Freefor All +++



THE MAGAZINE OF THE VENTA GROUP

DECEMBER 2021

CHRISTMAS 2021

IN STOKE, DUNSTON, CAISTOR AND ARMINGHALL

This is how God showed his love among us - He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him (1 John 4 v. 9)

LOVE CAME DOWN

12

10.30am Family Carol Service* STOKE HOLY CROSS CHURCH 6.30pm Carol Service* ARMINGHALL CHURCH

5pm **Carol Service*** CAISTOR ST EDMUND CHURCH (Join us for refreshments from 4.15) *or live on your doorstep on YouTube*



4.30pm Christmas Eve Crib Service* STOKE HOLY CROSS CHURCH 11.30pm **Carols, Readings & Communion** CAISTOR ST EDMUND CHURCH



10.30am Christmas Celebration Service STOKE HOLY CROSS CHURCH

2nd Jan

10.30am Holy Communion CAISTOR ST EDMUND CHURCH

(There is no service in the group on Boxing Day this year.)

PLEASE NOTE all the services marked with an asterisk * will need to be booked in advance – please see details on page 6

www.venta-group.org | www.facebook.com/ventachurches | rob@venta-group.org | 01508 492305

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Hello again!

t's lovely to be back writing again, looking forward to Christmas, after three amazing months of sabbatical leave – a sort of occasional extended break for vicars. But before the looking forward, a chance to look back for a moment and say a huge thank you to everyone in our churches and wider community who have worked so hard in the meantime. From everything I have heard over the last week it sounds like things have gone even better than before, which is just so encouraging.

One of the things I did towards the beginning of my sabbatical, back in early September, was spend a week up in Yorkshire, mainly on retreat in the Dales. One afternoon, as the temperature nudged beyond 25C, I had the brilliant idea of going up the biggest hill around. All was well for the 20 minutes or so I spent on the flat, but the climbing soon became a little challenging. I got about 2/3 of the way up, 500m or so, before I happened on what must be almost the highest scout hostel in England. I sat for a while against the wall in an inviting patch of shade.

I spent ten or 15 minutes contemplating whether I needed to go to the top. As I cooled down a bit, and began to feel that I wouldn't be requiring the services of the defibrillator attached to the wall of the tiny chapel, I concluded that I could probably manage it, but that it didn't matter if I got up there or not. I had come away to spend time with God, not climb to the top of hills, and he seemed quite happy to meet me where I was.

Christmas is coming, even sooner now that you are reading this than it was when I wrote it, and this year we will be making a lot of use of the phrase "Love came down". So much of life is a struggle to prove ourselves, to prove something. I can get to the top of the hill. I can be the best at my job. I can have the perfect family. We can wear ourselves out to the point of exhaustion and worse, trying to achieve these things, all the while knowing we can't ever really get to the top. What we certainly can't do is climb to the level of God's extraordinary, matchless perfection. It's not so much the Yorkshire Dales as Everest and beyond. The Psalms catch it: "Who can ascend the mountain of the Lord? Who can stand in his holy place?"

But it doesn't matter, because Love came down. Christmas, and Christianity, and Jesus Christ himself, are always first of all about God coming down, stooping, bending, breaking to meet us through Jesus his Son. Jesus alone can climb God's mountain and stand in his holy place, but he has chosen to come down to us, so we can know God's life and grace and forgiveness – so we can know that this Christmas, and always, love has come down.

Happy Christmas everyone!



This Christmas, we would love to offer some little gifts – biscuits, chocolate, and other festive treats – to people from around the villages who have had a particularly hard time recently. So if you can think of someone who is poorly, lonely, bereaved, struggling with family, work – anything really - who might like to receive a little goodie bag, please let us know. At the same time, if you would like to contribute a few things like this that we can distribute before Christmas, please put them in one of the foodbank boxes around the villages, or drop them in at the Vicarage, as soon as you can. Any of the usual supplies will continue to be passed on to people who need them, or given to Norwich Foodbank. Thank you!

VICAR OF THE VENTA GROUP

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For all administrative enquiries please contact admin@venta-group.org

Search Facebook and Youtube for "Venta group of churches"

www.venta-group.org

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CHURCHWARDENS

Stoke Holy Cross & Dunston Viv (493438) & Andy (07485 151051)

> Arminghall Annie (495580)

Caistor St Edmund Jani (493572) & Lia (494137)

ST GEORGE'S HALL BOOKINGS:

Joyce Williams 492143

STOKE CHURCH HALL BOOKINGS:

Viv Carrington 493438

STOKE HOLY CROSS PAVILION BOOKINGS:

Anita Rose (Parish clerk) 01362 858356

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IN A FUTURE MAGAZINE

just get in touch and we will see what we can do! Email: ventafree4all@outlook.com

FROM THE REGISTERS

FUNERAL

GERRY LACEY

30th November

at STOKE / DUNSTON

We continue to pray for all those who have lost loved ones recently, or are remembering someone particularly at this time of year.

We are always happy to record the names of anyone from the villages whose funeral has been held recently, even if it wasn't taken by a member of our ministry team.

FOR ALL COPY PLEASE

send by email to Henry and Eostre Caswell 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.



From the Curate's Egg: Out of the ordinary

Take a moment to think of the words of a carol or a Christmas song. I don't expect you are remembering Do not be afraid and yet they are recounted in the birth of Jesus in the bible. The shepherds are told by the angels, Do not be afraid (Luke 2:10). I think if I had been up on a hillside, in the dark and dead of night I would have been afraid suddenly seeing a bright light and an angel. It's totally unexpected. Something out of the ordinary. Before Jesus was born we read how an angel appeared to Mary, a virgin, and the angel said to her "Do not be afraid, Mary" (Luke 1:30). It's totally unexpected. Something out of the ordinary.

Do not be afraid are words we would not expect at Christmas, they are out of the ordinary and yet they are words I need to hold onto and they encourage me to reach out like the shepherds and Mary did. During the pandemic there have been times when I have been concerned, and even frightened – but it was an out of the ordinary time. During the whole of my life in fact, there have been times when I have been concerned, frightened about what I saw happening or what might happen – usually when something out of the ordinary has happened, something unexpected. A sudden bereavement. A car crash. The onset of illness. The after-effects of giving birth. Times when I couldn't control what was happening. In those times, like the shepherds and Mary, I need to be pointed to the one who is in control, God.

God sent Jesus. Out of the ordinary, into the ordinary. God sent Jesus into the world. Love came down. To a world that did not recognise him, did not receive him yet some did and to those who believe in him, he made them his children. It was nothing they could do. Nothing I could do. Yet he has made me his child. And you could become one of his children too – but are you afraid? Like Mary and the shepherds, like me, to relinquish control and to instead say Yes. Yes to be his servant. Yes to the good news, to go and find out more like the shepherds did, to a place (Bethlehem) and a people (Mary, Joseph and Jesus) or churches in the Venta Group and the body of Christ (Christians). Why not do something out of the ordinary – come and worship Christ the Lord this Christmas at one of your local churches?

Embers:



A brand new youth club for Stoke!

fantastic group of young people have been meeting on Thursday nights, for several weeks, at the church hall in Stoke. We've been recording music, playing pool and table tennis, taking part in crazy quizzes and generally hanging out, having fun together.

In early November, it was unanimously decided that we had a great thing going on! It was also agreed that we should meet every week instead of fortnightly and give ourselves a name. And so 'Embers' was born.

We believe that young people are packed full of potential and passion. Every one is created unique and valuable and each has something to give to the world. 'Embers' is there to provide a safe environment for our members to express themselves, explore the big questions of faith and fan into flame the gifts and talents that they all have within them.

Our programme is exciting and varied with ideas coming directly from the young people. There is something for everybody. What's more it's free! We do not want money to be an issue to anyone. There will be a voluntary donation jar for those who want to support the work but it's completely optional. Drinks and snacks will be provided every week.

So, spread the word and tell your young people. Let's get this good thing 'out there'!

Weekly on Thursdays, 7.30pm - 9pm Stoke Holy Cross Village Hall. If you have any questions, please contact me on gwatson@norwichyfc.co.uk.

Gary

Drop in join us for Coffee or Tea and a Chat

Have you missed the opportunity to meet locally, during the day time, for a tea or coffee with those who live in our villages?

Are you interested in meeting new people?

At the Stoke church hall we have we have set up such an opportunity once a month at least. So whether you've lived here for many years or a few months, please feel welcome to pop in and join us between

> 10:15 - 11:30 on 16th December 20th January 15th February

for a hot drink and a chat. We'd love to make your acquaintance.

Thursdays 7.30 - 9 pm Stoke Holy Cross Church Hall

2nd Dec. Christmas Film 9th Dec. Indoor Sports 16th Dec. Music Recording & Board Games 23rd Dec. Christmas Party

For more details contact: Gary Watson on gwatson@norwichyfc.co.uk

> Venta Group of Churches

@@stoke.embers

YOUTH FOR CHRIST

Stoke Holy Cross Thursday Club

for the over 55's meets at St.Georges Hall, Upper Stoke Holy Cross the first Thursday each month

THURSDAY 2nd DECEMBER 2021

Christmas celebration on our Club Day Please arrive for 12 noon as Julie Dawn will entertain us and we have an Afternoon Tea booked

THURSDAY 9TH DECEMBER 2021

Final 'get together' for the year "Christmas Bingo". Donation of an appropriate seasonal raffle prize would be appreciated. **1.30pm** for Eyes Down

Please give Carol a ring on 01508 492132 if you are interested in joining our Thursday Club for 2022

A little bit of Norfolk dialect

Cor that weren't half cold the other day. I heard that boi Harry say "Thas cold enough for a walking stick! And that look real bad over Will's mother's" Cos the weather is all upsides now int it? Some people think climate change is "a load of ol squit" Not me, summer used to be summer when farmhands used to go to Swaffun for a days trashun fur northun thas suffin. The winters wu wholly cold, but we hud fun in the snow. Farther he made us a sled out of an ol door. We was warned not to go on the the icy pond - cos I dussent. We knew if we did Mum & Dad wouldn't harf mob us. Another thing we used to do was clar up trees and hang dead hogs. Quite an art pickin the roite branch not too big so the legs couldn't git a grip but strong enough so you dint fall orf. We took a friend one day to clamber up an ol oak tree. She dint get far when she start hollering for her mum. It turned out she got a small twiggy stick caught in her clothing leave you to guess where! I said " hold you hard" I'll git yew down. Soon as she was down she run orf blaring. She dint come agin! Yew hef't to larf.

Thank you to Ann for sending this in. Does anyone else have some local sayings they would like to share?

St George's Dementia

Support Group



his is held at St. George's Hall in Upper Stoke Holy Cross.

We meet on the **2nd** and **4th Monday 10am to 12noon** each month except bank holidays. This is a great place to relax for those living with dementia and their carers. Come along and join us for fun activities, refreshments and subsidised outings.

On **25th October** we had a Reminiscence session with Angela Bishop. It was very entertaining remembering all the tradesmen years ago that used to deliver goods to our doorsteps using a variety of vehicles. Everyone enjoyed the accompanying songs. During November we welcomed some new members and a Christmas themed craft session. **December 6th** is our Christmas lunch at The Old Feathers and **13th December** is our Café Christmas Party with music by Stewart Hull and a buffet lunch.

For more information please ring 01508 493661, 01508 495580 or 01508 49238.

Our website is: www.st.George's-dementia-support-group.org

Maybe we could pray for you?



We firmly believe in the power of prayer and regularly seem to have prayers answered.

Do you have things troubling you or your family and would love to know that people are praying for you?

Please feel free to pop a note into one of our churches or send a short email to Lyn@venta-group.org.

Whatever you tell us will remain safe with us. A small number of church members will be asked to simply pray for our Lord Jesus to provide a solution, without your name being given out. Or you might just give your concerns direct to Jesus – just talk to him and ask for what you need. And don't forget you prayed about it when perhaps things do improve!

Jesus tells us. 'Come to me, all who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest'.

HOW TO BOOK FOR CHRISTMAS SERVICES All Christmas events marked with a * MUST be booked in advance using the Christmas page of our website from 1st December. You can scan the code below for direct access to our booking page, or go to our website www.venta-group.org and look for the Christmas image above, or check our Facebook page, Venta group of churches.

If you will find it hard to book online, please call a churchwarden or the Vicarage for help from 1st December. If the Crib Service books up quickly we will make a second slot available via our website and Facebook. The Caistor carol service, and possibly some of our other events, will be streamed online on our YouTube page, "Venta group of churches".



We three kings of Orient are...

ave you ever stopped to really reflect on the words of a carol? Would you have written the same things as the writer? And what do the words actually mean? If you were to choose a gift to bring to Jesus, what would it be?

We three kings of Orient are Bearing gifts we traverse afar Field and fountain, moor and maintain Following yonder star

O Star of wonder, star of night Star with royal beauty bright Westward leading, still proceeding Guide us to thy Perfect Light

Born a King on Bethlehem's plain Gold I bring to crown Him again King forever, ceasing never Over us all to reign

O Star of wonder, star of night...

Frankincense to offer have I Incense owns a Deity night Prayer and praising, all men raising Worship Him, God most high O Star of wonder, star of night...

Myrrh is mine, its bitter perfume Breathes of life of gathering gloom Sorrowing, sighing, bleeding, dying Sealed in a stone-cold tomb

O Star of wonder, star of night...

Glorious now behold Him arise King and God and Sacrifice Alleluia, Alleluia Earth to heav'n replies

O Star of wonder, star of night Star with royal beauty bright Westward leading, still proceeding Guide us to Thy perfect light.

These might not be exactly the same as the words you sing to We three kings as there are various versions and adaptations over the years. But the message is the same in all of them.

I asked the question earlier 'What gift would you bring to Jesus'? The amazing thing is that no gifts are expected from us at all. He gives us new life in him. Thank you Jesus that you came down into this world to be our Saviour.

Eostre

A prayer to reflect on as we look forward to Christmas and celebrating Jesus's birth.

Christ as a light, illumine and guide me.

Christ as a shield, overshadow me.

Christ under me;

Christ over me;

Christ beside me on my left and my right.

This day be within and without me,

Lowly and meek, yet all-powerful.

Be in the heart of each to whom I speak;

In the mouth of each who speaks unto me.

This day be within and without me,

Lowly and meek, yet all-powerful.

Christ as a light; Christ as a shield,

Christ beside me on my left and my right.

Stoke Holy Cross church repairs appeal



First a big thank you to all those who have so generously contributed to the repairs fund which is growing nicely. With grants, donations and promises we have now reached over £10,000 so this will enable us to get started as soon as we can get a date from builders.

As we have explained before there is a lot that needs doing to preserve this wonderful old historic building so more help is still needed and we now find the splendid old beech tree is dying and sadly needs to be taken down very carefully as it sits amongst many graves. In due course a new tree will be planted.

Thank you again for your caring donations.

Poringland and District W.E.A – Adult Learning Within Reach

Spring Term 2022

"Defence of the Realm" given by Mary Fewster

This course charts the physical and documentary evidence of warfare and defence in East Anglia from the Middle Ages to the beginning of the 20th century, and its effects on the lives of the region's inhabitants.

Starting Thursday 13th January 2022 at 10.30 am at Poringland Community Centre, Overton's Way, Poringland, NR14 7WB

The course comprises 10 sessions of two hours each, plus a short break for tea coffee and biscuits. The cost is £79 for the course – free to those on certain means tested benefits. Places are limited and you can enrol online at wea.org.uk or by phoning 0300 303 3464, quoting course no.C2228271

For more information, please phone 01508 500993

Do come along and join us!

The WEA is a charity registered in England and Wales (no.1112775) and in Scotland (no.SC039239)

Our Community Choir



Love came down and changed the world forever. This is how God showed his love among us - He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him (1 John 4 v. 9).



Join us in celebrating the birth of Jesus Christ

at one of the special services planned for this Christmas, featuring the newly formed community choir which will entertain us with a collection of traditional carols and contemporary Christmas music, featuring our theme tune

"Love came down".

12th Dec - 10.30AM *Stoke Holy Cross - Family Carol Service
12th Dec - 6.30PM *Arminghall - Carols by candlelight
19th Dec - 5PM - *Caistor St Edmund - Carol Service + live broadcast
24th Dec - 4.30PM - *Stoke Holy Cross - Crib Service
24th Dec - 11.30PM - Caistor St Edmund - Midnight Service
25th Dec - 10.30AM - Stoke Holy Cross - Family Communion
26th Dec - No service
2nd Jan - 10.30AM - Caistor St Edmund - Holy Communion Service

*For these services please book to ensure you have a seat at venta-group.org

Please note that the early evening service at Caistor on 19th December will be live streamed on YouTube to enable the whole community to join in. We invite you to step onto your front door step and sing your hearts out with us.





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If you wish to register your interest or to book a visit, please phone or email.



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