



Stockport Sunday School

February 2026 Newsletter 68



Here we are, at the beginning of February; January has passed away but the year still feels young as life gradually returns to its normal routine.

So, how are your New Year Resolutions progressing - assuming that you made some?

Are they still in operation, or have they already become intermittent and not likely to last to our next big celebration of Easter?

On the other hand, the advice in the last magazine on how to make your resolutions achievable may be having its effect and you are feeling the benefit, if that is the case - well done!



Of course the list of possible resolutions can be quite extensive. They may present challenges of a mental nature, and the potential benefits need to be thought to be worthwhile if they are to be achieved.

And what about our spiritual life, the wellbeing of our faith and commitment to God.

It is in this context, that St Paul in his Epistle to the Corinthians likens our human life to an athletic race.

His readers would be very familiar with the concept of sporting activities.

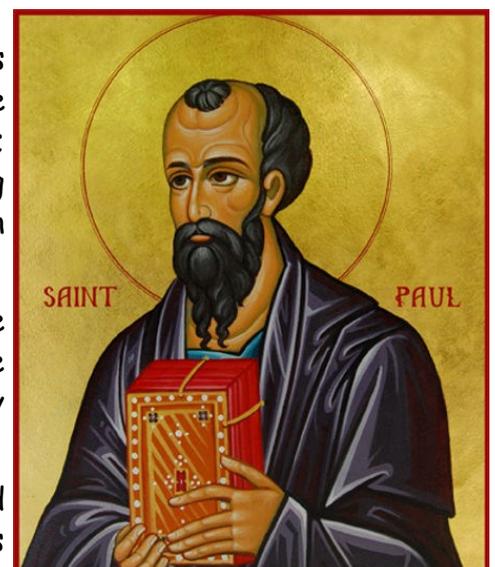
Every two years in Corinth the population held the Isthmian Games, a major sporting event with a range of events similar to the Olympic Games. Paul's readers would have seen the athletes preparing for the competition and the effort they would be putting into it.

Paul was writing to the Corinthian church because he was receiving reports that a number of their members were becoming slack in the way they were leading their lives; complacent and stalling in their pursuit of understanding the gospel message, thinking they had no more to learn about the Christian faith.

In highlighting the commitment the athletes have to give to achieving their goal, Paul is pointing out to the Corinthians that they are facing similar challenges if they are to truly follow Jesus.

He warns them against being complacent; that they need to be fit and disciplined in their daily lives as the athletes are.

The same message applies to followers of Jesus today.



The only difference between the challenge for us, compared with that for the athletes, is that they are in competition for a single prize whereas each of Jesus' true followers can be a winner; a member of God's Kingdom. But we have to use whatever abilities and talents we have to serve God and not just our own desires.

So we need to ask ourselves from time to time how we are living our lives in relation to the world around us and its trials and temptations. Are we able to be strong in body, mind, and spirit when challenges come our way?

Are we maintaining spiritual fitness, by worship, Bible reading and prayer as we seek to serve Jesus, our Saviour, Guide and Friend.

These are the resolutions that really matter.

So let us go forward together, strong in the strength that God supplies.



HAPPY BIRTHDAY

We send Happy Birthday wishes this month to:-

Margaret Morris Jones 9th February

And at the start of March to:

Judith Curry 5th March



CONGRATULATIONS

Congratulations to Judith Hadfield and her family on the birth of their new granddaughter, Harriet. We wish all the family well and look forward to seeing pictures of her.



THINKING OF YOU

As always, we think of those who are or have been unwell and are unable to join us on our Sunday afternoons. We want everyone to know that you are always in our thoughts and prayers and we wish everyone a speedy recovery.

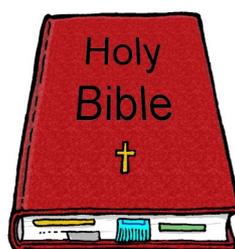
ELECTION OF INSPECTORS

The Election of Inspectors took place after the service on Sunday 18th January.

Margaret Forster was in the chair.

After the election, Walter Stead, Judith Higgins and Stuart Dean were invited back into the meeting. Margaret informed them that they had been re-elected for another year. She shook their hands and thanked them for all that they had done for the School during their time in office.

The meeting ended with the grace.



FUTURE SERVICES

The next dates for our services are:-

February 1st - BIBLE SUNDAY
Speaker - Peter Hall

February 8th - Cath Brown and Janet Moore

February 15th - Walter Stead

February 22nd - Judith Higgins

March 1st - Walter Stead

March 8th - Judith Higgins

March 15th - MOTHERING SUNDAY
Speaker - Sheila Hulme

If anyone feels they could take a service, part of a service or have an idea for a service, please reach out to Judith Higgins.





SERVICES



SUNDAY 4TH JANUARY 2026



Judith Higgins took the first service of 2026 beginning with a reading of the first verse of Minnie Louise Hoskins' poem, 'The Gate of the Year'.

January 6th would be Epiphany when Christians remember the arrival of the Magi who presented rich gifts to the baby.

They were the first gentiles to worship Jesus. The Magi took gifts to Jesus and now we give each other gifts to celebrate His birth.

Epiphany is also known as Twelfth Night and Judith spoke of some of the customs associated with Twelfth Night.

In some parts of the world, January 6th is celebrated as Christmas Day. She reminded us that whenever and however we celebrate Christmas, we must not lose sight of the true reason for the celebration of the day when God sent His Son into the world, to be our saviour and redeemer and to give Him our thanks and praise.

SUNDAY 11TH JANUARY 2026

Walter Stead led today's service and he decided to focus on the events surrounding the visit of the Magi as the church lectionary doesn't enable us to focus a lot of time on different aspects of the story.

He looked at some words by Sally Welch, who was a Canon of Christ Church Cathedral, Oxford and had also been a former editor of the Bible Reading Fellowship New Daylights notes, and Walter always found her comments thought provoking.



Reverend Canon
Dr Sally Welch

The Christmas narrative as we know it is a combination of the gospels of Luke and Matthew. There are the familiar aspects of the Christmas story including:- the angels speaking to Joseph and Mary; the child belonging to the line of David and is born in Bethlehem; the family receive visitors; they travel from Bethlehem to Egypt; and He is raised in Nazareth. Matthew, however, looks at some aspects of his own. Joseph was a good man engaged to Mary and as such after discovering she was pregnant from the Holy Spirit, he did not want to expose her to public disgrace by not marrying her or 'divorcing' her, but planned to send her home quietly. Joseph is described as a 'just' man by the King James Bible, a man 'faithful to

the law' by the New International Bible and The Message (contemporary translation) calls Joseph 'chagrined but noble', all of which imply that Joseph was someone who followed the rules, and had a strong sense of what is right and proper. But despite this, after a visit to Joseph in a dream by an angel of the Lord who explained that Mary's pregnancy was from the Holy Spirit and that she would have a Son that they should name Jesus and that He would grow up to save people from their sins, Joseph has faith and trusts in these words and moves forward to look after Mary and the special child they would have, despite the dangers and difficulties they would face.



The arrival of the wise men was to set off some difficult circumstances. The Magi arrived at the court of Herod as they knew Jesus was born in Bethlehem and the King at the time was Herod, so naturally they went there to visit Jesus, but this in turn brought the information to Herod who thought that this baby was going to replace him and was a threat against him and so he needed to do something to secure his place on the throne. Sadly, Herod's fear led to violence amongst his people including the murder of all boys in Bethlehem who were under 2 years old, as he tried to destroy Jesus, so although Mary, Joseph and Jesus found safety in Egypt, many others were killed.



December 28th is Holy Innocents Day which honours the baby boys who were slaughtered by King Herod. It is also a reminder that the way of Christ will not always be perfect and there may be opposition and hostilities to face when talking of the truth we know. We also must remember that Christmas is not the same for all and even if we are lucky enough to celebrate and enjoy ourselves with family and friends we should remember and pray for those less fortunate and whose journey has taken a different path, for those who are alone, whose loved ones are no longer with them or who are themselves suffering illness.

It is important that we hold on to hope and remember that, "the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it" (John 1:5). Thank you, Walter, for a different way for us to look at the Christmas story and what we can glean from it.

SUNDAY 18TH JANUARY 2026

This was a service devoted to hymn singing. Judith Higgins had asked members to choose a hymn they would like to sing and she spoke about the writers of the words and music for each one. Some members spoke about why they had chosen a particular hymn.

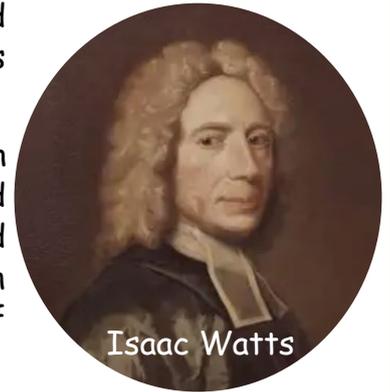
The hymns we sang were:-

'*Morning has broken*' chosen by Margaret Forster. This hymn was written by Eleanor Farjeon in 1931 inspired by the village of Alfriston in East Sussex. She had been asked to write words to the tune Burnessan, a village on the Isle of Mull, to fill a need for a hymn to give thanks for each new day.



'Make me a channel of your peace' chosen by Wendy. This hymn is often associated with Francis of Assisi, although the words cannot be found in his writings. It is often called the prayer for peace and was promoted during both World Wars and is the anthem of the British Legion. The tune for the hymn was written in 1907 by Sebastian Temple, a South African Franciscan.

'When I survey the wondrous cross' chosen by Gerald. This hymn was written by Isaac Watts and published in 1707. His father had challenged him to write something better, after he complained about the grim psalms they sang in chapel. He is credited with writing 750 hymns but this is often regarded as the greatest of them all.



Isaac Watts

It is usually sung to the tune Rockingham written by Edward Millar son of a stonemason who ran away from home to become a musician and became a flautist in Handel's orchestra.



Charles Crozat
Converse

'What a friend we have in Jesus' chosen by Janet. Originally written by the preacher Joseph Scriven as a poem in 1855 to comfort his mother who was living in Ireland whilst he was in Canada. It was published anonymously and he only received the credit for it in the 1880's.

The tune was composed by Charles Crozat Converse in 1868 and it is sung in churches all around the world.

'Give me joy in my heart' chosen by Margaret Morris Jones. Many will recognise it as 'Give me oil in my lamp', which is based on the parable of the ten virgins waiting to greet the arrival of the bridegroom and light his way to the wedding. Five were wise and had taken extra oil for their lamps and when the bridegroom was delayed they were able to refill their lamps and light his way but the foolish had not brought extra oil and were not able to relight their lamps and had to go to buy more oil and missed the wedding. Jesus told the listeners "Watch therefore for you know neither the day nor the hour when the Son of man cometh."

The writer is unknown, although it has been suggested that it could be an A Sevison but most hymn books just say traditional or anonymous.

'The Lord's my shepherd' chosen by Anne. Based on the 23rd psalm, the words of the hymn are usually attributed to Puritan Francis Rous, who had been appointed by Oliver Cromwell. Before his hymn could be approved for use it had to be subjected to scrutiny by the Long Parliament and a committee of translators. It took six years and extensive alterations before it was finally approved.

It's usually sung to the tune Crimmond which it is believed was composed by Jessie Seymour Irvine, the daughter of the Rev Alexander Irvine minister of Crimmond Church in Aberdeenshire. She asked David Grant to reharmonise it for her and his name was attached to the tune. It was only challenged in 1940 when a letter written by Jessie's sister Annie was found, and most people accept that the tune was written by Jessie.



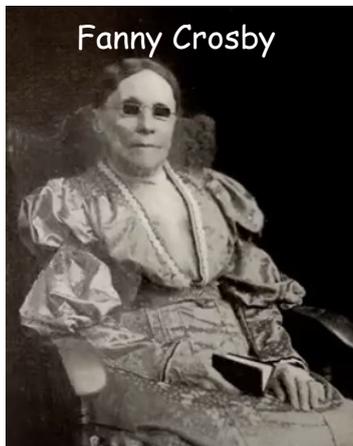
Jessie Seymour Irvine

'Amazing grace' chosen by Judith Hadfield. This hymn was published in 1779 by Anglican clergyman, abolitionist, and poet John Newton. In 1748 he was aboard a ship struggling to survive against heavy seas and rough weather and being worn out with pumping water and almost frozen, Newton, called out to God for mercy and the storm abated. He became a Christian convert. At 39 he was ordained as a minister and started writing hymns. He persuaded William Wilberforce to stay in politics and joined him in the fight to abolish the slave trade.

'Dear Lord and Father of mankind' chosen by Joyce. This hymn was written by an American Quaker, John Greenleaf Whittier, the words adapted from a longer poem called 'The Brewing of Soma.' Soma was an intoxicating drink prepared by priests for Indian worshippers to help them during their frenzied rites, an attempt to help them experience the divine.

It ends by describing how Quakers would make contact with God by leading sober lives dedicated to doing God's will seeking through silence and selfishness to hear the still small voice described in Kings 19, 11 -13.

The hymn is usually sung to the tune 'Repton' written by Hubert Parr'.

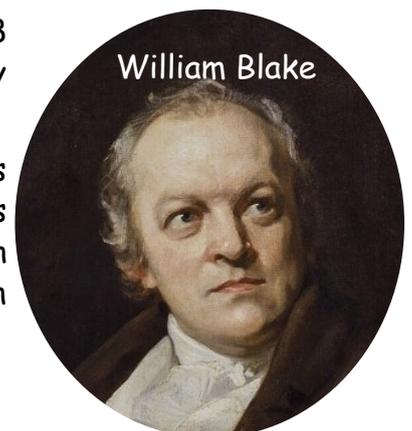


'To God be the glory' chosen by Walter. This hymn was written by the blind American mission worker, Fanny Crosby and was set to music by William Howard Doane. Although the hymn wasn't published until 1875, it was already being sung and enjoyed throughout Great Britain before this date. In the 1870s, the hymn was used in the evangelistic campaigns of Dwight L Moody and Ira Sankey. It became popular in the United States during the 1954 Billy Graham Crusade in London, where it was one of the congregational hymns sung. The words celebrate the goodness of God and the work accomplished through Jesus Christ and the song is now sung by Christians throughout the world.

'Jerusalem' chosen by Cath. Written by William Blake in 1808 and set to music by Hubert Parry in 1916 later orchestrated by Edward Elgar.

The words may be based on the apocryphal story that Jesus came to England with Joseph of Arimathea before starting his ministry. In fact this story only seems to have been started in the early twentieth century. An earlier story says that Joseph came alone to Glastonbury after the ascension of Jesus.

A varied selection which led to a joyful and enjoyable service.



SUNDAY 25TH JANUARY 2026

Judith Higgins felt that most of us knew more about the books of the New Testament than those of the Old Testament, so she had chosen as the topic for her service the life of the Old Testament prophet, Elijah.

A prophet was someone chosen by God to deliver His message to mankind. They were instrumental in shaping the moral and spiritual direction of the people of Israel.



By the ninth century BC, the Kingdom of Israel, once united under King Solomon, had been divided into the Northern Kingdom of Israel and the Southern Kingdom of Judah, which contained Solomon's great temple.

The people of the Northern Kingdom turned away from God and began to worship Baal. The King arranged the marriage of his son, Ahab, to Princess Jezebel, daughter of the King of Sidon and a worshipper of Baal.

When Ahab became King, he built many temples dedicated to Baal and Queen Jezebel brought many priests of Baal to the country. God's prophets were persecuted and many were killed.

Elijah, the prophet, confronted King Ahab on several occasions. He warned the King that there would be years of terrible drought because the King had turned away from

Yahweh. As Baal was the god of thunder and lightening, rain and dew, this was also a direct challenge to the god as well as the King.

God sent Elijah away to hide near the Brook of Cherith where there was water to drink and ravens brought him bread and meat to eat. When the brook ran dry, God sent Elijah to go to stay with a widow. At first she said she didn't have enough food to feed him but Elijah assured her that God would provide enough for them to eat.

After more than three years of drought, God sent Elijah back to Ahab to say the drought was over. Elijah challenged the prophets of Baal to prove the power of their god. They built an altar with a sacrificial bull and asked Baal to send down fire to consume it. Elijah also built a similar altar and called on God to send down fire, which He did. The prophets of Baal were killed by the people. This angered the Queen who threatened to kill Eiljah who again had to hide.

On a third occasion, Elijah confronted King Ahab when he had taken a vineyard when its owner had been killed by order of the Queen.

Although Elijah was true to God, he did not have an easy life, he was often in hiding, but God protected him and gave him the strength to carry on and through God Elijah performed many miracles.

The story of Elijah can be found in the first book of Kings.

Thank you, Judith, for another interesting service.



Elijah and the ravens, stained glass from Bangor Cathedral

'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*

Still water and still religion freeze the quickest. - *Anon*

LANCASHIRE HILL SUNDAY SCHOOL

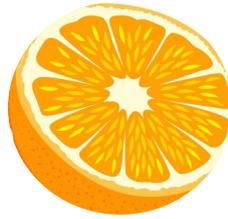


Recipe

Yogurt and Orange Scones

Makes 8

450 g plain flour
2 teaspoons salt
1 teaspoon baking powder
 $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon bicarbonate of soda
 $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon ground cinnamon
2 teaspoons light brown soft sugar
Finely grated rind of 1 orange
150 ml plain yogurt



Preheat the oven to 190°C/170°Fan/Gas 5. Line a baking sheet with baking paper.

Sift the flour, salt, baking powder, bicarb of soda, cinnamon and sugar into a bowl. Stir in the orange zest, yogurt and about 150 ml of cold water, to bind to a smooth, soft, but manageable dough.

Knead the dough lightly on a floured surface and shape into a 15 cm round. Make into 8 wedges.

Bake for 35-40 minutes or until the top is golden brown and the base sounds hollow when rapped with your knuckles.

Cut into wedges and serve warm.



Kites Group

The Kites Group are busy preparing for their February 2026 show Peter Panto to be held at Compass Point. Tickets are available now www.kitesgroup.com.



PETS



I have just been watching my neighbour's cat having a wonderful time, playing in my garden and it reminded me of the many cats who have been such a big part of my life over the last 80 years!

My first one was a gift from my Grandad when I was 7 years old. As an only child, he filled a gap in my life. His name was Timmy; he was black and white, fat and fluffy and my best friend for many years.

After he died, my Auntie's cat had kittens and she presented me with 'Chico', also black and white and who loved to play with the fuchsia flowers in Mum's garden. Mum did not share my love of cats, especially when Chico sharpened his claws on her posh Parker Knoll easy chair. Oh dear!!



After I was married, my first cat was a very pretty tortoiseshell lady named 'Shellie'. She had beautiful eyes, but was not very partial to being cuddled, then Smokie came to join her. He was a gentle Tom and a little bit afraid of Shellie. He did like to be cuddled and was very happy to curl up in front of the fire or on our knees. Shellie, however, seemed to know when I was due home from teaching and, as I turned into the adjoining road, she would appear to escort me down the road and into the drive. Was that affection, or did she know that it was feed time?

The two cats were part of our family for over 15 years, they accompanied us to Anglesey in our friend's caravan. Shellie had an annoying habit of disappearing just as we were packing to come home. I don't think that she fancied the streets of Stockport after all the freedom of the caravan park in Lligway.

Sadly, she was killed by a speeding motorist right outside our house and Paul buried her in our garden under the apple tree.

Smokie lived for another couple of years and then one morning, on holiday in Cornwall he was curled up peacefully in his basket and had quietly died, as he had lived, aged 17 years.

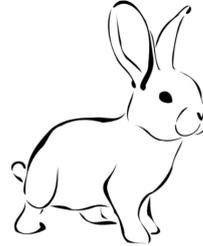
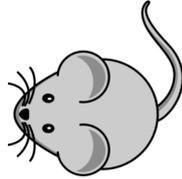


Finally, our last cat, Muffin, was a stray. He appeared one cold, wet evening. I gave him some food outside the back door and next morning he was still there, soaking wet and shivering and he never seemed to want to leave. So he was adopted and lived with us for 5 years, until one evening, I looked down at my furry slippers, (which I was wearing), and realised that Muffin had quietly slipped away to a peaceful cats' heaven, snuggled up on my slippers!



Derek had always wanted a dog, so along came Kerry, who was a lively and wonderful addition to our family for many years, along with a motley assortment of guineapigs, gerbils, rabbits, mice (from school), and gold-fish!!

They were all part of life's rich tapestry and I am so lucky to have been a part of such a happy varied family of pets.



Margaret Morris Jones

THE BOFFINS AND THE TECHNOCRATS

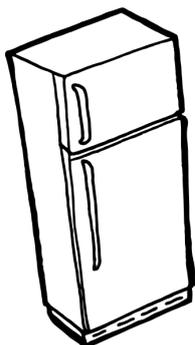
1. The boffins and the technocrats
Help folk like me and you
Inventing lots of clever things
That tell us what to do!



2. My car now has a clever light
Dispelling doubt or fear,
Without it I'd have not a clue
When to shift up a gear!



3. Of course there is the Sat Nav
To help me find my way
The time I learned to read a map
Was just a wasted day!

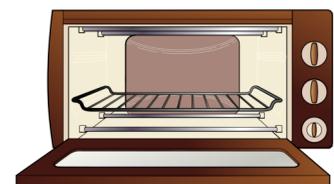


7. And so I am a harassed man,
I live a hassled life;
The one who shouts at me the least
Is my sweet and lovely wife!

4. My PC's a law unto itself
So busy telling me
To upgrade this or restart that -
The net I never see!

5. And sometimes, when my work is done
I turn on my TV
All chance to watch my programme gone -
"Retune" it says to me.

6. The oven, fridge, and microwave
They make a beeping sound
Or else they have bright lights which flash
To order me around.



By Nigel Beeton

14TH FEBRUARY - ASPECTS OF ROMANTIC LOVE

God obviously approves of romance - after all, putting Adam and Eve alone together in the Garden of Eden was His idea.

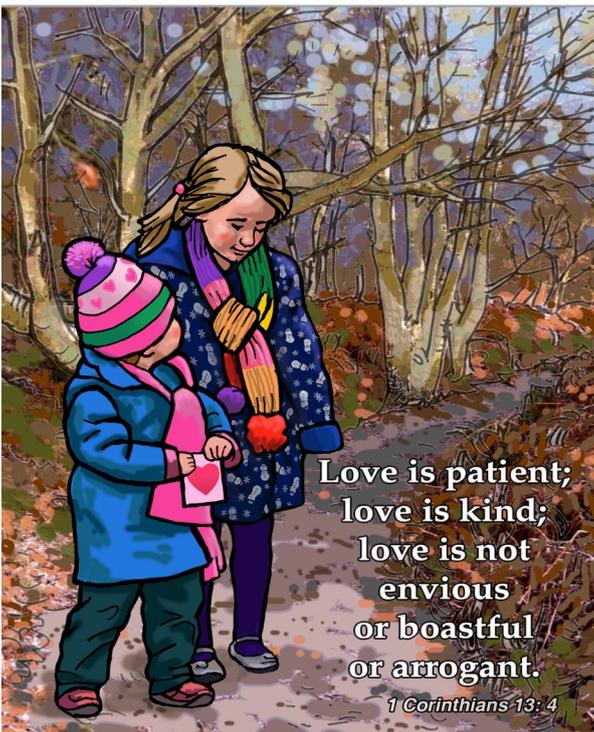
The history of the Israelites began with three great romances: Abraham and Sarah, Isaac and Rebekah, and Jacob and Rachel. The on-going history of Israel was deeply affected by later romances: Esther and King Xerxes, David's love affair with Bathsheba, and Solomon's marriage to hundreds of foreign wives. There is even an entire book in the Old Testament devoted to the love of a man and woman: the Song of Solomon!

When we reach the New Testament, we find real love between Joseph and Mary (even when Joseph thought Mary had been faithless, he did not want to harm her). St Paul, though himself a bachelor, nevertheless spent a lot of time urging Christians to love and be kind and faithful and considerate to their spouses. He even wrote 1 Corinthians 13 - the great love chapter that is read at millions of weddings worldwide 2000 years later.



Down the centuries ever since, romantic love has been critical in shaping history (Anthony and Cleopatra), in shaping cultural ideals (King Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table). Some of our favourite stories are built on romance. (Puccini's *Tosca*, Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*, Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*, Charlotte Bronte's *Jane Eyre*.)

People make amazing sacrifices for love. They defy their family, forsake their culture, and turn their back on wealth and position, just to be with their loved one. (King Edward VIII and Mrs Simpson.)



Love is patient;
love is kind;
love is not
envious
or boastful
or arrogant.

1 Corinthians 13: 4

People give their loved ones amazing gifts. The most extravagant is probably the gift of the Shah Jahan, who built the Taj Mahal in India for his favourite wife, Mumtaz Mahal.

Today, romance is still alive and well in Britain - last year we sent about 25 million Valentines to each other.

And what of the future? Well, just as the Bible begins with a love story, so it ends with one. And *you are involved!* For actually the greatest Love Story of all time is that between God and His people.

Christ is described in Revelation as our heavenly Bridegroom, and the Church is His beloved Bride. He has given us the most expensive present of all - Himself. And, just as in all the best romances, the story will end with the bride and groom getting together at last, so at the End of Time, Christ will return for His Bride.

SMILE LINES



It hurts

A little girl told her mother one day before lunch that her stomach was hurting. Her mother replied: "That's because it's empty, you have to put something into it!"

That evening the minister and his wife came for dinner. The minister looked a bit rough and explained that his head was hurting him. The little girl gave him a sweet smile and said encouragingly: "That's because it's empty, you have to put something into it!"

Hymns for professionals

Dentist - Crown Him with many crowns

Contractors - The Church's one foundation

Obstetricians - Come labour on

Golfers - There is a green hill far away

Politicians - Standing on the promises

Librarians - Let all mortal flesh keep silent



God made us

A little girl sitting on her grandfather's lap reached up to touch his wrinkled cheek. "Grandpa, did God make you?"

"Yes, sweetheart," he answered, "God made me a long time ago."

"Oh," she paused. "Grandpa, did God make me too?" Her grandfather assured her that He had. Feeling his wrinkled cheek again, she observed, "God's getting better at it, isn't He?"

Portrait

A teacher told her young class of children to try and draw the portrait of someone they knew. While they worked, she walked about, keeping an eye on their progress.

One little girl was working diligently, and the teacher asked who she was drawing. The child replied: "I'm drawing God."

The teacher protested that no one knows what God looks like. Without missing a beat, or looking up from her drawing, the girl replied, "They will in a minute."



After Eden

Adam was out walking with his sons Cain and Abel. As they passed by the ruins of the Garden of Eden, one of the boys asked, "Father, what's that place?"

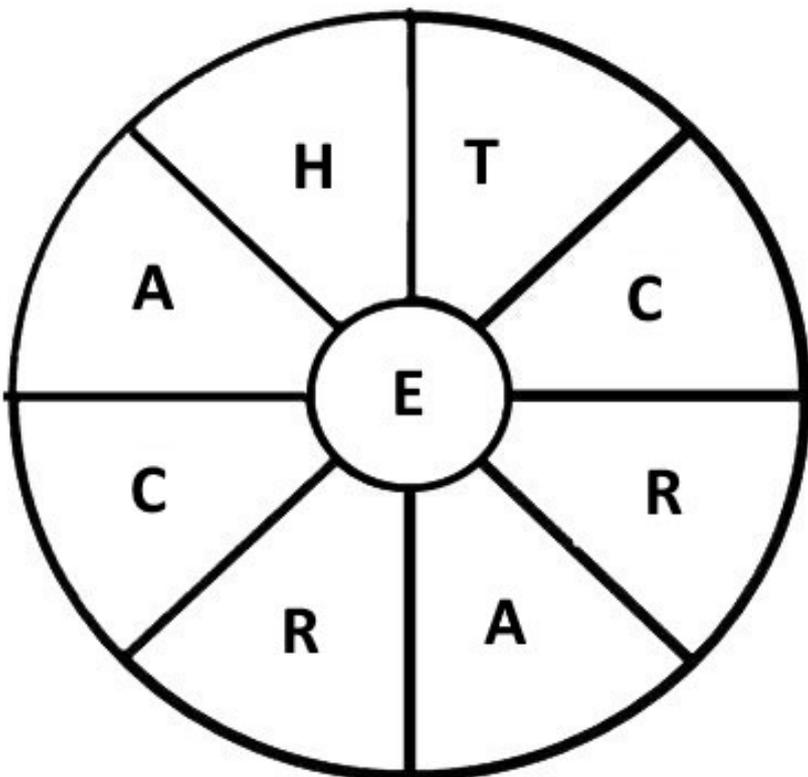
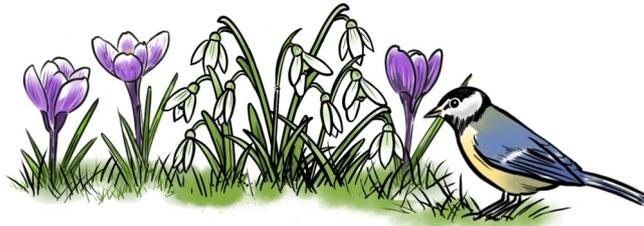
Adam replied, "Boys, that's where your mother ate us out of house and home."

PUZZLES

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



Sudoku



WORD WHEEL

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

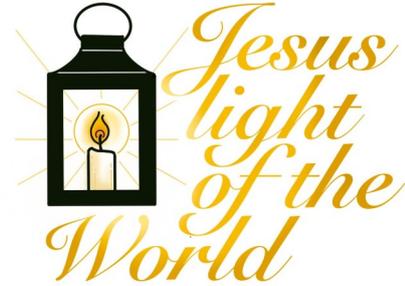
Words must be four letters or more, each word must contain the central letter E. Plurals and proper nouns are not allowed. There is at least one nine letter word.

Good score 14+ Excellent 22+

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

WORDSEARCH

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



The Presentation of Christ in the Temple/ Candlemas

CANDLEMAS, 2nd February, comes exactly **FORTY DAYS AFTER CHRISTMAS**. In **NEW TESTAMENT** times 40 days old was an **IMPORTANT AGE** for a **BABY BOY**: it was when they made their **FIRST 'PUBLIC APPEARANCE'**. **MARY**, like all good **JEWISH** mothers, went to the **TEMPLE** with Jesus, her first male child - to 'present Him to the Lord'. Thus, we have the **FESTIVAL** of the **PRESENTATION** of Christ in the Temple (Luke 2: 22-40). So where does the Candlemas bit come in? Jesus is **DESCRIBED** in the New Testament as the **LIGHT** of the **WORLD**, and **EARLY** Christians developed the tradition of **LIGHTING** many **CANDLES** in celebration of this day.



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?.

