



THE MAGAZINE OF THE VENTA GROUP

JANUARY 2021

Happy New Year 2021 from the Venta Group of Churches

It was so good to be able to sing some carols outside in the churchyard in December at the Stoke Carol Service



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appy New Year to all of you! After a year which seems to have been full of darkness, with you I am hoping and praying that 2021 will be full of colour and light.

You might have read last month as I wrote about how hard it is to see colour in the dark – about the difference between painting when it is light and when it isn't. It got me thinking about the difficulty that some of us have with colours even when we can see them.

While we talk about "colour blindness", it's not usual that someone can't tell the difference between any colours at all. Normally it is shades of red, yellow and green that are the problem. (Presumably the traffic light joke goes without

saying.) I knew that it was more common in men than women, but apparently as many as 1 in 12 men have this trouble. I expect most of them realise before too long.

This New Year, starting on 14th January as you can see from the separate advert on this page, we will be running our first online Alpha course. We've done lots before in the churches, but always in person. By doing it online we know we will be safe from Covid-19 complications like changing tier restrictions, quite apart from any risk of infection. But it also means that if you might normally struggle to get out in the evening for any reason, as long as you have the internet you can still join in with us. Perhaps watching something on a screen and chatting about it online afterwards is an easier way to explore faith than with a physical group of people you haven't met before?

So while doing Alpha online is safer for us in a mixture of ways, there is still a risk that you will end up seeing things very differently. You can take my word for this, because about 20 years ago now I did the Alpha course. Through Alpha I came to realise that until then I had believed in Jesus, but I hadn't really thought it was very important. I found out that he had given everything for me, and from then on he meant everything to me as well. It made me want to live for him. This year hasn't been easy for any of us, including all of us who follow Jesus, and being a Christian for me has never been about finding an easy way, but following Jesus brings life and joy and peace: eternal life and joy and peace.

When I discovered all of that, it was like suddenly looking at things in a different way. It was as though I was seeing the world in colours I had never noticed before – had almost been blind to. Everything shone. I could see things in a whole new way.

That's my story of coming to see who Jesus is, but you could have one this year too. Maybe our Alpha course could be the start of you discovering something wonderful in 2021, and it might really be that better year that we have all been hoping for.



VICAR OF THE VENTA GROUP

Stoke Holy Cross with Dunston, Arminghall and Caistor St Edmund Rob Baker, The Vicarage, Mill Road, Stoke Holy Cross, NR14 8PA rob@venta-group.org **01508 492305**

> CURATE Lyn Marsh, 8 Mill Green, Stoke Holy Cross, NR14 8PB Lyn@venta-group.org 01508 493422

Search Facebook and Youtube for "Venta group of churches"

www.venta-group.org

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Do you wonder about God?

Maybe you have questions you would like to ask about where God may fit into your life?

We are proposing to run an Alpha course on line about faith online on Thursday evenings start on Thursday 14th January, starting at 7.30pm.

To find out more please contact Rob at the Vicarage

NEXT EDITION

Items for the next month's magazine please send by email to Henry and Eostre Caswell by email to

ventafree4all@outlook.com

By 10th of this month please. The 10th of the month will be the deadline for all copy for the next magazine for the time being.



The Gate of the Year: A Message of hope to a Troubled Nation

e stand at the gate of the year. A new year is dawning and it's time to say goodbye to the old. We look back for that which has passed and we look forward to that which is before us.

As we pass through the gate of the year, no one can know what the new year will bring. But **God knows!**

There's a great lesson to be learned from a generation past. It comes from a message to the people of one of the most powerful nations on earth as they endured a time of uncertainty and fear.

More than seven decades have passed, but the truths of this message remain. As we stand at the gate of the new year, let us remember these unshakable truths.

A Message to a Troubled Nation

Princess Elizabeth was only thirteen years old in 1939. The poem that she brought to her father's attention was written by British poet Minnie Louise Haskins (1875-1957). Published in 1908 and titled *God Knows*, the poem was part of a collection of poems in a book titled *The Desert*. Years later, this poem gained popularity with a new title, *The Gate of the Year*, taken from the poem's first line.

Words of Truth and Hope

King George read the poem's preamble to reassure the people of England that their future was secure....in the hands of God.

The poem's wisdom was true for the English people on that Christmas Day in 1939 and it is true for us today.

As the new year dawns, let us remember that God is our only safe harbor. He is our only true hope. He will lead and direct our lives when we put our trust in Him. He will light our path and direct our steps as we enter into the new year.

The words of this poem were a message of assurance to a nation at war. They were words of comfort in the loss of loved ones, and words of hope for war to end. They were words of truth that our God is in control and we need not fear.

God Knows / The Gate of the Year

And I said to the man who stood at the gate of the year: "Give me a light that I may tread safely into the unknown." And he replied: "Go out into the darkness and put your hand into the Hand of God. That shall be to you better than light and safer than a known way."

So I went forth, and finding the Hand of God, trod gladly into the night. And He led me towards the hills and the breaking of day in the lone East.

How do you "put your hand into the Hand of God" and let Him lead you this year?

It's not by doing better, it's by believing better. It's by trusting that "God knows. His will is best."

- Commit this year to knowing Jesus better through reading and studying His Word. When you know Him better, you will love Him more and you will find peace in Him.
- Commit this year to entering into deeper communion with Jesus through prayer. When you commune with Him more, you will find rest in Him.
- Commit this year to remembering all that Jesus has done for you and all that He has given you. When you remember Jesus, your mind will be transformed and God will faithfully conform you more and more to the image of His Son.

As you enter the gate of the year let this be your prayer:

Open to me the gates of righteousness: I will go into them, and I will praise the LORD: This gate of the LORD, into which the righteous shall enter. I will praise You for You have heard me, and are my salvation. (Psalm 118:19-21)

HAPPY NEW YEAR

My New Year's Resolutions

I wonder how many of us write New Year's Resolutions and manage to keep them. Fortunately we are given many chances to start all over again in life,

whether at the beginning of a New Year or at any point in a year.

The following poem by Robert Fisher might help to raise a smile.

I will not throw the cat out of the window

Or put a frog in my sister's bed I will not tie my brother's shoelaces together

Nor jump from the roof of Dad's shed I shall remember my aunt's next birthday

And tidy my room once a week I'll not moan at Mum's cooking (not fish fingers again!)

Nor give her any more of my cheek. I will not pick my nose if I can help it I shall fold up my clothes, comb my hair, I will say please and thank you (even when I don't mean it)

And never spit or shout or even swear. I shall write each day in my diary Try my hardest to be helpful at school I shall help old ladies cross roads (even if they don't want to)

And when others are rude I'll stay cool. I'll go to bed with the owls and be up with the larks

And close every door behind me I shall squeeze from the bottom of every toothpaste tube And stay where trouble can't find me.

I shall start again, turn over a new leaf, Leave my bad old ways forever Shall I start them this year, or next year? Shall I sometimes, or.....?

tearfund Big Quiz Night

Some 17,432 people from nearly 500 churches across the UK joined together to raise funds for their work.

A s a Christian charity, TearFund believes that everyone has an amazing God-given potential to create change. They seek to show people around the world how to unlock these gifts and put them to use in escaping poverty. Many of their partners in this work are local churches, who discover how to offer their communities material and spiritual hope.

Stoke Holy Cross was one of those participating churches, with 8 teams comprising a total of 51 participants competing online over Zoom. All competitors were invited to make a discretionary contribution of £5 per person, so imagine or delight to have raised a grand total of £677 to date.



The picture, taken off Zoom, shows our Quiz Master Andy Harding and just some of our quiz teams' members from near and far.

All the money raised will go towards changing the lives of some of the of the people in the greatest need, all around our world. For example, £16 can release two complete households from hunger by simply giving them 5kg of weather-proof seeds to produce an abundant harvest.

On behalf of Tearfund we thank everyone who took part for your generosity.

New Year Jokes and Trivia

My wife still hasn't told me what my New Year's resolutions are.

My friend asked me where I see myself in the New Year. I don't know as I don't have 2021 vision.

> Why do you need a jeweller on New Year's Eve?

To ring in the New Year.

What do you say when saying goodbye on New Year's Eve?

See you next year!

Where can you find comedians on New Year's Eve?

Waiting for the punchline!

Knock, knock Who's there?

Abby Abby who

Abby New Year!

What did the little champagne bottle call his father? Pop

Explaining God

By Danny Dutton, age 8 (written for homework)

ne of God's main jobs is making people. He makes them to replace the ones that die so there will be enough people to take care of things on earth. He doesn't make grown-ups, just babies. I think because they are smaller and easier to make. That way, he doesn't have to take up his valuable time teaching them to talk and walk. He can just leave that to mothers and fathers.

God's second most important job is listening to prayers. An awful lot of this goes on, since some people, like preachers and things, pray at times besides bed time. God doesn't have time to listen to the radio or TV because of this. Because he hears everything there must be a terrible lot of noise in is ears, unless he has thought of a way to turn it off. God sees everything and hears everything and is everywhere which keeps him pretty busy. So you shouldn't go wasting his time by going over your mum and dad's head asking for something they've said you can't have.

Jesus is God's Son. He used to do all the hard work like walking on water and performing miracles and trying to teach the people who didn't want to learn about God. They finally got tired of him preaching to them and Jesus said they didn't know what they were doing and to forgive them and God said OK. His dad (God) appreciated everything that he had done and all his hard work on earth so he told him he didn't have to go out on the road any more, he could stay in heaven. So he did. And now he helps his dad out by listening to prayers and seeing things which are important for God to take care of and which ones he can take care of himself without having to bother God. Like a secretary only more important.

You can pray any time you want and they are sure to hear you because they got it worked out so one of them is on duty all the time.

But you shouldn't just always think of what God can do for you. I think God put me here and he can take me back anytime he pleases. And that's why I believe in God.

Two's company, three's a crowd - A Curate's Egg piece from Lyn

ow was your Christmas? Different? I was talking to someone just before Christmas who was looking forward to their first Christmas with their new addition to the family. Instead of being two they would be three. He recognised it would be different from previous Christmases but can anything prepare us for changes in our household numbers? Whether it's children returning from university for Christmas, or welcoming extended family once again to join us for our Christmas bubble window, or temporarily moving back into a family home years after leaving or the death of a partner, all these changes in the composition of our households make our lives different and often challenging. Our comfort and joy hedgehogs have been joined by a third in the feeding station – not only is it crowded but there's pushing and shoving going on as to who can get to the food.

Mary and Joseph's new addition to their household certainly changed and challenged their lives. Jesus the baby, became Jesus the pre-teen, then a teen and finally a man. But that's jumping ahead a bit. Let's go back to the baby Jesus. The birth of a child is often accompanied by visitors, carrying cards and cooing over the baby and Jesus' birth was no exception. (well they might not have given cards!) A week after his birth when his parents went to the temple to thank God for his birth, one person, Simeon, on seeing the baby, tells Mary "a sword will pierce your soul". Jesus' birth brought challenges to his family. A change in circumstances for Mary and Joseph. We don't know much about Jesus' early life; we don't know how his parents handled bringing up the Son of God. Except we are told every year they went to Jerusalem, to attend the Feast of the Passover. They kept the faith. They drew strength to cope with the challenges of family life from their belief in God and others who shared their belief in God. This new year, gives you the opportunity to seek strength from God and the members of the churches in the Venta Group – let us know how we can help you and may you pray, Lord help me to turn to you and find strength in you when I face changes

New Year Comments

This New Year I am going to make a resolution I can keep. No dieting all year long.

An optimist stays up until midnight to see the New Year in.

A pessimist stays up to make sure the old year leaves - perhaps a good idea for 2020!

Youth is when you're allowed to stay up late on New Year's Eve.

Middle age is when you're forced to.

New Year's Day Prayer for Everybody

Dear Lord

So far this year I've done well. I haven't gossiped, I haven't lost my temper, I haven't been greedy, grumpy, nasty, selfish or overindulgent. I'm very thankful for that. But in a few minutes, Lord, I'm going to get out of bed and, from then on, I'm probably going to need a lot more help.

Amen

The internet was the source for all the above.

Happy New Year

by Eostre

 \mathbf{H} appy New Year to all

A time to reflect and give thanks

Perhaps to dream and a time to look forward

Pondering on what might have been

Yet a time of expectancy of what lies ahead

New beginnings with a New Year

Ever hoping and praying for a better future

Whilst remembering and learning from the past

 \mathbf{Y} ears go by so treasure each moment

 ${f E}$ njoy those precious times

An opportunity to change things for the better

Roll on 2021!



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Sunday 3rd January 9.30 am	Caistor St Edmund	Praise and Worship
Sunday 17th January 9am	Caistor St Edmund	Holy Communion
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LightHouse family sessions

9.30am on our Youtube channel on 10th, 17th, 31st January 4pm in person at Stoke Church on 24th January— email cathrynbake<u>r@gmail.com to book</u>

Caistor church is normally open from 10-4 on Wednesdays and Sundays. At the moment everything is of course subject to change, so please keep checking our website, Facebook, and Youtube. Please get in touch if we can help you in any way.

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New Year Wordsearch

BEGINNING	FOUNTAINHEAD	LIGHT
CLEAN	FRESH	NEW
COMMENCEMENT	FUTURE	OPPORTUNITY
COMMITMENT	GENESIS	PROMISES
DAWN	GOD	RESOLUTIONS
DECIDE	HOPE	RESOLVE
DISCIPLES	INCEPTION	START
ETERNAL	JESUS	UNDERTAKE
FORWARD	LIFE	YEAR





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