**Gill Newton on Games Days**

I am retired, widowed and without grandchildren – so have a great deal of freedom to make myself, my time and my home available. Some of this is as an (unpaid) licensed lay minister in the local church ... taking funerals, leading Sunday services, preaching, pastoral visiting ... and developing the parish office in the church Community Centre and looking after the finance as Church Treasurer. But this brings me in contact with all manner of people some of whom are not very literate and numerate and have no-one else to turn to...and call on me to help them understand letters and fill in forms, make phone calls to sort out problems and if need be occasionally accompany them to appointments with doctors, banks, benefits agency, their children’s schools, and much else.  Things that are simple if you are articulate and have a reasonable level of social skills are frighteningly difficult if you are not.  On another front, are acquaintances that used to enjoy a home full of family life but for a variety of reasons – divorce, bereavement, and children leaving the nest – are now adjusting to living on their own. Like me many used to enjoy board games! Nowadays, with my adult sons and daughter-in-law, it is the specialist designer strategy games we play ...Dominion, Ticket to Ride, Settlers of Catan...and on bank holidays especially I’ll invite other singletons to a Games Day at home with lunch and snacks from mid morning till evening. And the idea has spread with some of them doing the same. Not everyone likes board games! But it is a bit of family life people often miss when life moves on ...and a simple (and inexpensive for everyone) way of adding some laughter and enjoyment to life on days when living alone as a newly single person can make people feel depressed and shut off from the rest of the community if they don’t have family to be with.