



# Stockport Sunday School

January 2026 Newsletter 67



Welcome to, and best wishes for this New Year of 2026!

In a few days, with the arrival of Epiphany on January 6th, the church's season of Christmas will be over for another 12 months.



Over the last few weeks, the season has, as always, been marked by Christmas music wherever you might be; on the radio, in shops and stores, at musical events, and of course in church services.

Carols in particular are a major part of the phenomenon, and are always a welcome component of our SSS services, with such a wide variety to enjoy. Music has always been an important part of our worship. In earlier days, members of SSS would travel down to London to major concerts to find out what they could bring back to Stockport for everyone to learn and enjoy.



No doubt you each have your particular favourite carol. My own is 'It came upon the midnight clear...'. To a large extent, I think it is because the angel's voices, wishing 'peace on earth, goodwill to men' are put in the context of the actual fallen world in which we live. They bid us listen to the news of God's love which they bring, while reminding us of those people whose plight is much harsher than ours;

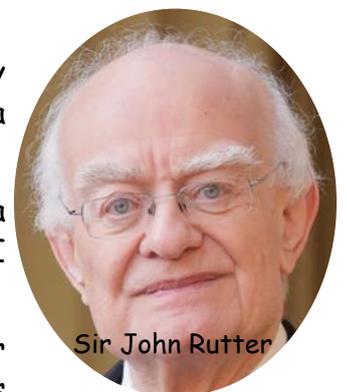
(- particularly significant in our present days of increasing war and strife between nations -) and by implication asking us what we can and should do as followers of Jesus, the new born Messiah.

For many of us, the words of the popular carols are very familiar. However, those of us of 'maturer years' have to be on our guard for changes in the wording which have been slipped in; sometimes the purpose is apparent, but on other occasions it seems as if for no obvious reason other than making you feel embarrassed when you get it wrong!

Sometimes the familiarity with a particular carol can perhaps take away some of its significance, and we may need something to cause us to do a rethink. I had a recent example of this.

My combined Birthday and Christmas presents from my daughter was a trip to London to a carol concert in the Royal Albert Hall; somewhere I had not visited within the last 40 years or so.

It involved the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, the 100 strong Bach Choir and the Kings Singers; all conducted by Sir John Rutter; famous for his choral works and especially carols - a very special event.



Sir John Rutter

The hall was full with an audience of about 6,000 people (our old Centenary Hall held 2,000 and that was considered very large). Most of them I suspect were choral singers themselves. The first carol was 'O come all ye faithful'; very well-known but not one of my particular favourites. But when we all stood to sing it together, filling the hall with sound, it was a very emotional experience - hundreds of people joining in to say, 'Come with us and worship the newborn King.'

The experience has changed my view and response to this familiar carol - I now see it as a rallying cry for us and our fellow believers, joining together to confirm our commitment to our Lord.

It was also a reminder of how singing together can benefit and uplift us, particularly when we may be feeling low; something now being recognised more and more by the medical professions. It is also being demonstrated by the growing popularity of Community Choirs in recent years, which accommodate so many people with no significant singing experience and produce performances of a high standard.

Singing together has been an important part of SSS history. It has helped to bind us together in our faith - not just at Christmas time but as a valued part of all our weekly services.

So let us thank God for the gift of music and the ability to share it in song. Long may it continue to inspire us as we seek to follow our Lord Jesus Christ in our daily lives.

With best wishes from the Officials to all our members and readers for a -

**Happy and Healthy New Year**

### THINKING OF YOU

We send our best wishes to all our friends who have not been well over recent weeks, and also to those who are no longer able to come each Sunday, including Judith Curry who continues to care for Don at home, Joan Heald, Maureen Jewsbury and Hilary Wood. We are also thinking of Joyce Sellers who is still in hospital after her operation on her broken femur after a fall at home and who has also been dealing with pneumonia and also Garth Higgins, who was admitted to Stepping Hill Hospital over the festive period. We have missed Margaret Morris Jones who has had to miss a few weeks again with her leg and also Anne Mather who had a fall at home over the festive period. We hope they will soon be home again. It was good to see Beryl Manley back in School after being taken ill. All our friends and their families are in our thoughts and prayers.



### HAPPY BIRTHDAY

We wish Happy Birthday this month to

Joan Heald on 10<sup>th</sup> January

and

Ann Mather on 25<sup>th</sup> January

and

Margaret Morris Jones on 9<sup>th</sup> February

### CHRISTINE MOORE

Sadly we learnt of the passing of Christine Moore on Boxing Day. We keep her family and friends in our thoughts and prayers.





## FRONTS OF CARDS

Please remember to save the fronts of your Christmas cards and pass them to Margaret Forster, so that they can be put into the shoe boxes sent out via Teams4u later in the year.



## 2026 NEWSLETTER

The annual subscription is now due. The cost of the emailed and printed newsletter will not go up, but as the price of stamps has increased there is a rise in the cost for people receiving their newsletter by post. The charges for 11 copies (no newsletter in August) will be:-

Online per year - £3.50

On paper in School - £5.50

On paper posted - £15.07

(which includes 11 x 87p stamps)

Cash or cheque please to be sent to:-

Mrs J Hadfield,  
C/o Stockport Sunday School  
96 Nangreave Road  
Heaviley  
Stockport  
SK2 6DQ

or can be given in School.



## CHRISTMAS POST

The Sunday School Christmas post box was well used again this year. Thank you to everyone who helped to sort the Christmas cards for members to collect.



## SEE, AMID THE WINTER'S SNOW

See, amid the winter's snow  
Lots of cars that just won't go;  
It is not the drivers' fault -  
Councils have run out of salt!  
Here, we sit the whole night long!  
Where have all the snowploughs gone?

If we'd known we'd be delayed  
We'd perhaps have brought a spade!  
Say, ye cheerful children, say  
Why aren't you in school today?

'We are skating round and round  
'Cos the heating's broken down!  
'Yes, the heating's gone beserk!

'Mum has missed a day at work!  
'Though she's cross and seems on edge,  
'We can ride upon our sledge!

Sages on the weather show  
Said the sun would surely glow,  
And, said they, we may be sure  
Of a glorious day in store!  
But they missed a detail, small  
And the snow did thickly fall!

But the met-men feel no shame -  
Their computer takes the blame!

By Nigel Beeton



## SERVICES



### SUNDAY DECEMBER 7<sup>TH</sup>

Walter led the service on the second Sunday in Advent. Advent is a time when Christians prepare spiritually to celebrate the birth of Jesus.

It can also be a time when we begin to feel the pressure of preparing for the Christmas celebration starting to build up. Walter asked which of the preparations we most enjoy, decorating the tree, writing and receiving cards and letters with family news? He also asked what is a burden or a challenge - trying to find suitable presents, planning a menu? There is a lot to fit in to make the occasion a happy one.

He noted that the mood of the Bible readings in the church lectionary are very sobering.

One of the lessons for the day, Luke 4 verses 14 - 21 tells how Jesus' preaching in Nazareth was not well received. He left the synagogue and the people threatened to kill Him.

In Matthew's gospel chapter 24, Jesus warns His disciples of the dangers that lie ahead, not words of comfort!

He speaks of false Messiahs, war, famine and earthquakes, but He also makes a prophetic promise that God will most certainly come again and put right the mess that we have made of His world. Today we hear on the news how fellow Christians are suffering the effects of war, famine, earthquakes, floods and wild fires and working through the aftermath.

Thank you, Walter, for a very thought-provoking service.



### CANDLE AND CAROL SERVICE, SUNDAY DECEMBER 14<sup>TH</sup>



Once again, the members of The Triangle arranged the Candle and Carol Service. When we arrived, the hall was set out with tables with candles and a Christmas decoration on each one and the front of the hall was beautifully decorated with candles, a nativity scene and Christmas trees. Howard lit the third candle on

the Advent wreath.

All the candles were lit during the singing of the first hymn. Stuart Dean led the service and the readers of the Bible passages were:-

Irene - the Angel Gabriel appears to Mary

Jane - the angels told to shepherds of Jesus' birth

Pam - the wise men present their gifts to Jesus

Beryl Barnet led the prayers.

Stuart told us the story of Marion who expected to spend Christmas

Christmas alone but her day was transformed when she shared it with her new neighbours. The theme for the service was 'snow' and Stuart told us facts that we probably didn't know about snow. At the end of the service, each member received a small candle depicting a pine cone tree covered in snow or Father Christmas delivering gifts in the snow.

At the end of the service, everyone enjoyed mince pies and tea or coffee.

Our thanks again to all the members of The Triangle.



## SUNDAY DECEMBER 21<sup>ST</sup>

The service organised by the Officials was the service of carols and lessons that was formerly held at 7am on Christmas morning.

The readers were Walter Stead, Margaret Forster and Judith Higgins. The prayers were led by Judith.

Walter spoke about the significance of Bethlehem for the Jews. It is the place where Ruth committed herself to staying with and supporting her mother-in-law, Naomi. Ruth eventually married Boaz and they became the forebears of David King of Isarel. Much later the wise men arrived in Bethlehem from the east to become the first gentiles to recognise the significance of the birth of Jesus.



The ensuing flight to Egypt is a stark reminder of why refugees have to flee from where they are settled. Mark 12 verse 31, Love your neighbour as yourself. There is no greater commandment

In Christianity LOVE is a verb it is active not passive. Christmas is a season of love but we should not restrict our love to one special month.

Walter wished everyone a Happy Christmas and every member received a knitted robin containing a chocolate made by Judith Higgins.

## FUTURE SERVICES

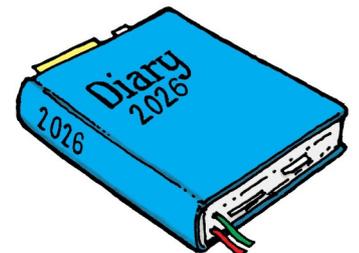
The next dates for our services are:-

January 11<sup>th</sup>                      Walter Stead

January 19<sup>th</sup>                      Judith Higgins

Future services still need to be arranged.

To help out Walter and Judith, once again, if anyone feels they could do a service or part of a service or even just has an idea for a service as we appreciate taking a service is not something everyone is comfortable doing, please speak to Judith. Thank you.



Long before my clock alarms  
I hear the robin as he charms  
A sleeping world with glorious song.  
But he sings loud, and he sings long,  
And, as I rub my sleepy eyes  
Long before I'm meant to rise  
I wish that he would use his beak  
Instead the early worm to seek!

By Nigel Beeton

# LANCASHIRE HILL SUNDAY SCHOOL



## Recipe

### *White chocolate & tangerine mousse*

Makes 8

300g white chocolate  
200ml double cream  
200ml Greek yoghurt  
1 tangerine jelly (25g pack)  
298g tin mandarins



Melt the white chocolate in the microwave, stirring every 30 seconds then leave to cool slightly.

Whip the cream and yoghurt until stiff.

Melt the jelly with one tablespoon of water in the microwave. Add the juice from the tin of mandarins and extra water needed to make the juice up to 400ml.

Stir the jelly and white chocolate into the cream and yoghurt. Mix well until an even colour and texture is obtained.

Pour into serving bowls and refrigerate for at least four hours.

Serve with mandarin pieces on the top once set.

### Candle and Carol Service 2025

The offertory from this service amounted to £102.88 so we have sent £105.00 to The Christie.

Thank you to everyone who attended.



### 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](http://www.kitesgroup.com).

## 2<sup>ND</sup> JANUARY - GREGORY OF NAZIANZUS

Next time you think about the Holy Spirit, breath a short prayer of thanks for Gregory of Nazianzus.

This fourth century bishop of Constantinople made such an impact on the Early Church with his understanding of how the Holy Spirit relates to the Father and the Son, that he became known as the 'Trinitarian Theologian'.

The young Gregory had never intended to be a theologian. Far from it. Born in 329 into a wealthy Greek family in southwest Cappadocia, he had excelled in rhetoric and philosophy in Caesarea, Alexandria and Athens, becoming a gifted scholar and orator.

Then disaster struck. While Gregory was on his way to Athens, a severe storm nearly engulfed his ship. Amid the terror of the wind and waves, Gregory promised God that if his life was spared, he would dedicate the rest of his life to the service of Jesus Christ.

It was not an easy promise to keep, as by nature Gregory preferred a life of study and reflection. Instead, as a priest and then Bishop of Sasima in 372, and Bishop of Constantinople in 380, he was plunged into the tumultuous church politics of the time. His crowning moment came in 381, when he presided at the opening of the Council of Constantinople.

But it was in his quiet times of study and writing that Gregory made his biggest contribution to the early Church. For he expanded the idea that our salvation is a progressive journey into the Godhead, and he stressed that the One who enables us to take this journey is the Holy Spirit. Gregory proposed the term 'procession', saying that the Spirit proceeds from both the Father and the Son, and that the Spirit should be given full worship and equal honour.

Gregory is greatly honoured in both Eastern and Western Christianity. He was one of the three 'Cappadocian Fathers', who along with Gregory of Nyssa and Basil of Caesarea, developed the doctrine of the Holy Spirit and the Trinity.



A Byzantine-style icon depicting the [Three Holy Hierarchs](#): (left to right:) [Basil of Caesarea](#), [John Chrysostom](#) and Gregory of Nazianzus.

## EPIPHANY FOR TODAY

This month we celebrate Epiphany, the occasion on which we remember the Magi from the East following a star to find the baby Jesus: 'Where is the One who has been born king of the Jews?' (Matthew 2:1). At the start of a New Year, in an uncertain world, we can be asking the same question. The gifts the Magi offered point us to how Jesus can answer our concerns and worries: 'they bowed down and worshipped Him...and presented Him with gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh.' (2:11).

The gift of gold reflects that the Magi saw in the baby a king, destined to rule over us all. In

this coming year we need to remember that Jesus is on the throne, the seat of power and authority in the whole universe. Will we crown Him king of our lives and dedicate all that we are and do to Him?

The gift of frankincense reflects that the visitors saw not just an earthly king, but God in human flesh. Incense symbolises the prayers of God's people and so this gift reminds us that God is worthy of our worship and prayer. Will we offer our praise and prayer, as we seek God to guide us through the uncertainties of this coming year?

The gift of myrrh reflects that these astrologers saw beyond the baby's birth and life, to His death which would secure life for all. Jesus was offered myrrh on the cross and was a spice used in His tomb. As we face challenges in the future, we can be confident that Jesus knows and understands our experience. Are we ready to trust Him in everything?

*'Glorious now behold Him arise, King and God and Sacrifice! Heav'n sings Hallelujah: Hallelujah the earth replies.'* ('We Three Kings').

By Canon Paul Hardingham



### HOW TO KEEP THOSE NEW YEAR RESOLUTIONS

We are full of good intentions at the start of each year. How come we usually fizzle out by February? Here are some tips to keep you going...

*Be realistic.* If you have several goals, don't attempt them all at once. Research has found that if you stagger your goals, you will have more success. So, for example, if this year you want to spend less money, do more exercise and spend more time with your family, start one change this month, another in February, and start the third in March.

*Be specific.* For example, don't tell yourself: Lose weight. Decide exactly how much you want to lose. When do you want to lose it by? How will you do it? If you want more time with your family, how and when will you do that? The more exact you can be, the more likely you are to succeed.

*Write it down.* There's something about committing thoughts to paper that helps to cement your resolve. Why not start some sort of journal this year, to track your thoughts, your hopes, your goals - and your successes!

*Tell other people.* If you intend to do something, tell someone, and therefore you will feel more obliged to get going with it... your pride may keep you going when all else fails!

*Focus on GAIN, not loss.* Ever notice how many resolutions are about giving something up? Why not put it the other way round - instead of saying you will eat less, tell yourself you are headed for those skinny jeans....

*Give yourself rewards.* If you are quitting smoking or sweets, for example, put the money that you would have spent in a jam jar, and treat yourself to something nice (and healthy) with it.

*Break your resolution into steps.* Some goals will take months to achieve. So, break each one down into tiny steps, and simply head for each step. Build in some time frames, to prevent you procrastinating.

*Finally, don't let failure defeat you.* You will make mistakes. But the secret is to simply get up again and to keep going. Only if you stop are you really defeated. None of us are perfect, and the Bible encourages us to always start again.

## SMILE LINES

### Up and down

A psychiatrist was training some young clergy who were interested in doing counselling. Deciding to test them, she asked: "How would you diagnose someone who visits your church, walks back and forth, screaming at the top of his lungs one minute, and then collapsing in a pew to weep uncontrollably the next?"

A young man at the back of the room raised his hand and ventured: "A football coach?"



### Light

A fellow nurse at my hospital received a call from an anxious woman. "I'm diabetic and I'm afraid I've had too much sugar today," she said.

"Are you light-headed?" my colleague asked.

"Oh no," the caller answered, "I'm a brunette."

### Softly

A churchwarden went to the Police Station wishing to see the burglar who had slipped in and out of the church during evensong. "You'll get your chance in court," said the Desk Sergeant.

"I don't want revenge," said the man. "I want to know how he got out of the service early without the vicar noticing. I've been trying to do that for years!"



### The puppy

A clergyman was walking down the street when he came upon a group of about a dozen boys, surrounding a small puppy. Concerned lest the boys were hurting it, he went to investigate. One boy explained, "We just found this puppy, and we all want him. So, we've decided that whichever one of us can tell the biggest lie will get to take him home."

The minister was taken aback. "Don't you boys know it's a sin to lie? Why, when I was your age, I never told a lie." There was dead silence for a moment. The minister thought he had got through to them.

Then the smallest boy gave a deep sigh and said, "All right, give him the dog."

### The bump

A vicar who had just undergone a very complicated operation kept complaining about a bump on his head and a terrible headache. Since his operation had been an intestinal one, the nurse was concerned. Finally, she spoke to the doctor about it. The doctor reassured her, saying: "Don't worry, he really does have a bump on his head. About halfway through the operation, we ran out of anesthetic."



# PUZZLES

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



Sudoku

## WORDSEARCH

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



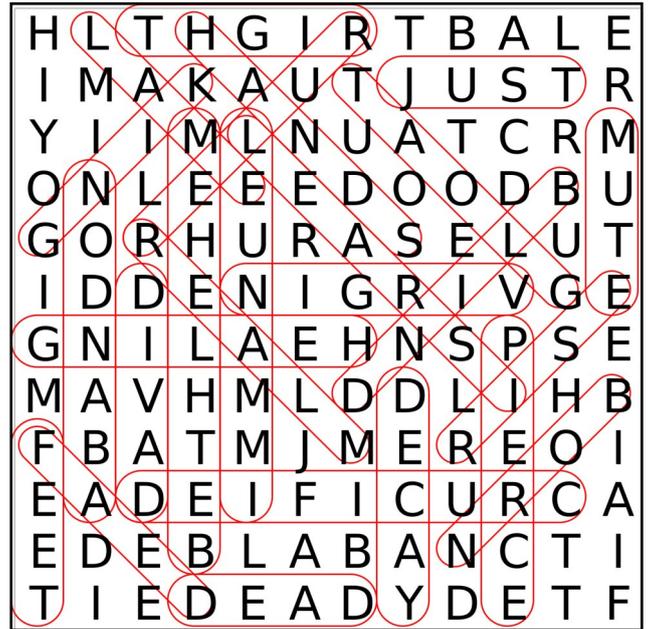
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 E E A W O R S H I P I E M  
 E N S P I I A E C M A G I

## EPIPHANY

6<sup>th</sup> January brings **EPIPHANY** - the **VISIT** of the **WISE MEN** to the baby Jesus. Matthew calls them '**MAGI**', the name of an **ANCIENT PRIESTLY** caste from **PERSIA**. Early church **TRADITION** says there were three: **BALTHASAR**, **CASPAR** and **MELCHIOR**. As for their **GIFTS**? **GOLD** is a symbol of **WISDOM** and **WEALTH**, **INCENSE** is a symbol of **WORSHIP** and **SACRIFICE**, and **MYRRH** is a **SYMBOL** of **HEALING** - and even **EMBALMING**. Jesus **CHALLENGED** and set aright the way in which the **WORLD** handled all three of these things.

## ANSWERS FROM LAST NEWSLETTER

9	<b>3</b>	<b>1</b>	5	2	4	<b>7</b>	<b>8</b>	6
<b>6</b>	<b>8</b>	5	3	7	1	9	<b>4</b>	<b>2</b>
4	2	7	6	<b>9</b>	8	1	5	3
<b>3</b>	<b>5</b>	2	<b>9</b>	1	<b>7</b>	4	<b>6</b>	<b>8</b>
8	1	9	<b>4</b>	5	<b>6</b>	2	3	7
<b>7</b>	<b>6</b>	4	<b>8</b>	3	<b>2</b>	5	<b>9</b>	<b>1</b>
1	4	6	2	<b>8</b>	5	3	7	9
<b>2</b>	<b>9</b>	8	7	4	3	6	<b>1</b>	<b>5</b>
5	<b>7</b>	<b>3</b>	1	6	9	<b>8</b>	<b>2</b>	4

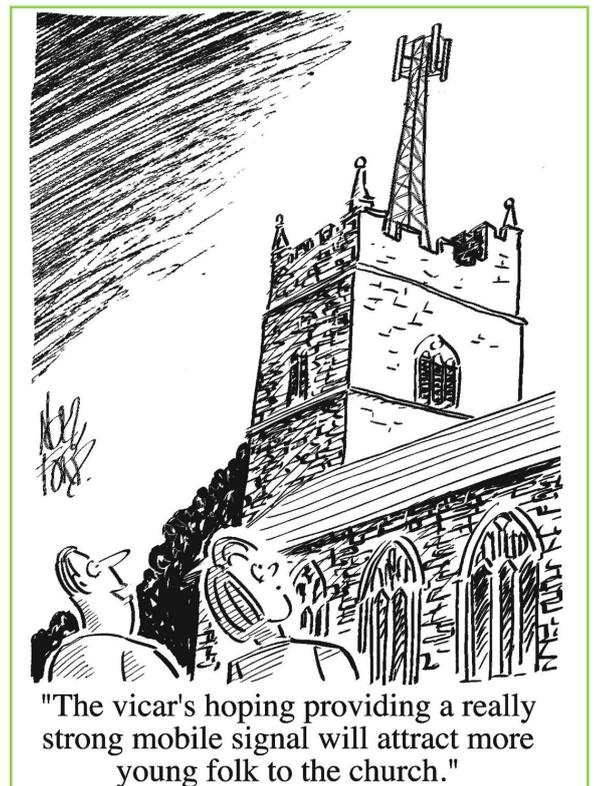


### SUDOKU ANSWERS

### WORDSEARCH ANSWERS



...the good news is - I've found a way of heating the church on unwanted chip-fat!...



"The vicar's hoping providing a really strong mobile signal will attract more young folk to the church."