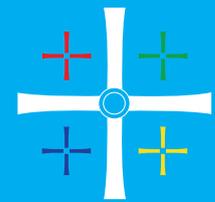


Free for All



THE MAGAZINE OF THE VENTA GROUP

FEBRUARY 2018

Hopefully something to make you smile!



A POEM BY THE LATE SPIKE MILLIGAN

Smiling is infectious
You catch it like the flu

When someone smiled at me today
I started smiling too

I walked around the corner
And someone saw me grin

When he smiled I realised
I had passed it on to him

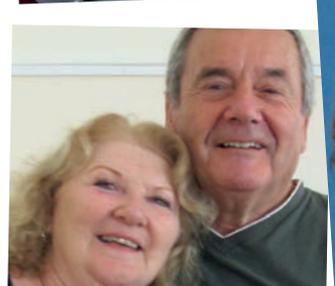
I thought about the smile
And then realised its worth

So if you feel a smile begin
Don't leave it undetected

Start an epidemic
And get the world infected.

*Let's all pass on our smiles to others
today (and in the days to come).*

*Maybe we really can make
the world a better place!*



We are delighted to announce that we have now appointed Freyja Mardell as our new Church Administrator who can be reached via the office admin email admin@venta-group.org

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Turning Point

For some people February is a meh* month. A month that has no joy to it. In fact for many it's the month when the financial reality of Christmas hits home – with the credit card bill needing to be paid. I suppose I used to think of February as a nuisance. A month to be endured – particularly as we often had snow. But the birth of my son in February became the turning point to seeing it differently.

The pregnancy, particularly after I started maternity leave, was a difficult time. I had to be hospitalised a month before the expected birth and in the end, because of concern for my health, I was induced. So when he was born there was a sense of, yeah now we can get on with life, except I had to make a decision. I had lost so much blood I needed a transfusion but the news headlines at the time were of stories of contaminated blood and the resulting health problems people were suffering. I struggled to make that decision. I floundered. Despite my family all encouraging me to have the transfusion, it took me five days to agree. That became a turning point in my recovery.

Over the years February has become a joyous month. A month to look forward to – birthday presents to buy, birthday celebrations to plan and enjoy. But also noticing the little things in nature that happen in February, particularly snowdrops. The sight of snowdrops signify a turning point, a turning point in the seasons, of spring and new beginnings. Snowdrops are known as Candlemas bells – because they appear around the time when the church celebrates Candlemas or The Purification of the Blessed Virgin Mary. A time when the church acknowledges that after the birth of Jesus, Mary and Joseph took Jesus according to Jewish custom to the temple and offered two doves. A turning point for them, marking a new beginning and also acknowledging where that beginning comes from, God.

Snowdrops with their white flowers and green leaves display the offering of a new beginning, a turning point. Often I try to visit Walsingham Abbey to see the abundance of snowdrops in the grounds but if I leave it to February half term it's too late. This year in the middle of half term, the church has a turning point. It begins the season of Lent with Ash Wednesday. A time when we remember one of the turning points in Jesus' life, he entered the desert, fasted and prayed for 40 days, and drew close to God.

We in the churches in the Venta Group will have the opportunity to draw closer to God as we have breakfast and meet on Saturday mornings in Lent in our villages. Perhaps you would like to join us? Just email Rob or I to let us know you're coming. Enjoy breakfast with others seeking a turning point in their lives, from focussing on themselves to considering how God calls us to live according to his word. For February can be a turning point for all of us. A turning to God, the creator of all things, including snowdrops and people. A turning point to seeing life differently.

** Editor's note – the word "meh" may be new to some of us as it turns out to be a modern texting word for something like "UGH" and is pronounced in a similar way I understand.*

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

CHURCH ADMINISTRATOR

For any admin inquiries please email Freyja Mardell admin@venta-group.org

CURATE

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

www.venta-group.org

 [@venta-group](https://twitter.com/venta-group)

CHURCHWARDENS

Stoke Holy Cross & Dunston
Viv (493438) & Roy (493595)

Arminghall

Pat (492622) & Annie (495580)

Caistor St Edmund

Jani (493572) & Graham (493430)

ST GEORGE'S HALL BOOKINGS:

Joyce Williams 492143

STOKE CHURCH HALL BOOKINGS:

Viv Carrington 493438

STOKE HOLY CROSS PAVILION BOOKINGS:

Barbara Cattermole (Parish clerk)
530739

STOKE HOLY CROSS FUEL ALLOTMENT TRUST – TRUSTEE VACANCY

CAN YOU HELP?

This local charity, which considers requests for financial assistance from anyone living within the parish of Stoke Holy Cross who is suffering from "need, hardship, or distress", would like to appoint a new Trustee, ideally someone resident within, or with local knowledge of, the village of Stoke Holy Cross.

The role is voluntary (i.e. unpaid) but not particularly time-consuming - Trustees normally meet only twice per year - and local knowledge is more relevant than past experience.

If you are interested, and think that you might be able to assist the Trust in this role, please contact David Dobson, 25, Carol Close, Upper Stoke Holy Cross, NR14 8NN (01508-495182), by 28th February 2018.

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.



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My Visit to The Holy Land

14th February (Ash Wednesday) 7.30pm – Stoke Holy Cross Church Hall

As I write this, I am preparing to visit Israel with fellow clergy from the Diocese of Norwich for eight days from 29 January. We will be led by the Bishop of Norwich (Bishop Graham) and will have the opportunity to visit places mentioned in the bible as well as meet people who live and work in Israel today. This is the first time I have visited Israel and I anticipate it will be challenging and thought provoking. Therefore I invite you to join me on this evening as I reflect on my experience and spend some time thinking and praying as we enter the season of Lent. No previous knowledge of Israel (or Lent!) is required to participate in the evening, just an enquiring mind. If you need a lift to the hall, please let me know by the 12th and we can arrange this – my contact details are elsewhere in this magazine. *Lyn Marsh*

Ash Wednesday and Lent

Ash Wednesday, the day after Shrove Tuesday (or Pancake Day), is the first day of Lent. It is a time for saying sorry for doing things wrong and a reminder that we are loved by Jesus. In some churches, an ash cross is marked on people's foreheads. The cross is a reminder that God loves and forgives us.

Lent is a time for remembering that Jesus fasted for forty days in the wilderness. Traditionally it is a time for giving something up but it could also be a time for changing behaviour into something new. If you would like to join in either the Ash Wednesday morning service or the evening reflection service.

Shrove Tuesday

Shrove Tuesday sounds like a really old-fashioned name, doesn't it? Obviously it has been around a long time because we don't use the word 'shrove' any more (well in our household we don't!) 'Shrove' actually is quite a strange word and we don't really have a similar word today instead of it, as it means being forgiven for wrongdoings. Today in some churches people go to confession on this day to say sorry for the things which they have done wrong, to cleanse themselves before the beginning of Lent on the following day (known as Ash Wednesday).

On Shrove Tuesday customs vary from country to country but there is always a similar theme of being a day of cleansing the soul and also a day of celebration, a day to feast before Lent begins. In times gone by, it was a day of using up all the rich things in the larder before a time of fasting before Easter.

Today Shrove Tuesday is generally remembered now as Pancake Day (it is also known as 'Mardi Gras' in some countries, which is the French for 'Fat Tuesday').

Pancake Recipe

Ingredients

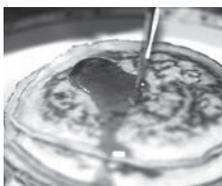
4 oz plain flour (sifted)

Pinch of salt

1 egg

½ pt semi-skimmed milk

1 tbsp sunflower or vegetable oil (for frying)



Method

1. Sift the flour and salt into a large mixing bowl.
2. Make a well into the centre of the flour and break the eggs into it. Whisk the eggs, using either a whisk or a fork, making sure you get all the flour from the edge of the bowl into the mixture.
3. Gradually add small quantities of the milk and water mixture, still mixing. The lumps will gradually disappear as you whisk. Keep whisking until the mixture is smooth and is the consistency of smooth cream. Then put the batter mixture in a jug.
4. Heat the frying pan over a moderate heat with a teaspoon of oil.
5. Let the pan get really hot and pour some batter into the pan, tilting the pan to move the mixture around for a thin and even layer.
6. Cook the pancake mixture for about 30 seconds till it is no longer liquid and comes away easily from the pan. 7. Use a palette knife, or similar implement, to flip it over. Or toss it if you dare! Make sure the pancake is flat and cook for a further 30 seconds.

7. Shrove Tuesday pancakes are traditionally served with lemon and sugar but do have fun adding your own toppings. Children tend to like maple syrup as in the picture.

This is the recipe which we use at home, which we find usually works well, but you probably have your own. Please do send us photos of your finished pancakes.



SERVICES FOR FEBRUARY IN THE VENTA GROUP OF CHURCHES

4th Feb 9.00 am	2nd Sunday before Lent Traditional Holy Communion <i>Caistor St Edmund Church</i>
10.30 am	Informal Holy Communion <i>Stoke Holy Cross Church</i>
11th Feb 9.00 am	Sunday next before Lent Traditional Holy Communion <i>Arminghall Church</i>
9.30 am	Praise & Worship <i>Caistor St Edmund Church</i>
10.30 am	Café Church <i>Stoke Holy Cross Church Hall</i>
14th Feb 10.00 am	Ash Wednesday Venta Group Communion for Ash Wednesday <i>Arminghall Church</i>
7.30 pm	Reflective evening for Ash Wednesday <i>Stoke Holy Cross Church Hall</i>
18th Feb 9.30 am	Lent 1 Family Service <i>Caistor St Edmund Church</i>
11.00 am	Traditional Holy Communion <i>Stoke Holy Cross Church</i>
6.30 pm	The Gathering <i>Stoke Holy Cross Church</i>
25th Feb 9.00 am	Lent 2 Traditional Holy Communion <i>Caistor St Edmund Church</i>
10.30 am	Sunday 4 Everyone <i>Stoke Holy Cross Church Hall</i>
4.00 pm	Evening Service <i>Arminghall Church</i>

We always do our best to come and say hello to new people moving into the villages where possible, and are happy to come and visit if you would like us to pray God's blessing over your new home, for example. Please be in touch with Rob or the churchwardens if you would like us to come and see you...



BABY JESUS STONES

I wonder how many folks found one of the Baby Jesus stones that were hidden around the village just before Christmas.

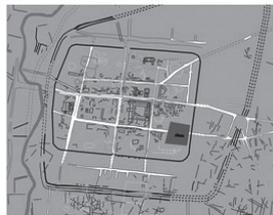
Sarah sent us these pictures of the one Dominic found.

As magazine editors Eostre and Henry are always delighted to receive any photos of what you have been doing locally to publish with your consent.



STOKE HOLY CROSS TUESDAY GROUP

You are all warmly invited to the Group's February meeting, which is due to take place on the 20th of the month at 2 o'clock – an afternoon meeting so that you can reach home before dark! During her career, our Chairman, Joy Clarke, taught what was then termed 'Domestic Science', and many of you will remember with gratitude being taught the basics of home cooking – and yes, this includes husbands! After retirement, she taught her subject to men currently residing in H.M.Prison, Wayland, and it is this period of her life that she will tell us about. It promises to be an interesting subject, and just think how a good laugh will brighten up the dull days of February....



THE NORFOLK ARCHAEOLOGICAL TRUST



Caistor St Edmund

Caistor Roman Project

Two further excavations are now planned in 2018 to reveal more of this amazing site from 28th April to 7th May and 20th August to 3rd September (both provisional dates). Maybe you would like to know more and even get involved?

Working in partnership with the University of Nottingham and Norfolk Archaeological Trust (NAT), Caistor Roman Project (CRP) is a registered charity. CRP was set-up to in 2009 to encourage community involvement in archaeological research in and around the Roman town of Venta Icenorum (present-day Caistor St. Edmund). It is a nationally important site as it is one of only three Roman regional capitals in Britain that were not succeeded by medieval and modern towns; the others are Wroxeter and Silchester. The aim of CRP is to investigate the origins of the site in the late Iron Age and its development as a Roman town as well as the relationship between the town and its surrounding countryside.

CRP is in the middle of a Heritage Lottery funded grant which has enabled it to do geophysical surveying, local research and excavations around the Roman town.

If you would like to become a member or find out more about CRP and the Roman Town, please visit the CRP website at caistorromanproject.org.uk or email crpmembership@gmail.com.

Membership of CRP costs just £25 (or £15 for students) for a year from January to December and being a member will give you access to the excavations (as a helper or to dig), training, workshops and the opportunity to get involved in some of the "behind the scenes" work, such as finds recording. You will also receive a copy of the Caistor Clarion by email which details events and other activities you may be interested in, like tour guiding.

Find out more about the Christian faith

pilgrim

A COURSE FOR THE CHRISTIAN JOURNEY

Join us for Lent this year as we reflect on the amazing words of Jesus in Beatitudes—teaching that really turns the way we look at things upside down, and introduces us to God's big vision for his kingdom coming in the world. We will be using the Pilgrim material that was so popular last year to explore the themes of

- | | | |
|-----------------|---------------------------------|----------------------|
| Openness to God | Thirsting for what is right | Living transparently |
| Peacemaking | Being citizens of God's kingdom | Foundations |

Once again we will be having a series of breakfasts around the villages where we can spend more time together creating community and deepening discipleship through food, and some listening, talking, and prayer. We would love people from across the group to join us at each of these. You can sign up on a Sunday, or email lent@venta-group.org. 8.30-10am every week.

- | | |
|--|----------------------------------|
| 17th February, Arminghall Village Hall | 24th February, Stoke Church Hall |
| 3rd March, Stoke Church Hall | 10th March, Stoke Church Hall |
| 17th March, Caistor St Edmund | 24th March, Caistor St Edmund |

SAINT MARY'S CHURCH ARMINGHALL

Jim and Pat want to say a big thank you to everyone who has helped in the church during our illness. Pam as usual has worked very hard and a huge thank you also to Joyce and her merry band who have kept the church in such excellent condition.

Christmas at Caistor Church

There was a large congregation for the Carol Service and we welcomed also some of the boys and members of staff from Elizabeth House Beccles, who joined us for the service. Thank you to everyone who brought presents for the boys to take back with them. Thank you also to those who provided the Festive Refreshments before the service and also for the ladies who decorated the church for the Christmas Services.

With money from the offertories at the two Christmas Services and further money agreed by the PCC from church funds we have been able to send a cheque for £422.00 to each of our two nominated charities this year. The YMCA, Norwich. and the Tearfund Christmas Appeal which is for woman in the Central African Republic and around the world who have suffered due to conflict and poverty. (More details can be found on the Tearfund website) Letters of thanks and appreciation have been received from both charities.



St George's Hall Dementia Support Cafe

A comfortable, caring and supportive social setting for people living with dementia and their carers meeting on 2nd and 4th Mondays of each month (not Bank Holidays) from 10am till 12 noon at St George's Hall, Long Lane, Upper Stoke Holy Cross, NR14 8ND.



We run occasional subsidised excursions. Also included is a separate carers' meeting place providing an adjoining space to relax and useful for sharing of ideas, practical support and advice. The Café is run by a team of dedicated and caring volunteers, and funded entirely by donations, grants and fund-raising activities. For further details please ring 01508 493661 or 492938.

The Dementia Group members have all really enjoyed some great times during last year with many busy and happy meetings at St Georges Hall. Also our events have included our trip to Pensthorpe nature reserve, a Sing-along, Film Shows, Carols singing with children from Poringland School and our recent very merry Christmas Party with a guest singer.

The group and café are proving to be a wonderful opportunity for those with dementia and their carers to enjoy a relaxing time together to the benefit and enjoyment of all who come. If you know someone local with a form of dementia do mention the café and we are always pleased to welcome more volunteers to help too. Dates for February are Monday 12th and 26th.

Newcomers are always very welcome to simply drop in to the Café (or ring one of the above numbers before to learn more if you wish). And we are naturally delighted to welcome any new volunteers, even if you can't come every time.

www.stgeorges-dementia-support-group.btck.co.uk

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ALLSTARS CLUB after school for 4 -11s

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All Foundation-Year 6 children are welcome to join us at our brand new after-school club, as well as any older helpers who would like to join in!

If you'd like to come along, or find out more, contact us on admin@venta-group.org, or 01508 492305.

We really need to know in advance if you are coming to help us plan ahead, but please do just come along if you don't manage to get in touch for any reason. All children must be signed in and out by a responsible adult.

Thursdays 3.30-4.45 in the Church Hall

25th Jan 22nd Feb

22nd March 26th April

24th May 28th June

The Venta group of churches
www.venta-group.org

STOKE HOLY CROSS THURSDAY CLUB

Our first meeting for 2018 is on Thursday the 1st February, 2018 - 1.30 for 2pm at St. Georges Hall Upper Stoke Holy Cross. We will have our usual table top stall and a raffle. If you are at a loss why not come and join us for an enjoyable afternoon of socializing and cards or dominos, you will be made very welcome.

Our dates for **Bingo** are - Wednesday 14th and 28th - eyes down 1.45pm

Our dates for **Carpet Bowls** are - Wednesday 7th and 21st - 1.30pm start - cost for this £2.

Things Kids Say

3-year-old Reese heard saying
"Our Father, Who does art in heaven,
Harold is His name. Amen"

Another little boy was overheard praying:
"Lord, don't worry if you can't make me
a better boy, I'm having a real good time
like I am."

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Adam's Garden Tips for February

The arrival of spring can vary each year by as much as a month or so, and combined with your soil type will depend on when you can make planting progress. Towards the end of the month, on a light sandy soil it is worth considering some tentative early sowings. Adam likes to start with some less reliable germinators, such as parsnips, so that he has time for a second sowing if necessary. Parsnip seed is best sown directly into the soil in situ. If these are started in modules or trays the tap root can become twisted and they will not grow as straight as they should.

Early sowing can also take place under cloche protection, or in the cold frame. Cut- and-come again salad crops, radishes, spinach, rocket, spring onions, and turnips. If you have managed to get your seed potatoes early, now is the time to start the chitting process which means giving them plenty of light at a reasonable temperature to encourage the growth of early strong shoots. This can be done on an egg tray or on crumpled newspaper.

Late pruning of soft fruit cane fruit such as raspberries should be drawing to a close, and the debris from strawberries rows can be

raked off now in order to minimise disease carry over. April has found that the rows in her strawberry patch have merged into one large bed, so she will be seen with her spade chopping out the unwanted plants and just leaving neater rows. Next year she will train her runners into the rows to try to avoid this happening.

Towards the end of the month rhubarb can be forced, either by using a terracotta purpose-made forcer or simply unturned buckets or dustbins, to exclude light and encourage beautiful rosy pink, delicately flavoured, early rhubarb stems. So delicious.

On the colder, wetter clay soils, black plastic can be used to speed up warming the soil for sowing. It can smother some weed growth. Don't forget to weight the plastic to prevent it flying around the garden.

Remember to continue with your planning for the summer season and Adam suggests that you make a resolution to try at least one new crop each year. He wants to try melons this year and April is considering aubergine.

In season to eat, there are still Brussel sprouts, kale, leeks, winter cabbages, sprouting broccoli, and parsnips.

Baked Apples

The basic recipe is very simple but you can add many variations according to taste. The ingredients in brackets are optional extras.

- One smallish cooking apple per person
- Sultanas
- Cinnamon
- Brown Sugar
- (Zest of an orange /lemon)
- (Chopped nuts)
- (Leftover mincemeat)

Pre heat the oven to 1800C/Gas Mark 4

Wash and core the apples. This is best done with an apple corer but take care if you do it with a knife. Then cut a ring just through the apple skin about half way up the apple. Stand the apples in an oven proof dish and then mix the sultanas, sugar and cinnamon (and optional items) and stuff the centres of the apples with the mixture. Sprinkle two teaspoons of brown sugar over each apple (some people dot with butter), and bake in a moderate oven for about 45 minutes until the apples are soft throughout. Serve with your favourite accompaniment.

Valentine's Day Trivia

(with thanks to various internet sources)

Valentine's Day is celebrated on 14th February (this year it is on a Wednesday)

It is reputed that St Valentine, a Roman clergyman, was executed on 14th February around 270 AD.

The oldest Valentine's card was made in the 15th century.

It became popular to send Valentine cards, messages and gifts during the 17th century.

In 1825 the Post Office handled more than 200,000 letters and cards on Valentine's Day.

In Medieval times, it was traditional for girls to eat unusual foods on St Valentine's Day, as it was thought that they would then dream of their future husband.

The oldest Valentine card is to be found in the British Museum.

Commercial Valentine cards were started in the 19th century.

Traditionally Valentine cards were unsigned, so that the recipient had to guess who had sent the card.

More recently, red roses are often given on Valentine's Day as a symbol of love.

Will you be sending a Valentine's card this year? Perhaps it might also be a great idea to contact somebody you know who is unlikely to receive a card and who might feel lonely and unloved on this day. You'd make their day feel very special indeed.

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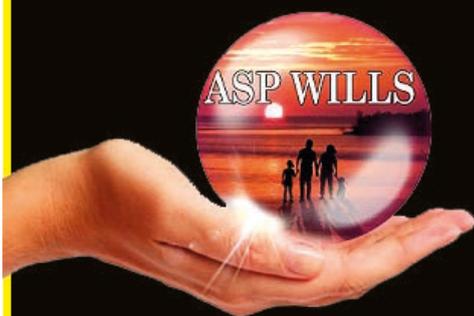
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