

# Free for All



THE MAGAZINE OF THE VENTA GROUP

DECEMBER 2018



From all the churches in the Venta Group  
we want to wish all our readers a very

*Happy Christmas*

**MAY THE LORD BLESS YOU AND KEEP YOU;  
THE LORD MAKE HIS FACE TO SHINE UPON YOU  
AND BE GRACIOUS TO YOU;  
THE LORD TURN HIS FACE TOWARD YOU  
AND GIVE YOU PEACE**

We would love to welcome you at one (or indeed all) of our special  
Christmas Services and you can find full details of each of these  
on pages 5 and 7 and also on the Venta Group website

[www.venta-group.org](http://www.venta-group.org)

## SUNDAY 2nd DECEMBER cafe church

Come and join us for Christmas café church on 2nd December at 10.30am at Stoke church hall, as we start advent and think about following the star to the stable!

We'll have coffee and breakfast, crafts, activities and festive music, with plenty to do for all ages, paint a star stone (see p.5 for more details), chat and take time to reflect during the busy run-up to Christmas.

We'd love to see you there!



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**D**id you know that researchers have got really interested in the 'Like' button on Facebook? In case you are one of the lucky people who doesn't know what I am talking about, it is a button you can click on if you 'like' what someone has posted. People have been doing some research about it, and have found that not only did Facebook spend ages working out which word they should use to make it most popular for people, but unsurprisingly that we are getting addicted to that nice warm feeling we get when someone clicks to say they like our message. When lots of people click to say they like our message.

There is another button you get on Facebook and Twitter (and others I am sure) which interests me even more. It is called 'Follow'. I don't know quite why you think they chose the word 'Follow', but it is important to me. It is the word that best describes the way I think God calls me to relate to Jesus. When Jesus chose his first disciples, of course they physically followed him from place to place, but they also followed his teaching, and tried to live according to it. They followed what he was doing, and tried to copy it. They followed him to the cross, and the empty tomb, and understood that that was to be the pattern for their lives. Following Jesus was, and is, an exciting and dynamic and lifechanging thing. And that brings us to this Christmas, and the

Christmas card you will have received with this magazine, inviting you to 'Follow the Star'. Like churches all over the country, we are using this phrase to prompt you to think about what following the star to Jesus means. For many of you, that will mean joining us at one of the wonderful Christmas events you can read about in this magazine, in the card, or on our website, but the invitation goes further than that too. This Christmas you might want to do what the first disciples did, and think about what it means to follow and believe in Jesus's teaching; to see what he is doing and try to copy it; to follow him through this life and into the next.

Every Christmas we have so many good things happening around the churches, and there is so much to enjoy and to like. You might even find yourself reflecting that you really like a certain event that we put on. It is easy enough to click on the 'Like' button when you see it advertised on our Facebook page, and you'll make all of us at the churches feel very happy when you do. (And Facebook will notice you doing it, and keep sending you more of our stuff – hooray!) But for some of you this Christmas God is calling you into a deeper and more meaningful relationship than that. He's pointing out that other button. That rather more challenging one. The one that says, 'Follow.'

### VICAR OF THE VENTA GROUP

Stoke Holy Cross with Dunston, Arminghall and Caistor St Edmund  
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Pat (492622) & Annie (495580)

#### Caistor St Edmund

Jani (493572) & Graham (493430)

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### STOKE CHURCH HALL BOOKINGS:

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### STOKE HOLY CROSS PAVILION BOOKINGS:

Anita Rose (Parish clerk) 491709

### FROM THE REGISTERS

#### FUNERAL

#### DAPHNE RANSON

20th November  
Dunston

#### INTERMENT OF ASHES

#### CHRISTINE ELLIOTT

22nd November  
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.

### NEXT EDITION

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

[ventafree4all@outlook.com](mailto: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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## Where to find a Christmas Carol Service to suit you

### St Mary's Church Arminghall

Carol Service will be at the usual time of **6.30pm** on **Sunday 9th December**. Please do stay on for Mulled Wine and Nibbles at the end of the service.

Then on **Christmas Eve** St Mary's will host the Midnight Service starting at **11.30pm** with Carols, Readings and Communion

### St Edmund's Church Caistor

Our Carol Service at Caistor will be on **Sunday 23rd December** at **4pm**. Come and join us for Festive Refreshments beforehand from 3pm and stay on for our traditional Service of readings and carols. You are invited to bring along a present for the young boys at Elizabeth House, Beccles. (see more details on page 7)

### Holy Cross Church Stoke Holy Cross

Our Carol Services at Stoke will start with Family Carols on **Sunday 9th December** at **10:30am** with refreshments served afterwards.

Carols round the Tree this year will be on **Sunday 16th** at **6pm** at Stoke Holy Cross church hall. Ideal for all the family with mince pies, nibbles and mulled wine afterwards.

On the evening of **Tuesday 18th December** the Tuesday Group invite everyone to a traditional Carol Service at Stoke Holy Cross church hall at **7.30pm** with their usual wonderful refreshments too.

Then on **Christmas Eve** we will have the **Crib Service** in the church at **4pm** and this is a great one for young children who can come as a shepherd or angel (if they like) and be part of the service.

## Following the Star



From mid-December, children, have a look around Stoke Holy Cross for stones like these (with a gold star on a blue background).

We will be making them at Café Church on December 2nd to remember how the shepherds followed the star to find Jesus.

Please keep your stone and bring it along to our Crib Service at 4pm on Christmas Eve.

*Would you welcome a visit from one of our church team?*

*We will do our best to come and say hello to new people moving into the village where possible. We would be very happy to come and visit you. Maybe you would like us to pray God's blessing over your new home, for example. Please do get in touch with Rob, Lyn or the churchwardens if you would welcome a visit. Also members of the church are always pleased to come and bring communion to you if you would like to get in touch. All the contact numbers are on page 3.*



### SERVICES FOR DECEMBER IN THE VENTA GROUP OF CHURCHES

<b>2nd Dec</b>	<b>1st Sunday of Advent</b>
<b>9.00 am</b>	Traditional Holy Communion Caistor St Edmund Church
<b>10.30 am</b>	Christmas Café Church Stoke Holy Cross Church Hall
<b>9th Dec</b>	<b>2nd Sunday of Advent</b>
<b>9.30 am</b>	Praise & Worship Caistor St Edmund Church
<b>10.30 am</b>	Carol Service Stoke Holy Cross Church
<b>6.30 pm</b>	Carol Service Arminghall Church
<b>16th Dec</b>	<b>3rd Sunday of Advent</b>
<b>9.30 am</b>	Reflective (Taize) Service Caistor St Edmund Church
<b>11.00 am</b>	Traditional Holy Communion Stoke Holy Cross Church
<b>6.00 pm</b>	Carols Around the Christmas Tree Stoke Holy Cross Church Hall
<b>18th Dec</b>	<b>Tuesday Group</b>
<b>7.30 pm</b>	Traditional Carol Service Stoke Holy Cross Church
<b>23rd Dec</b>	<b>4th Sunday of Advent</b>
<b>4.00 pm</b>	Carol Service Caistor St Edmund
<b>24th Dec</b>	<b>Christmas Eve</b>
<b>4.00 pm</b>	Crib Service Stoke Holy Cross Church
<b>11.30 pm</b>	Carols, Readings and Communion for Christmas Night Arminghall Church
<b>25th Dec</b>	<b>Christmas Day</b>
<b>9.00 am</b>	Christmas Morning Celebration Service Caistor St Edmund Church
<b>10.30 am</b>	Christmas Morning Celebration Service Stoke Holy Cross Church
<b>30th Dec</b>	<b>1st Sunday of Christmas</b>
<b>10.30 am</b>	Venta Group Morning Worship Stoke Holy Cross Church

## SOME RANDOM FACTS ABOUT CHRISTMAS

The first Christmas tree was reputedly introduced into the UK in the 1830s. Prince Albert (Queen Victoria's husband) put up a Christmas tree in Windsor Castle in 1841.

The first Christmas card was drawn by artist John Horsley in 1843. It was introduced to encourage people to use the recently set up Post Office (originally part of the Public Records Office).

Mince Pies were originally made of fruit, spice and meat and usually contained 13 ingredients. These represented Christ and the Apostles. The pies were made in an oval shape, like a manger.

In Victorian times, mince pies no longer contained meat. But beef suet is sometimes still used in today's mince pies.

Christmas crackers were created by a sweet-maker called Tom Smith and he also invented the way to make them 'crack' when pulled apart. Originally the crackers contained sweets with mottos or riddles. His sons, Tom, Walter and Harry were responsible for adding hats and novelty gifts.

Christmas pudding used also to be known as plum or figgy pudding. It is reputed that its origins go as far back as the Middle Ages and known then as frumenty. It is traditional to make your Christmas Pudding a week before Advent (the old name for the 4 weeks before Christmas) on what is still known as 'Stir-up Sunday'.

Gerhard Lang is widely considered the producer of the first printed Advent calendar in the early 1900s. His calendar was inspired by one that his mother had made for him and featured 24 coloured pictures that attached to a piece of cardboard. Lang modified his calendars to include the little doors that are a staple of most Advent calendars today and they soon became a commercial success in Germany. Production stopped due to a cardboard shortage during World War II, but resumed soon after, with Richard Sellmer emerging as the leading producer of commercial Advent calendars.

Christmas stockings are derived from the legend of St Nicholas. He was known as the gift giver; once he sent bags of gold down a chimney into the home of a poor man, who had no dowry for his unmarried daughters. The gold fell into stockings left hanging to dry.

The Dutch changed the name of St Nicholas to Sinterklass, which English-speakers changed to Santa Claus.

*These facts are taken from various sources on the internet. These seem to be the most popular reasons given for the traditions carried out at Christmas.*



## St Mary's Church Arminghall Coffee Morning

It was a lovely sunny morning and it was great to see so many people, old friends from Stoke as well as people from the village. Vera won the 'guess the weight of the Christmas cake' competition. Pam's mince meat pies made us feel that Christmas is around the corner.

Thanks to all those who helped and those who came to make it such an enjoyable morning. We raised £130.20.

## Carols Round the Tree



You will probably have noticed that a Christmas tree 'appears' in front of Stoke Holy Cross Hall near the beginning of each December. This year we are grateful to Jill and Jim Hopper for allowing us to cut it down from their garden. It will put up by a dedicated few people from Stoke Holy Cross Church and decorated with lights too for the enjoyment of the whole village, as well as those who pass through the village.

On Sunday 16th December at 6 o'clock in the evening there will be an opportunity to join together to sing Carols round the Tree. Do come and join us to sing some of your favourite carols by the lights on the Christmas tree. Afterwards there will be mulled wine, mince pies and some other Christmas goodies in the Church Hall. Everybody is welcome, whether young or old or inbetween!

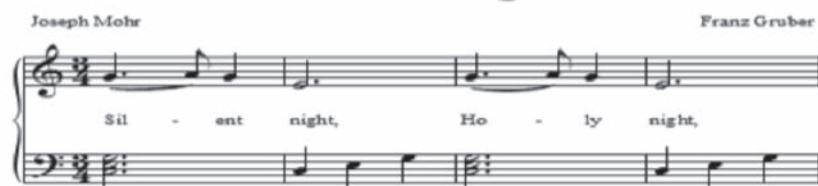
## Christmas at Caistor Church

The Caistor Carol Service will be held on Sunday 23rd December at 4pm. Before the service from 3pm to 3.45pm we shall be serving Festive Refreshments. We hope you will join us for these and stay for the Carol Service with all the familiar readings and carols. As in previous years we invite you please, to bring a present for the young boys at Elizabeth House (formerly Grange Road Children's Home) in Beccles. The age group of the boys ranges from 9 to 12 years old, please note Elizabeth House request that we avoid any form of guns/weapons, DVD's that are for 12+ and aerosols, all for obvious reasons. If you could gift wrap your present and mark what age you would consider it for, that would be appreciated. Thank you.



# Have you ever wondered how this famous old carol came into being?

## Silent Night



**W**ell, it was originally written in German as 'Stille Nacht' by a priest called Father Joseph Mohr in Austria, as translated below, in 1816. It seems Fr. Mohr then asked his friend Franz Xaver Gruber to compose a melody with a guitar arrangement in 1818.

Silent night, holy night,  
Bethlehem sleeps, yet what light,  
Floats around the heavenly pair;  
Songs of angels fill the air.  
Strains of heavenly peace.

There is more than one version of the legend about Silent Night, one of which says that Fr. Mohr wanted the carol to be sung by village children at the midnight Christmas Eve service but the organ broke when they were practicing. So they learnt to sing the carol with the guitar instead in time for the service. Another version says that this actually happened at the midnight service but we will never know what truly happened!

It was later translated and changed a little into the English and today the carol will be sung in many churches during the Christmas period, including, our own in the Venta Group. Why not come and join in one, or more, of the carol services held in one of the churches. Or come and join in singing carols round the Christmas tree at Stoke Holy Cross Church Hall. You will find the dates and times all the Christmas services on page 5.



### ST GEORGE'S HALL DEMENTIA SUPPORT CAFÉ

There's always room for more people living with dementia and their partners or carers to join us, whether on our subsidised outings or at our regular cafe sessions in St George's Hall, Upper Stoke. For more information please ring 01508 493661 or 492938, visit our website at <http://stgeorges-dementia-support-group.btck.co.uk/>

We have realised that one reason we are perhaps not getting new "customers" may be a transport issue. So please, anyone who would like to come along, do be aware that if you have transport problems in reaching the cafe one solution might be to contact the voluntary organisation 5+ Good Neighbours on 07934195724.

Our December café is 10th which will be our Christmas Party when Stewart Hull will be entertaining us again with longs of the old songs we will all remember, so do come with your special requests. No cafe on 24th December.

## Caistor At Edmund Remembers

**A** congregation of over 50 attended the Remembrance Sunday Service, gathering at the War Memorial for the laying of wreaths and the reading of the names of the fallen from Caistor St Edmund, Stoke Holy Cross and Dunston followed by the 2 minutes silence. As is our custom the offertory taken at the service will be sent to The Royal British Legion Poppy Appeal, this totalled £274.50.



The day ended with RINGING FOR PEACE at 7.05pm joining in with many other church all over the country ringing their bells. The Garden of Remembrance at the War Memorial had 18 remembrance crosses placed there.

### STOKE HOLY CROSS TUESDAY GROUP

The Group's December meeting will take the form of a traditional Carol Service, as always. It will be held at the Parish Church of the Holy Cross, on Tuesday, December 18th at 7.30 pm, and it will be a pleasure to welcome friends old and new. There is plenty of car parking, the church is warm, and we follow the service with mince pies. We'd love to see you!

### SPARKLERS BABY AND TODDLER GROUP

Sparklers is the place to be for children under 5 and their parents or carers on a Tuesday morning!

We meet from 10-11.30am at Stoke church hall, with a room full of toys, games and activities, plus drinks and snacks for children and grownups.

We are always happy to welcome new mums or dads, of course, with your little ones.

If you would like to know more contact Cathryn via [sparklers@venta-group.org](mailto:sparklers@venta-group.org) or see our Facebook page Sparklers Stoke Holy Cross. Or just turn up and join in.

Over the next few weeks we will be getting ready for Christmas, making nativity crafts and learning simple Christmas songs to sing for everyone at the Crib Service on 24th December.

Our final session on 18th December will be a Christmas party with activities to take us on a journey through the nativity story, as well as cakes and treats and a present for each child.



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# Adam's Gardening Tips for December

## ROTATION AND PLANNING AND THE CUTTING GARDEN

In both organic and inorganic gardening systems it is always a good idea to plan well in advance and rotate crops around a given area of land. The principle reasons for this would be to try to control pests and soil borne diseases (eg Club root in brassicas) and to maintain soil fertility. It interrupts the life cycle of pests even if just moving crops a very short distance. Probably the easiest method is to divide crops into three traditional groups, root crops, brassicas and legumes. Other crops such as salad greens, squashes and tomatoes can be fitted in where there is space and perennial crops like asparagus will remain in their position. It is also possible to include in your rotation one year fallow or green manuring which should help to rejuvenate the soil.

A typical rotation might be as the table below illustrates.

	Plot 1	Plot 2	Plot 3
Year 1	Legumes	Brassicas	Root Crops
Year 2	Brassicas	Root Crops	Legumes
Year 3	Root Crops	Legumes	Brassicas

This system is not infallible due to some winter crops overlapping and making true rotation difficult, but it is definitely worth moving crops about each year. Do bear in mind that some pathogens such as fungal disorders can remain in the ground for some time. It is possibly better to separate some types of vegetables which share common diseases, such as potatoes and tomatoes which are both susceptible to blight.

While April is concentrating on her vegetables Adam will be indulging in a passion of his own, the cutting garden. It is a great tradition in this country to have fresh flowers in the house and rather than raiding the borders as a source of this delight why not consider an area set aside for such a purpose. With careful planning it is possible for there to be hardly a month in the year when the garden cannot produce some floral display. For example very early in the year there will be daffodils (and there are many varieties that combined, can provide a spread for three months). This can be followed by tulips, and then the Hollandica Iris will be coming into their own. In June the Sweet Peas and Sweet William will be flowering and then later on the sunflowers will make a spectacular display. In the summer/autumn the Dahlias will be in bloom and then the chrysanthemums will

take Adam through to December. Bulbs such as hyacinths can be purchased ready prepared to provide blooms for new year. Varieties chosen for scent will bring added enjoyment and don't forget the foliage plants as well to add interest to the display.

Obviously this takes a bit of planning ahead but the results are well worth it.

## CARROT AND CORIANDER

This is an old favourite but always welcome.

25gm butter or oil  
1 medium onion finely chopped  
1 clove of garlic crushed  
1 tablespoon of ground coriander (optional)  
500 gm roughly chopped carrots  
1 litre of stock  
Bunch of chopped fresh coriander  
Salt and pepper  
150ml fresh cream (optional)

Sauté the onion and garlic in the butter or oil until soft but not brown. Add the carrots and coat with oil and then add the ground coriander if using and cook for one minute. Pour in the stock, bring to the boil and cook until the carrots are tender. Allow to cool a little and then liquidise the soup. Return to a cleaned pan, add the chopped coriander and cream if using. Taste for seasoning.

## STOKE HOLY CROSS THURSDAY CLUB

There will be no meeting in December as this was brought forward to the 29th November, 2018.

We will re-commence our meetings on Thursday 10th January, 2019 (weather permitting) at 1.30pm.

**Bingo** - we will re-commence on Wednesday 23rd January, 2019. Dates for February 2019 are 6th and the 20th

**Carpet Bowls** - we will re-commence on Wednesday 30th January, 2019, dates for February 2019 are 13th and the 27th - 1.30pm - cost for this is £2

May I thank all your readers for supporting the Thursday Club throughout 2018 and wish you all a very 'Merry Christmas' and a happy, healthy New Year.

## Christmas Wordsearch

H N E W B O R N L D R L W M Z  
S C F L Z Z A E Z A L Z A S B  
A A M A R Y H L P I M N V E O  
M O V I I P I B H E G B T L L  
T B G I E S O A A E E H J M G  
S G T S O A Q T R P L K B Q A  
I S O S Y U Y S S E F P N P D  
R J K O A E R G H G O L B N O  
H J L C N E I E K D L L U U I  
C R S R O F M V W T L W C S V  
Q W U J K L Y S B M O D T J T  
X O Y B A B F M H B W A I E V  
J P X C E N S U S E R K G S E  
S L E G N A R P U V E O A U N  
S D R E H P E H S L W P M S R

ANGELS  
BABY  
BETHLEHEM  
CENSUS  
CHRISTMAS  
EAST  
FLOCKS  
FOLLOW  
HILL  
INNKEEPER  
JESUS  
JOSEPH  
JOURNEY  
LAMB  
MAGI  
MANGER  
MARY  
NEWBORN  
SAVIOUR  
SHEEP  
SHEPHERDS  
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