



THE MAGAZINE OF THE VENTA GROUP

DECEMBER 2022

CHRISTMAS 2022





10.30am, 6.30pm Carols for everyone at Stoke and Arminghall







24





10.30am, 5pm Communion at Stoke and Carols at Caistor

2pm/2.45pm 1st Jan New Year walk, refreshments and prayer

4pm, 11.30pm

Crib service for all ages and

midnight communion

More details, including timings of all our Christmas events, on page 10, and in the Christmas card included with this month's magazine. Visit our website www.venta-group.org, or search Facebook and YouTube for Venta group of churches.





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ast week I was with some minister friends I meet up with a few times a year. We catch up and pray for each other, and end up talking about all sorts of different things. This time one of us wondered out loud whether it did anyone any good to be constantly checking the news to see what else might have gone wrong since last time we looked. As a group we're all roughly the same age, and we remembered back to when we were children, when it was pretty tricky to find a news bulletin between breakfast and lunch, or dinner and bedtime.

There are lots of reasons why reading too much news might be a problem, but one of them is probably the news itself! It's difficult to know which came first: did we decide we wanted to hear serious (so mostly bad) news, and so the newspapers printed that sort of thing, or did they decide the bad stuff was good for us, and so that was what they published?

The news stops being good for us when it makes us afraid. Do you look back now, like I do, and wonder how much the constant drip of statistics and reports about Covid made you even more afraid than you needed to be, horrible as the virus is and was?

Some of us in the churches have been thinking and praying about the Christmas story, and noticing the angel's words to the shepherds "not to be afraid, because there is good news." In an age when things have apparently got so bad that the Collins dictionary word of the year is "permacrisis", there is good news, so you don't have to be afraid.

The shepherds were simple people scratching out a living as best they could, but there was good news. Mary and Joseph were a young unmarried couple surrounded by rumour about her pregnancy, but there was good news. The wise men were foreigners receiving an uncertain welcome from the authorities, but there was good news. The whole nation lived under Roman occupation, which might have seemed as permanent as our crisis today, but there was good news.

I love the Emeli Sandé song Read all about it. I listen to it often, because it reminds me that as Christians we have good news to sing and to shout about, but often we are biting our tongue and the nation-changing words don't find their way out. We should be like the angel, daring the papers to print that good news, not being afraid.

This Christmas we want to help you not to be afraid, and to believe in spite of everything that there is good news. We're going to do that by not being afraid to sing and shout about the good news that we have. We're going to find our voices, and give you the chance to hear again about Jesus who has come into the world to bring good news that God is with us, and he loves us. Good news, the angel said, for everyone; good news for 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 (07777 675193)

> **Arminghall** Annie (495580)

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ST GEORGE'S HALL BOOKINGS:

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STOKE HOLY CROSS PAVILION BOOKINGS:

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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

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

FUNERALS

JOHN MYHILL

Wednesday 2nd November

WAVENEY CREMATORIUM

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.



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Looking forward or looking back?

t's that time of the year. December starts with the Christmas adverts in full swing, looking towards Christmas and then we'll be encouraged even more to look forwards between Christmas and the New Year to think about booking our next year holidays. December is also the time when we look back. We might have office parties and reminisce on who's no longer working for the company/institution and family get togethers too, let alone the films that turn our attention back to a time when it was more wonderful than now!

For my birthday this year my children bought me and my husband tickets to see a Christian songwriter, Graham Kendrick. He was celebrating 50 years of performing/writing. I am particularly reminded of him at Christmas. At the June concert he didn't play any Christmas songs but during the 1980s and 1990s churches at Christmas time did and many still do today. The song which is particularly on my mind this year is entitled God with us (He walked where I walk).

- He walked where I walk He stood where I stand He felt what I feel He understands He knows my frailty Shared my humanity Tempted in every way
- Yet without sin

If we focus on how the world is portrayed in the media, we are in dark days. If we look outside our windows, it's dark a lot more at this time of the year. If we look at ourselves in fact if we look anywhere other than Jesus, it seems dark, hopeless. But Jesus knows what it's like: he's walked on earth, he's felt pain, suffering, financial difficulty, he understands. He knows my failings, my frustrations, the things that annoy me because he's shared my humanity, he's been tempted in the same ways I am but he was without sin. He didn't allow himself to be drawn away from his walk with Father God. This first verse encourages me that there is someone who knows what I'm going through because they've experienced it. But there's a second verse:

One of a hated race Stung by the prejudice Suffering injustice Yet he forgives Wept for my wasted years Paid for my wickedness He died in my place That I might live

This second verse reminds me Jesus lived in an occupied country where his race was hated; he encountered prejudice and suffered injustice but he forgave. Do I? Do I judge others? Do I forgive others when they treat me unfairly? Yes Jesus shared my humanity, he is God with us, he walked where I walk, but he did something I, nor anyone else could do, he died that I might live, I might have eternal life. Let us look back to Jesus, born as a baby but let us also not forget to look forward to Easter in December, when Jesus died that I might live. Happy Christmas. Happy Easter.

PS You can find more songs by Graham Kendrick on YouTube or other channels. Why not search and listen to He walked where I walk (God with us) or Rumours of angels, a Christmas album of songs he wrote

STOKE HOLY CROSS THURSDAY CLUB

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 1st December 2022 at 1.30pm

Club Members Christmas Meal at The Old Feathers on Wednesday 7th December at 12.30pm

Christmas Bingo on Thursday 8th December eyes down at 1.00pm

We start back again in February so enjoy the festive break and thank you all for your support in 2022

THE GREATEST MAN IN HISTORY.

HE HAD NO SERVANTS YET THEY CALLED HIM MASTER.

HAD NO DEGREES YET THEY CALLED HIM TEACHER.

HAD NO MEDICINES YET THEY CALLED HIM HEALER.

HAD NO ARMY YET KINGS FEARED HIM.

HE WON NO MILITARY BATTLES YET HE CONQUERED THE WORLD.

HE COMMITTED NO CRIME YET THEY CRUCIFIED HIM.

HE WAS BURIED IN A TOMB YET HE LIVES TODAY.

HIS NAME IS JESUS.

Stoke Holy Cross Jubilee Wildflower Meadow

ollowing on from last month's article in the Free for All. We have now completed another phase and got the nest boxes up on
October the 18th as planned.

My Cousin Dominic kindly donated the lovely Tawny Owl box. This was a task to erect, finding a space in the lvy, using ropes and ladders with the help of Ray, Dave and Pauline. Dominic finally got it in place. He also made six bird boxes which are suitable for smaller birds such as Blue Tits, Great Tits and maybe even Nut Hatchers. These are all strongly made with metal plates around the holes to stop Woodpeckers and other birds enlarging the hole to steal the eggs or chicks when they hatch. He put an entrance

hole on the side of two of them, one right hand the other on the left hand side. leaving four of them with a front entrance. He also fitted all of these boxes on the trees for us. Hopefully some birds may choose to roost in these during the cold nights before snapping them up in the Spring to nest and raise their young in. I hope some of you will go over to the meadow and see if you can spot them all!

If you happen to see any birds checking them out let us know.

This meadow is for all of us to enjoy. There will be seating at a later date and a display board with information on. A work in progress.

Liz Dack







Maybe we could pray for you?

e 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 senior 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'.

Free for All

St. George's Dementia Support Group



any thanks to Neil and Emma who have volunteered to set up our tables and chairs for our group. It is much appreciated.

We warmly welcome people with dementia and their carers to our regular café sessions in St. Georges Hall, Upper Stoke, Holy Cross held 10 am to 12 midday on the second and fourth Monday mornings of each month (except bank holidays). There are always fun activities and entertainment to enjoy along with good conversation, helpful support and information plus refreshments. We also run occasional subsidised outings. There are no joining fees, just a small charge for refreshments no referral is required. We also welcome anyone interested in becoming a volunteer.

Our December dates are: 5th December & 12th December.

5th December is our pre-booked Christmas lunch at The Old Feathers and 12th December is our Christmas party (at the hall) with entertainment by Mr. S Hull

For further information call, 01508 493661, 01508 494742 or 01508 495580

Website is www.st.georges-dementia-support-group.uk

Shortbread Recipe

This recipe has been foolproof on the countless times it has been used in our household by Henry. Hope you enjoy it too.

Ingredients:

225g unsalted butter, softened (plus extra for greasing)110g caster sugar (plus extra for dusting)225g plain flour (plus extra for dusting)110g cornflour Pinch of salt

You will also need:

Baking parchment; Baking trays; Wire rack; Hand-held electric whisk or wooden spoon; Knife or biscuit cutter; Large bowl; and a rolling pin

Method:

- 1. Lightly butter two trays (or line with baking parchment)
- 2. Put the butter and sugar into a large bowl and cream together, using an electric hand-held whisk or a wooden spoon, until light and fluffy.
- 3. Sift the flour and cornflour into the bowl, add salt, then mix together until smoothly combined.
- 4. Tip the mixture out onto a lightly floured surface and knead to a soft dough.
- 5. Roll out the dough to a thickness of 1 cm. (if you prefer you can roll it between two pieces of baking parchment) Prick the dough all over with a fork and cut the dough into rectangles, triangles (or whatever shape you choose), using a knife or biscuit cutter.
- 6. Re-roll the scraps once to cut more (do not roll any more times as the dough gets too greasy).
- 7. Put the shortbreads onto the prepared baking trays, leaving space between them for them to expand, and chill in fridge for at least 30 minutes.
- 8. Heat oven to 170 degrees.
- 9. Bake shortbreads for about 20 minutes until just turning golden brown at the edges. Leave on the baking trays for a few minutes to firm up slightly, then lift the shortbreads onto a wire rack.
- 10. Dust with sugar, if you wish, and leave to cool. They will keep in an airtight container for 3-4 days (if not eaten before then!)

Coffee and chat

10.30-11.30

1 December

15 December

Are you wanting to meet others?

Why not come and join us and chat over a drink?

On the first Thursday of the month there is a short traditional

communion service at 10





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Sunday 1st January 2pm/2.45pm

Caistor St Edmund

New Year walk followed by Tea and cake and time to pray

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his year at our Stoke Christmas services from 11th-25th December, we will be collecting for our 2022 Christmas charities, Christians Against Poverty and YMCA Norfolk. Through them, we'll be supporting people of all ages, in Norfolk and nationally, who are struggling to find money, work and even housing in these difficult times.

You can search for them online to find out more about what they do, and we'll be sharing videos highlighting their work on our Facebook page and at our different events.







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