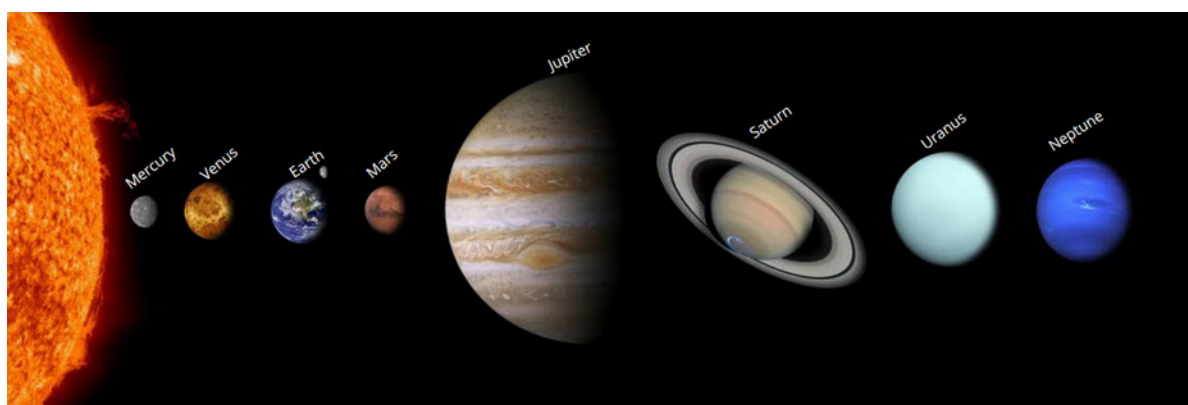
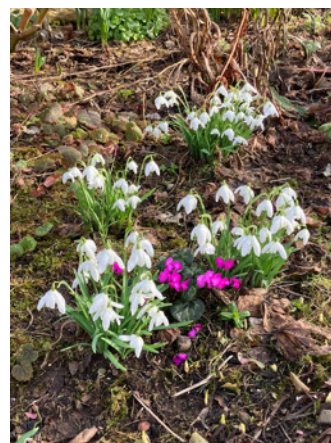


This is an occasional newsletter from Strathmore Parish Church; you are receiving it because you have passed on your email address to the church. If you do not want us to have your email address, or if you don't want to receive these emails, please let us know right away at admin@strathmoreparish.org Feel free to forward this newsletter to anyone you think might be interested, or to send us the email address of anyone who would like to be added to the mailing list.

Hello, everyone - here's the kirk newsletter for March! Yes, March - isn't it amazing how we are getting through the winter months? So many signs of spring all around us now, and doesn't that do our spirits good?

Many gardeners will have been outside on some of the recent dry days, getting a wee bit of tidying up done after the winter and all the gales, and will know what a nice surprise you can get when you clear away dead leaves and find some wee spring delights waiting for you!

As well as things happening on the ground, there are goings-on in the skies too just now



From the BBC website: *Throughout January and February six planets – Venus, Mars, Jupiter, Saturn, Uranus and Neptune – have been visible in the night sky. During just one night – **Friday 28 February** – they will be joined by Mercury, a rare seven-planet alignment visible in the sky. It is a spectacle that will not be visible again until 2040.*

Mercury, Venus, Mars, Jupiter and Saturn are all bright enough to be visible to the naked eye, while Uranus and Neptune require binoculars or a telescope to spot.

'There is something special about looking at the planets with your own eyes,' says Jennifer Millard, a science communicator and astronomer at Fifth Star Labs in the UK. 'Yes, you can go on Google and get a more spectacular view of all these planets. But when you're looking at these objects, these are photons that have travelled millions or billions of miles through space to hit your retinas.'

Billions of miles away . . . and yet, if we look to the west in the early evening this Friday, we may be able to see some of these distant planets with our own eyes - we are part of a marvellous universe, are we not?

Here on the 'third rock from the sun', our own planet Earth, this coming Sunday is for most Christian churches the last Sunday of the season of Epiphany, because by next week we will be into the season of Lent, when Christians journey with Jesus towards his death in Jerusalem and the subsequent joy of the resurrection morning.

This year, Ash Wednesday, the first day of Lent, falls on 5th March and on that day many church-goers across the globe will have their foreheads marked with ashes, in the sign of a cross, to show that they are on their Lenten journey. Traditionally, the ashes used are from the palm branches waved on the previous year's Palm Sunday! We in the Church of Scotland don't go in for the ashes bit much, but that doesn't mean we can't mark Lent in our own ways, either by giving something up or by doing something extra.





Of course, the day before Ash Wednesday is Shrove Tuesday, when traditionally everyone uses up all their rich foods before fasting during Lent. (Mardi Gras, fat Tuesday, is the French equivalent of that.) In Britain, it's now commonly known as Pancake Day. One of the longest-serving elders in our parish, Mrs Moyra Stewart, is a dab hand at making pancakes, and if you would like to try her recipe, and her tips for success, you'll find both at the end of this newsletter. Having enjoyed Moyra's pancakes many a time, I can highly recommend them!

What I'm afraid we've all missed for this year, though, is a traditional Polish custom which is gaining popularity in the UK - it's called Tłusty Czwartek (Fat Thursday) and again it's a pre-Lent opportunity to enjoy some rich food. It's on the Thursday before Ash Wednesday, and on that day there are queues outside Polish bakeries, as everyone buys jam doughnuts or a special pastry called 'angels' wings'. As there are many Polish bakeries in Britain now, the queues have attracted lots of us Brits to see what it's all about - but if you fancy a nibble of an 'angel's wing', you'll have to wait for next year!



Over these next 40 days of Lent, many of us try to go a little further than usual in our giving to charity.

The charity 'Shelter Box', started by Rotary Clubs but now an independent charity, provides strong, durable tents for families who have lost everything when their homes have been swept away by tsunamis or mudslides or destroyed by fire or war. This year, because of the huge demand for emergency housing (not least in Gaza) they are asking all of us if we can support their 'Tent for Lent' appeal. Here's what they say:

*Do you want to help give shelter to families facing disaster? If so, please sign up to **Tent for Lent**. You have 40 days to fundraise for **ShelterBox**, helping to provide shelter for families who've lost their homes to earthquakes, floods, hurricanes or conflict.*

It's easy to get fundraising. Have a Lent Lunch. Host a collection. Do a sleep-out. Give up chocolate, swearing or do a digital detox. Be creative! It's totally up to you. You can do it as a congregation, a group, with friends and family, or by yourself.

Do it to give emergency shelter. Do it to help families recover. Do it to deepen your Lent journey by remembering people rebuilding after disaster.

£350 will buy a tent - is this something we could do as a congregation? As groups? As individuals? We have till Easter Sunday - 20th April - could we raise £350 in that time? If you'd be prepared to help or have some ideas for fundraising, please contact me, Mary Reid. mmreid@btinternet.com

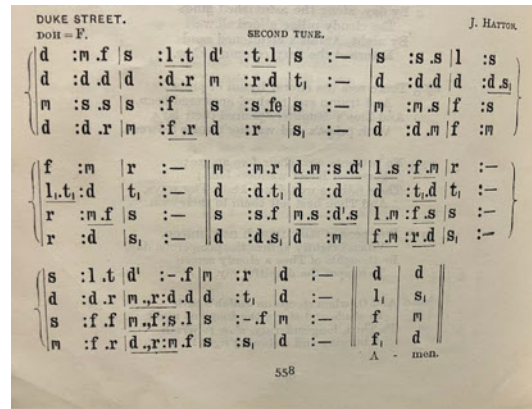
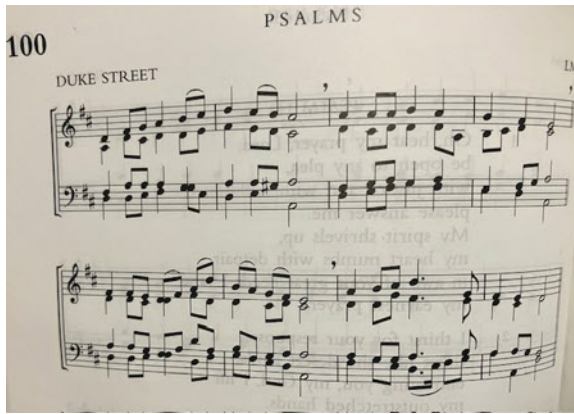


Now for something completely different! I wonder if you are old enough to recognise the item on the left? For those of you who don't know, it is something that was a common piece of classroom equipment from the 1850s for over 100 years - the modulator.

When it was time for singing, the teacher would hang the modulator over the blackboard and, by pointing at the notes and using the hand-signs on the right, would teach the pupils how to read music using the 'tonic solfa' method - an easier method of reading music than using the 'staff' notation.

Tonic solfa was popular with schools and with church choirs - it was said that the huge passion for choral singing in Wales, in the 1880s and 90s, wouldn't have happened without the invention of tonic solfa. It was invented by a lady called Sarah Glover, of Norwich, then developed and circulated widely in Britain by a minister, the Reverend John Curwen (hence 'Curwen's Modulator!')





So (pardon the pun) here's what the two systems look like on the page - on the left the usual staff notation, on the right, tonic solfa. I'm sorry the pics aren't of better quality, but they both show the well-known tune 'Duke Street' (often sung to 'Oh Lord, thou art my God and King') and both show the parts for soprano, alto, tenor and bass singers.

Hymn-singing is an important part of our church services and we are very fortunate in Strathmore Parish Church to have good organists and lots of great singers!

If you enjoy listening to good choral singing, Dundee Choral Union are performing Brahms' German Requiem in the Caird Hall, Dundee, at 7.30pm on Sunday 16th March. Tickets cost £15, and you can get them from the Caird Hall box office or online at <https://www.dundeechoralunion.org.uk/>

Another date for your diary is **Sunday 30th March** - March is a month with five Sundays this year, so on the 30th we will be having only one service, a **whole-parish service at Kettins Church at 10am**. If you haven't been to a service there before, you will find that the Kettins building has many interesting features, both inside and out! The stained-glass windows are varied in style and very beautiful - let's hope it's a sunny day so we can all see them at their best!

The Community Hub at Kettins needs more storage, and the Hub committee are fund-raising to pay for a storage extension to the present building - if you would like to sponsor a brick and help to get the extension built, please go to: <https://forms.office.com/e/5WT2MfgHcm>

If you have any parish news that you'd like to see included in the next newsletter (probably out on 28th March) please email me at mmreid@btinternet.com or send it to Alison, our church admin. person, at admin@strathmoreparish.org

Hoping that you will be able to get out and enjoy the spring in our lovely parish,

Mary Reid

Moyra's pancake recipe for Shrove Tuesday

Ingredients:

160gms/ 6 ozs Plain Flour
1 tsp Caster Sugar
½ tsp Bicarb. of Soda
1 tsp Cream of Tartar
1 Egg
150 - 170 ml Milk or milk/water

Method:

Sieve dry ingredients into a bowl, make a well in middle and break in egg. Add milk (the mixture should be creamy) and mix well until smooth.

Meanwhile have girdle, fry pan or hotplate heating. Wipe surface with buttered paper. When slightly smoking, drop a spoonful on surface. Allow bubbles to rise, flip pancake over using a palate knife and allow to cook. When the dampness round the outside is dry, lift pancake and place in a cloth on a cooling rack. Leave covered until cool.

If you are happy, continue as before, placing spoonfuls on the hot surface, allowing space to turn pancakes.

May I suggest that practice makes perfect. The cooking time is short and requires constant attention, both sides of the pancake should look similar.

With a little practice, you can expect to have 18 perfect pancakes. Enjoy!!

