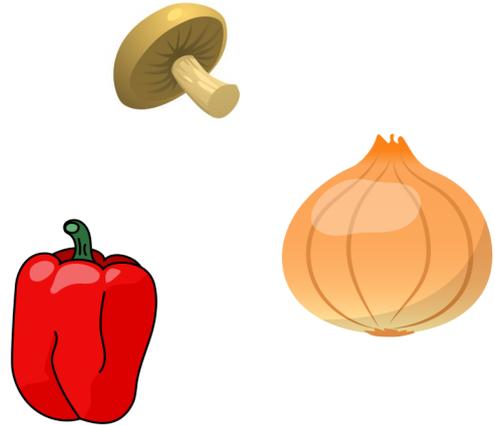
2 tbsp smoked paprika

2 tsp dried marjoram

200g soured cream or crème fraiche

1 tbsp finely chopped parsley

Pappardelle, cooked to serve



Heat some oil in a casserole or heavy-based lidded frying pan. Cook the onion and pepper with a pinch of salt, covered, over a medium heat for 15 minutes until soft. Add the mushrooms with another pinch of salt and cook for 10 minutes, stirring occasionally, until the mushrooms release their juices.

Lower the heat, add the paprika and marjoram, and cook for 5 minutes. Add the soured cream and stir until well combined. Adjust the seasoning, adding some black pepper. Simmer gently on the lowest heat, without boiling for 2-3 minutes.

Take the pan off the heat, stir in the parsley and let it rest for a little before serving with the pappardelle.



Kites

Kites would like to thank everyone at SSS for their help and support during the run up to, and performance of 'Cinderella 2'. Hopefully we did not cause too much disruption or make too much of a mess. We had a very successful show this year, all nights were sold out.



Happy Birthday

14 March - Eileen Harrington



BAKING

Sing a song of baking
Of sugar, flour and spice.
Mix them altogether and
You'll turn out something nice!

Some folks are really good at this;
They wield the rolling pin
And tarts and flans appear each week
All yummy, crisp and thin!

But some poor souls don't have the knack
To make delicious pastry.
Their cakes don't rise,
They burn their pies;
They're certainly not tasty!

Sing a song of baking,
Of lovely currant buns.

But, cooks beware!
Don't leave them there,
They'll end up in our tumms!!

Oh, how I wish that I could bake
With fruit and glacé cherry.

I sit and cry,
For though I try,
Im not a Mary Berry"

But never mind, I have a friend,
(or perhaps there's two or three?)

They'll help me make
Delicious cakes,
And I'll end up on TV!!

Margaret Morris Jones



SMILE LINES

THE GREAT OUTDOORS



These are actual comments left on US Forest Service registration comment cards by backpackers:

"A small deer came into my camp and stole my bag of pickles. Is there a way I can get reimbursed? Please call."

"Escalators would help on steep uphill sections."

"Trails need to be wider so people can walk while holding hands."

"Trails need to be reconstructed. Please avoid building trails that go uphill."

"Too many bugs and leeches and spiders and spider webs. Please spray the wilderness to rid the area of these pests."

"Please pave the trails so they can be ploughed of snow in the winter."

"Need more signs to keep area pristine."

"A McDonald's would be nice at the trail head."

"Too many rocks in the mountains."

"The coyotes made too much noise last night and kept me awake. Please eradicate these annoying animals."

"Ban walking sticks in wilderness. Hikers that use walking sticks are more likely to chase animals."

"Instead of a permit system or regulations, the Forest Service needs to reduce worldwide population growth to limit the number of visitors to wilderness."



SNORING

A clergyman consulted his doctor about his wife's snoring. "It has to STOP," he insisted.

The doctor was intrigued: "Does it really bother you that much?"

"Well, it's not just me," confided the minister. "She is bothering the whole congregation."



CHOCOLATE

I'm giving up eating chocolate for a month. Oh, wait, sorry, bad punctuation. I meant, I'm giving up. Eating chocolate for a month.

DADDY

Policeman to the vicar, found pacing outside the vicarage at three o'clock in the morning: "What are you doing here?"

Man: "I forgot my key, officer, and I'm waiting for my children to come home and let me in."



A LENT REFLECTION

Somebody asked a Christian friend why he was eating doughnuts, when he had given them up for Lent! He answered,



'At the bakers I told God, that if He wanted me to buy doughnuts, He should provide a parking space in front. On the eighth time around, there it was!'

Rather than seeing Lent simply as a time to give things up, let's use it intentionally for self-examination, reading Scripture, penitence, fasting and prayer.

At Jesus' baptism, God's voice says,

'You are My Son, whom I love; with You I am well pleased.' (Luke 3:22).

The Holy Spirit then leads Jesus into the wilderness, where we find Him coming to terms with who He is. Satan's temptations challenge Jesus in key three areas of His identity: His divine sonship, political power and Messianic role (Luke 4: 1-13). It is as though Jesus was looking into the mirror at Himself to discern what kind of Saviour He should be.

For us, Lent is an opportunity to hold up a mirror to ourselves and ask the question,
'who am I?'

It's a season of honest encounter with who we are, what we've done, and how we should live. What will we see when we hold up the mirror to ourselves? Keeping Lent, the 40 days running up to Easter, could mean taking time to read Scripture, studying a Christian book or spending five minutes each day in silence! We might fast by missing one or two meals, refraining from TV, alcohol, social media, or scrolling on our phones. All of these can help us to give more attention to God in our lives.

Whatever we do, Lent is a season for self-reflection, as we put ourselves in a position to receive afresh the forgiveness and healing that God offers.



By Canon Paul Hardingham



IS IT TIME YOU REMEMBERED 'EUREKA!'?

As Lent 2025 gets underway, do you suspect that your Christian commitment is not all it could be? If so, you are not alone. As one American church leader sadly put it:

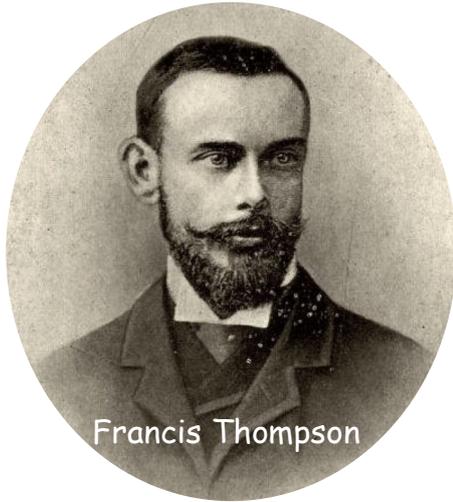
"In America the church is 3,000 miles wide - and one inch deep."

But Jesus is still calling us to be His disciples, NOT His well-wishers - from a safe distance! So how does one start as a disciple, exactly? It can be helpful to remember the story of John and Andrew in the first chapter of St John.

Firstly, John and Andrew were simply getting on with daily life when their teacher, John the Baptist, introduced them to Jesus. They hadn't been out looking for Him - but when they met Him, they were deeply affected. Andrew excitedly reported:

"We have found the Messiah" (John 1:41).

His statement is true, but the more you read of the story, the more you'll realize that it was Jesus who found them. He is after YOU, too! If you encounter God, it is no accident that your paths have crossed.



Francis Thompson

The English poet Francis Thompson was a derelict living under a bridge until a Christian benefactor took him into his home. One of the poems Francis Thompson later wrote was 'The Hound of Heaven', which described God as the one who sought him down through his wayward, "labyrinthine ways." He was, like us, running from God, who all the time was leading him to an encounter with Himself.

Secondly, there is the *eureka!* factor in Andrew and John's story. This expression, from the Greek *eurisko*, is said to have been exclaimed around the year 200 BC by the Greek mathematician Archimedes when he discovered a way to determine the purity of gold. Andrew used this same expression in vs 41, when he told his brother he had found Jesus Christ.

"I've found Him! Eureka!"

This Lent, you can be sure that Jesus is certainly looking for you, and if your response has ever been:

"I've found Him! Eureka!"

- then you, like Andrew, have become a disciple, a Christian. Maybe you began to follow Jesus a long time ago, but your obedience has been "on hold." You haven't been faithful in worship, in reading the Bible. You haven't even been a part of a local church.

Well, Lent 2025 is an ideal time to re-discover the joy of *eureka!* again.



Effective prayer is a quartet - the Father, the Son, the Spirit, and the Christian.

- J Blanchard



The Bible is a letter God has sent to us; prayer is a letter we send to Him.

- Matthew Henry



The best mathematical equation I've ever seen: 1 cross + 3 nails = 4 given

- Anon

PUZZLES

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



Sudoku

WORDSEARCH

March brings us Lent and Mothering Sunday. Lent is a time of spiritual self-assessment as we prepare for Easter. It is a time to turn to God, and to grow closer to Him. Mothering Sunday reminds us of not only the mothers that have loved and raised us, but of mother church, who has spiritually loved and nurtured us throughout our Christian pilgrimage.

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

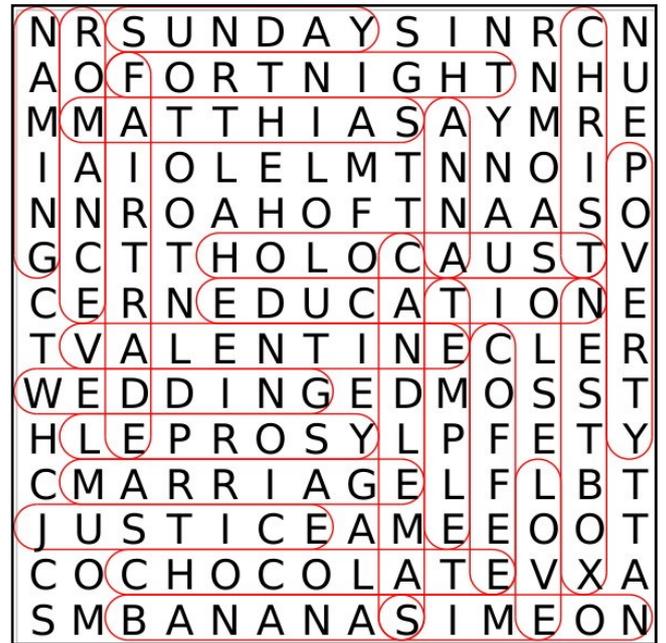
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|-------------|-------------|
| Care | Desert |
| Disciples | Easter |
| Family | Fasting |
| Finding | Flowers |
| Growing | Learning |
| Lent | Love |
| Mothers | Nursing |
| Nurture | Prayer |
| Preparation | Repentance |
| Seeking | Self denial |
| Spiritual | Teaching |
| Thank you | Worldwide |

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e e f e p d n t l y r l g p i
l c r t r y f a m i l y n u
a a n e e i a g i e t e n u h
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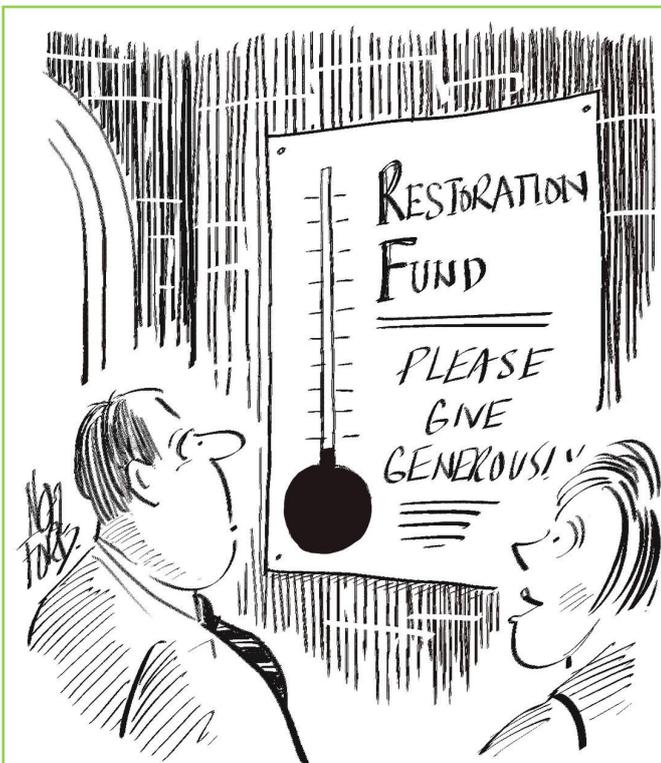
ANSWERS FROM LAST NEWSLETTER

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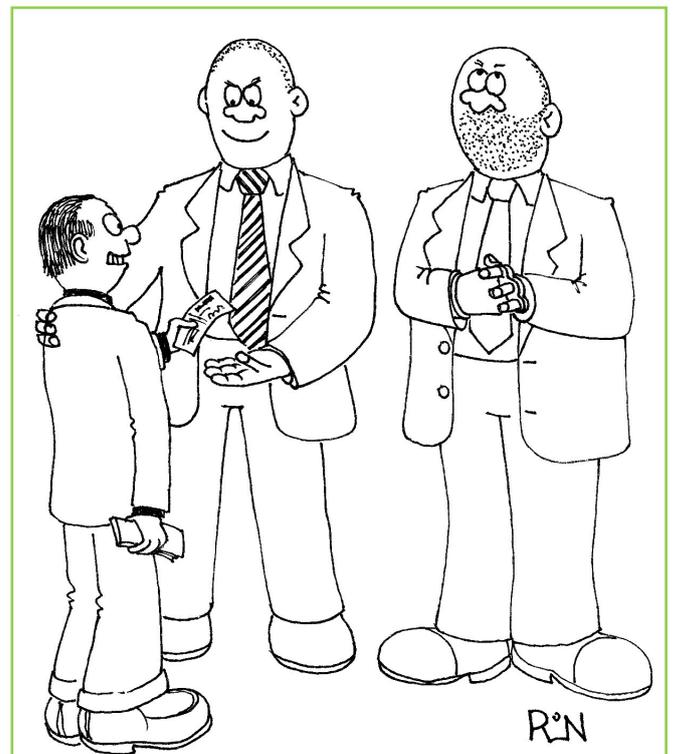


SUDOKU ANSWERS

WORDSEARCH ANSWERS



"No, not the steeple, the roof or the organ – it's for the vicar's post-Christmas-pre-Easter recuperation holiday-break."



Technically, the Parish Share is a voluntary contribution

Thank you to Parish Pump who provide some of the articles and artwork