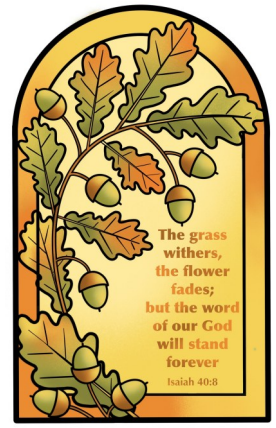


Stockport Sunday School

October 2026 Newsletter 75



The book of Ezra in the Old Testament is one of the shorter ones and not very often chosen for the Bible reading in most church services.

It recounts the history of the Israeli people rebuilding the Temple in Jerusalem five hundred years before the birth of Christ.

The story commences with the people being in exile in Babylon after Jerusalem had been captured in 586 BC by Nebuchadnezzar, the King of the Babylonians.

It was then nearly fifty years before the Babylonians were defeated by King Cyrus, founder of the Persian Empire

He was more sympathetic than his predecessors to the various groups who had been taken into captivity by the Babylonians. and soon announced that 'The God of the Israelites had appointed him to rebuild the Temple to their God in Jerusalem.' (Having more than one God to pray to was not unusual in those days, but the Israelites were different in this respect, committing themselves to serving the one true God.)

Cyrus therefore undertook to allow any Israelites who wished to, could return to their homeland to carry out this major task.

It was an act of magnanimity by Cyrus but would be an enormous challenge for those who chose to go.

They had been settled in Babylon for many years, made their homes there, built their houses, raised their families. Now they were being asked to start all that again. A daunting prospect!

But they were families for whom doing God's will and worshipping in the Temple were overriding priorities in their lives and in total 50,000 people undertook the journey.

And they did not set out empty-handed. They were provided with financial and practical support for their endeavours by their fellow Israelites.

At first there was no conflict with existing inhabitants. But as time went on and the work progressed, the local people and Israel's traditional enemies in the region did not take kindly to this large influx of immigrants. There was growing opposition to the rebuild of the temple

Pressure was put upon the Israelites, including physical threats making them afraid to go to work.



Officials were bribed to frustrate their plan. Nevertheless, they still had the support of Cyrus the King. However, when he died, their enemies petitioned his successor, Artaxerxes, who then commanded the work to cease, which it did for a period of 10 years.

All this must have made the Israelites feel perhaps God was forsaking them, despite their continuing commitment to their cause



But sometimes what we see as God's delays are actually beneficial in the long run. We have to accept the words of God given to the prophet Isaiah - 'As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways and My thoughts higher than your thoughts'.

Throughout all this turmoil, the Israelites had been supported, encouraged and guided by God's prophets, Haggai and Zechariah. Eventually the people dared to re-start their task without any formal permission and challenged their opponents to take the matter to the new King, Darius.

He in turn, commanded a review of the history of the project back to the original decree of Cyrus and decided in the Israelites favour.

The work was able to be carried out to completion, and with the King's financial support!

Ultimately the Priests and Levites were restored to their respective offices and the Temple re-dedicated with much rejoicing.

It was then that Ezra, who was the son of the chief priest, and a teacher well versed in the law came up to Jerusalem with the King's blessing, together with another large contingent of the Israelites still living in Babylon.

Ezra soon became the leader and moral guardian for the people.

The temple work had reached fruition, but the task of restoring the city still had far to go.

Sadly in time the population started to go backwards in terms of their relationship with God; failing to adhere to the temple law and general immorality in their relationships with surrounding tribes. Sadly, it seemed that even some of the leaders were demonstrating such weaknesses.

Was this because the later influx of people were less dedicated to the principles of the Jewish faith than the original arrivals. The primary objective had been to re-establish the centre of worship of their God in the Temple as the basis of a faithful relationship with Him.

Ezra was in despair but had the courage to take the people to task, spelling out their shortcomings. He pointed out that even the foreign kings had more awareness of the importance of God in peoples' lives than some of the population did.

He was able to convince the population of the errors of their ways and call them to repentance, while the individual Israeli transgressors were named and listed in the biblical text.

Well, all that is History - a bit of a roller coaster.

But what can we learn from it?

Well perhaps the most notable thing is how important the Temple was to the Jewish faithful.

We often say the 'Church' is not a building; the Church is the 'membership', the congregation of the faithful, - which is true.

But the building where we meet to worship God, in a way, is like our domestic home is for our day to day life. If you were to lose that for some reason, it would be traumatic.

Imagine - it could be as the result of serious illness, a natural disaster, or warfare. For some it may have been because we were living in a land where our religious beliefs are banned and being faced with the need to consider emigrating, something very hard to accept. For the Israelites the Temple was their spiritual home and its loss was such an ongoing pain.

Nevertheless, despite their captivity in Babylon, the people had retained their faith. When offered the opportunity, a substantial number had taken up the challenge to make a life-changing decision. We have to admire such faith and determination.

That the opportunity came because God spoke to a foreign king is even more surprising, (although such events crop up throughout the Bible).

They no doubt realised it would involve hardship and possible enmity from the people already living there. They did encounter problems from different quarters and long periods of uncertainty, but when the time came they took the risk of re-starting the work, and with the guidance of their prophets they succeeded. All this took courage.

But before long, many of the general population, possibly mainly the later arrivals, seemed to ascribe their success to their own efforts rather than the trust they had put in God's guidance.

*For everyone who asks
will receive, and everyone
who searches will find,
and for everyone
who knocks, the door
will be opened*

They lapsed into immorality. Not an uncommon outcome if we let go of God's guidance in our lives. Hopefully, for transgressors in such circumstances, like the Israelites, repentance will follow.

Sadly, in our day and age, we seem to be living in a world where God's wish for honesty, compassion, and love for our neighbour seems to be more and more under threat in many ways, in both public and in private life.

May we like, the faithful Israelites, be prepared to listen to what God wants us to do, and trusting in Him, have the courage and will to respond to His call.

*And
remember,
I am with you
always, to the
end of the
age.'*

Are you wrinkled with burden? Come to the church for a faith-lift. - Anon



Though the Lord is out of sight, we are not out of His. - M Henry



We wish 'Happy Birthday' this month to:-

Walter Stead on October 3rd

Elizabeth Keeling on October 6th

Wendy Hill on October 19th

Margaret Forster on October 26th

Maureen Jewsbury on November 4th



GET WELL SOON

We send our best wishes to those of our friends who have been ill recently and hope that they will soon be fully recovered.



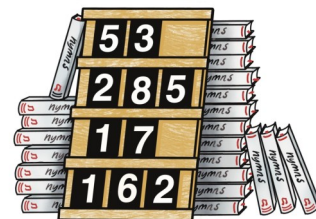
CLOCKS GO BACK!

Just a little reminder that the clocks go back on the evening of Saturday October 24th (or officially 2am on Sunday October 25th).



COMING SPEAKERS AND EVENTS

4 th October	Walter Stead
11 th October	Judith Higgins
18 th October	Anniversary Rev Jonathan Bramwell
25 th October	Walter Stead



ANNIVERSARY, SUNDAY 18TH OCTOBER



For our Anniversary Service this year, we are pleased to welcome Rev. Jonathan Bramwell as our speaker. Jonathan is a former pupil of the Sunday School and son of Barbara and the late Ralph Bramwell, who were both teachers at the School.

We would like to welcome members, friends and family to join us for this service. It is a special day in the School's calendar, and it is always good to catch up with former friends and colleagues and catch up on all the news after the service.

We look forward to welcoming you to celebrate with us.



KNIT 'N NATTER AUTUMN FAIR



Autumn Fair

Come and join us on

27th October, 2026

1.30pm -3.30pm

Compass Point, 96 Nangreave Rd

Stockport, SK2 6DQ

In aid of

Independent Options North West

*A community charity dedicated to supporting people with disabilities,
additional needs and their families.*

*A variety of stalls including, Crafts, Bric a Brac, Tombola,
Raffle, Refreshments and much more.*

Free Admission

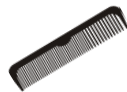
SHOE BOXES

This year we will once again be collecting Shoe Boxes for Teams 4 U. Below is a list of suggested items to go into the boxes. If you are unable to make up a complete box but would like to donate individual items, Margaret will place a box in the entrance hall.



BOXES THAT CAN BE MADE UP

BOY	3 - 5 YEARS
BOY	6 - 11 YEARS
BOY	12+ YEARS
GIRL	3 - 5 YEARS
GIRL	6 - 11 YEARS
GIRL	12+ YEARS
HOME	



WHAT TO DO

Once you have filled your shoebox, it is then closed using an elastic band. A recommended donation is asked for each box completed which helps gets the boxes out to the communities who will receive them. Donations can be made online at teams4u.com or can be placed in the envelope attached to the leaflets once they are available in the entrance hall and complete the form to go into the envelope with your donation.

SUGGESTIONS FOR WHAT CAN GO IN A BOX

For Boys Or Girls

Toothbrush and toothpaste	New socks/underwear	Small ball
Hair accessories/brush	Soft toy	Sweets (use by date from June)
Soap and face cloth	Game	Photo
Stationery and paper	Puzzle	Message from you
Gloves	Small musical instruments	
Hat and scarf	Toy vehicles	

Home Box

Candles	Cooking utensils	Plastic containers
Tea towels	Washing up cloths	Hairbrush
Small toiletries	Bowls and cups	Small decoration
Soap	Clothes pegs	Headscarves
New socks and underwear	Jewellery	New makeup



ITEMS THAT SHOULD NOT BE INCLUDED

Food (only exception is sweets - use by date from June)	Medicines
Anything highly flammable	Military themed items
Sharp items	
Novels	



CALENDAR FOR 2027

January 17th	Election of Inspectors 3.30
January 24th	Committee Meeting 3.15
February 8th	Bible Sunday
February 15th - 20th	Kites Pantomime
March 7th	Mothering Sunday
March 21st	Palm Sunday
March 28th	Easter Sunday
April 18th	Committee Meeting
June 13th	Founders' Day
June 27th	Committee Meeting
September 12th	AGM
September 19th	Harvest
October 17th	Anniversary
November 14th	Remembrance Sunday
December 12th	Candle and Carol Service Christmas Post
December 19th	Officials Service Christmas Post
December 26th	No Service

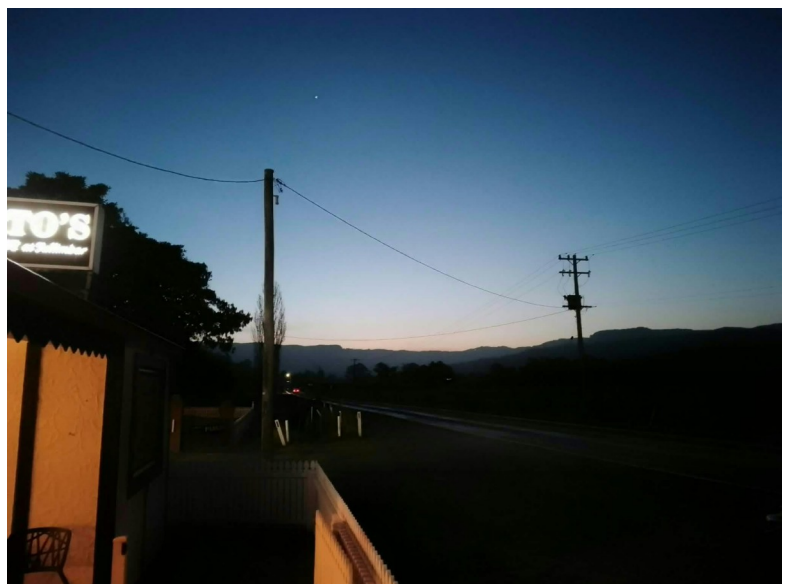


**PLEASE NOTE THAT THIS IS THE CALENDAR FOR
2027 NOT THE REST OF 2026**



AUSTRALIA

After the disappointment earlier in the year of having had her trip to see her family postponed, we were pleased to hear from Beryl Manley that she had had a good journey over to Australia, where she had been met by her son. She is now enjoying spending quality time with her son, his wife and her grandson and has sent some photos. We look forward to hearing about her travels when she returns.





SERVICES



SUNDAY, 6TH SEPTEMBER 2026

In the Bible, we can read how God worked with the Jewish people in the Old Testament. The New Testament teaches about the life, teachings, death and resurrection of Jesus and the establishment of the early Christian church.

How well we do we know the Bible? On Sunday September 6th, Judith Higgins led a Bible quiz in four parts between the hymns and Bible readings. Some of the questions were very easy, others more difficult, but the answers were recognised when given out.

The names of the mountains where the ark came to rest after the flood and where Moses received the ten commandments were well known but which was which? (Sinai or Ararat)

The afternoon was light hearted but showed up some gaps in our Bible knowledge.



Mount Ararat in the fog

SUNDAY, 13TH SEPTEMBER 2026, HARVEST



We were pleased to welcome Keith Tonge from Short Street United Reformed Church as our harvest speaker this year. His first reading was from Genesis 8, God's promise that as long as earth endures He will send seed time and harvest.

Keith said how harvest services have changed over the years. When we were young, fresh fruits and vegetables would be displayed on the altar, all fruits and vegetables in season. Today the supermarkets stock fresh fruit and vegetables from all over the world at all times of the year. We bring these gifts to the special service to thank God for providing our food.

Today many churches pass on their harvest gifts to Wellspring or food banks so fresh produce has been replaced by tinned or dried goods. This year our harvest table also contained toiletries which were asked for by Wellspring. Keith visited a church harvest where a lady sang a solo sharing her gift of a lovely voice with others. We can all share our God given talents with others.

Many people joined the Great North Run raising money for charities.



In Psalm 8, the psalmist asks when he surveys the wonders of the earth, "What is man that God is mindful of him?"

Celebrating 35 years

The world is God's, we are His stewards, we must care for it. Man is responsible for global warming which is causing climate change, we must care for the world and take responsibility for it.

Harvest is a time for thanking, caring and sharing.

Thank you, Keith, you have given us a lot to think about.

SUNDAY, 20TH SEPTEMBER 2026

In his service, Walter looked at Paul's first letter to the Christians in Corinth.



He had heard of problems of relationships between various groups in the Church. He explained that God had given people many different gifts but all come from the Spirit. We are all members of one body. We must use our God given gifts to do what is right.

Paul's message is that we all have our individual parts to play.

He goes on to say the importance of using these gifts with love. Love is patient, love is kind, it does not envy, it does not boast and is not proud, it does not dishonour others, and is not self seeking and is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs.

Love always protects, trusts, hopes perseveres.

Paul's words to the early church in Corinth still have meaning to us today.

Thank you, Walter, for reminding us of Paul's words that still have meaning for us today.

THE FARAWAY COUNTRY

There's a faraway country we dream of
Where the street is paved with gold,
No more tears or hidden fears
Where time has lost its hold.

God's love is so embracing
For He longs the world to save
Into realms of glory, resurrection's story
And for this His Son He gave.

The portals of heaven are waiting
Where a place has been reserved,
Bought at a cost, by a Saviour's cross
Not one of us has deserved.

Let's be part of God's plan for redemption
Of a world still trapped in sin,
As we seek His face for saving grace
That all may enter in.

By Megan Carter

LANCASHIRE HILL SUNDAY SCHOOL

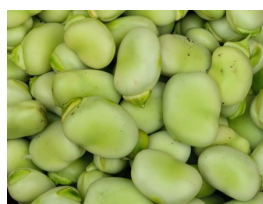


Recipe

Courgette orzo

Serves 4

***3 courgettes
1 1/2 tbsp olive oil
1 onion, finely chopped
2 garlic cloves, finely chopped
300g orzo
1 litre vegetable stock
4 tbsp grated parmesan
200g baby broad beans, podded (optional)
Large handful each of mint and basil leaves, shredded
1 lemon, zested and juiced***



Slice one of the courgettes into thin rounds. Heat 1 tbsp of the oil in a lidded frying pan over a medium heat and fry the sliced courgettes, tossing occasionally, to soften and lightly brown. Remove from the pan with a slotted spoon. Add the onion with $\frac{1}{2}$ tbsp oil. Turn down the heat slightly and cook for 5 minutes to soften.

Coarsely grate the remaining two courgettes and add to the pan with the garlic, turn the heat up a little and cook for 5 minutes until the courgette is just starting to soften. Stir in the orzo, then pour in the stock. Bring to the boil, turn down to a simmer and cook for 10 minutes, stirring occasionally, until the orzo is almost done.

Add the parmesan, beans and courgette slices, season, put on the lid and turn down the heat. Cook for 5 minutes, then stir in most of the herbs, lemon zest and juice, and divide between four plates. Grate over a little extra parmesan and top with the remaining herbs.



Kites Group

The Kites Group are busy preparing for their February 2027 show to be held at Compass Point. Tickets will be available soon on www.kitesgroup.com.

Having struggled to cross over Hempshaw Lane many times, I am always very grateful when some motorist stops to let me cross. I found that this poem held a lot of meaning for me.

Margaret M Jones

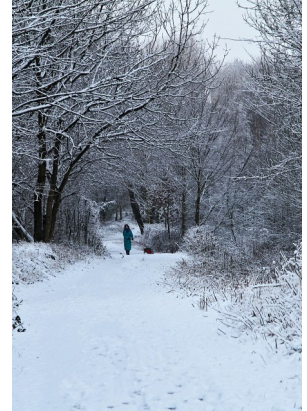
Somebody's Mother



The woman was old and ragged and grey
And best with the chill of a Winter's day,
The street was wet with a recent snow
And the woman's feet were aged and slow.

She stood at the crossing and waited long,
Alone, uncared for, amid the throng
Of human beings, who passed her by
Nor heeded the glance of her anxious eye.

Down the street, with laughter and shout,
Clad in the freedom of 'school let out',
Came the boys like a flock of sheep,
Hailing the snow piled white and deep.



Past the woman, so old and grey
Hastened the children on their way
Nor offered a helping hand to her -
So meek, so timid, afraid to stir
Lest the carriage wheels on the horse's feet,
Should crowd her down in the slippery street.

At last came one of the merry troupe,
The cheeriest laddie of all the group,
He paused beside her and whispered low,
"I'll help you cross, if you wish to go."



Her aged hand on his strong young arm
She placed, and so, without hurt or harm
He guided the trembling feet along,
Proud that his own were firm and strong.



Then back again to his friends he went,
His young heart happy and well content,
"She's somebody's mother, boys, you know,
For all she's aged and poor and slow,
And I hope some fellow will lend a hand
To help my mother, you understand,
If ever she's poor and old and grey,
When her own dear boy is far away."



And somebody's mother bowed low her head
In her home that night and the prayer she said,
Was, "God be kind to the noble boy,
Who is somebody's son and pride and joy!"

By Mary Dow Brine

4TH OCTOBER - 800 YEARS SINCE THE DEATH OF ST FRANCIS OF ASSISI

You'll have heard of Giovanni di Pietro di Bernadone, although he is more probably familiar as Francis of Assisi. On 4th October we will mark 800 years since his death; such was his fame, influence and holiness that he was declared a saint by the pope less than two years after his death.

Francis was born into a prosperous family of silk merchants in Assisi, central Italy, probably in 1181. As a young man he loved clothes, spent money lavishly, and enjoyed a reputation of a jack-the-lad, pleasure-loving and irresponsible. But experience both as a prisoner of war and of illness led him to think deeply about his life, although it took some time for this reappraisal to bear fruit.

Just outside Assisi was the ruined chapel of San Damiano, and it was here that he felt God speak to him, asking him to "repair my church, which as you can see, is falling into ruin". Little did Francis know at that point that 'repairing my church' meant much more than repairing this simple chapel - a task he set about doing.

Francis became known for his devotion to Christ and also his commitment to the poor and bereft. Others were attracted to join him in preaching the gospel and serving the poor. Eventually this was organised into a congregation of poor men (friars), which today we know as the Franciscans.

He established a Rule of Life for these men, later revised as more joined them. A sister organisation, the Poor Clares, was founded for women who wanted to give their lives to God and the service of the poor. Two years before his death, in a period of intense prayer, he is said to have displayed the *stigmata* - the wounds of Christ - in his hands and side. By then he was increasingly ill; blindness and malaria took its toll. He died aged just 45.

Simplicity was a hallmark of his life, which has come down to us in a number of ways. Care for the environment is one way; patron saint of animals is another. World Animal Day is marked on the same day as Francis' death. Many churches will be holding a 'Blessing of the Animals' service, often a cheerful riot of barking dogs, hissing cats, rats and mice in cages, even a stick insect, and horses tethered outside. Is there one in your area where you could take your pet to be blessed?

We should see Francis as a visionary and inspirer, who, impelled by the love of Christ, was able to give himself to, and draw others to, a life of service to the poor, care for the environment, and prayer. By the time he died, there were Franciscan friars over much of Europe. Today, inspired by his legacy, his followers - friars, sisters and lay people - are found all over the world.

Do you have a Rule of Life which you try to live by, one which honours God and seeks the best for humanity? How do you inspire those around you? How do you mark your care for God's creation? You love your pets, but is it time to re-evaluate if you are doing the best by them?

One of Francis' prayers asks God 'to grant us the grace to do for You alone what we know You want us to do, and always to desire what pleases You.' That could be a good rule of life, a star to live by; could you make it yours?



JUST FOR SMILES

Genesis for Cats

On the first day of Creation, God created the cat.

On the second day, God created man to serve the cat.

On the third day, God created all the animals of the earth to serve as food for the cat.

On the fourth day, God created honest toil so that man could labour for the good of the cat.

On the fifth day, God created expensive furniture so that the cat would have objects whereon to sharpen its claws.

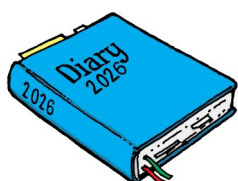
On the sixth day, God created veterinary science to keep the cat healthy and the man broke.

On the seventh day, God tried to rest, but the litterbox needed changing.



God is here

When our minister and his wife visited our neighbour, her four-year-old daughter answered the door. "Mum!" she yelled toward the living room. "God's here, and He brought His girlfriend."



Book the date

Our new curate was very eager to please. When I asked if I could have a church service when I eventually die, he responded with enthusiasm. "Of course," he said, grabbing his date book. "What day do you want?"

The cow and the Bible

A religious farmer lost his Bible out in the field. A few days later he went to answer a noise at his door. Standing there was a cow, with his Bible in its mouth. The farmer raised his eyes to heaven and thanked the Lord for this miracle. "It's not really," said the cow. "Your name was written inside."



Shampoo

Why I didn't realise this sooner? It's the shampoo I use in the shower that is my problem. When I wash my hair, the shampoo runs down my whole body, and printed very clearly on the shampoo label is this warning: 'FOR EXTRA VOLUME AND BODY.' No wonder I have been gaining weight.

Scammer

I got a call from a scammer who said, "I've got all of your passwords." I said, "Great. What are they? I'll grab a pen."

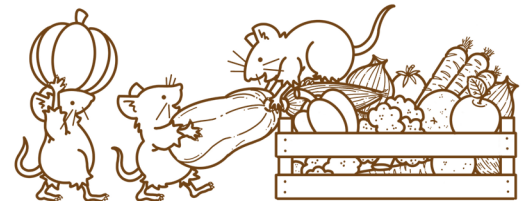


PUZZLES

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



Sudoku



WORDSEARCH

To St **LUKE**, whose **FEAST-DAY** is 18th October, we owe a beautifully **WRITTEN GOSPEL** as well as the Book of **ACTS**. He was a **GREEK PHYSICIAN** and **FAITHFUL TRAVELLING** companion to St Paul. Under house arrest near the end of his life **PAUL** noted, 'only Luke is with me'. Luke's gospel focuses on the **COMPASSION** of Christ, and offers us moving **PARABLES**, such as the **GOOD SAMARITAN** and **PRODIGAL SON**. **WOMEN** figure more prominently in Luke's gospel than in any other: look out for the extended story of the Virgin Birth, and stories of Mary, Elizabeth, and the woman who was a sinner. His gospel also features more **POOR** people, more **LEPERS**, more '**SINNERS**', who are all shown to be 'inside' the love of Christ. In Acts, Luke skilfully links sacred and profane history, as subsequent archaeology has shown. He tells of how the **EARLY CHRISTIANS** moved away from **JERUSALEM** into the **PAGAN** world, and especially on to **ROME**.

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

Can you find the words shown in bold capitals in the passage in the grid?
Words can be found in the grid in any direction.

ANSWERS FROM LAST NEWSLETTER

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



SUDOKU ANSWERS

WORDSEARCH ANSWERS

