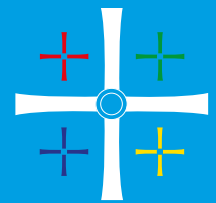


Free for All



THE MAGAZINE OF THE VENTA GROUP

FEBRUARY 2019

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Good

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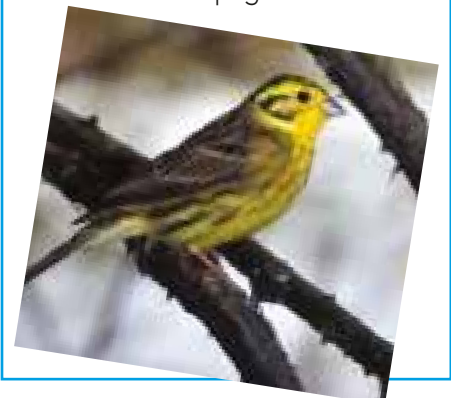


HighAshFarm



Have you explored the lovely country walks across the road from Caistor Roman Town?

See page 7



"Why not come along and give it a try?"



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THE MAGAZINE OF THE VENTA GROUP



The process of becoming a vicar is quite a long one, but a key part of it is when you go away for a few days to a series of selection interviews. We were put in two groups; a yellow one and a green one. (I don't think there was any kind of Norwich City situation going on.) Each group had a different set of interviewers, and one of the candidates in the other group ended up in a room next to me when we got to training college. He told me that when he went into one of his interviews, the selector sat him down and said to him, "So... what is God?" I began to think I was in the right group after all.

In the last couple of weeks I have been thinking a lot about what the story of the wise men coming at Christmas tells us about God. Specifically, I have been thinking about what it tells us about prayer, partly because prayer is always on my mind in January: it is as close as I get to a New Year's resolution.

The more I thought about it, the more convinced I became that the story teaches us that God is near.

This truth is tremendously important when we think about prayer; actually, what we believe about God is far more important than anything we do when we pray. If we believe God hears and answers prayer, we are much more likely to pray. And if we believe God is really near, rather than at a distance, looking down on us, separate from our concerns, then we are also much more likely to pray. The story of the wise men, who go looking

for God in a royal palace, but find him in the heart of a family home, shows us this really clearly.

Like some of you, you see, my friend was asked the wrong question at an interview. It is a shame, because wondering about God is the most important thing any of us can ever do. But the question to ask is not normally a what one. In this case, first of all it is a 'where' question. Where is he? The story says, "He is here. He is near." As we ask important questions about where God is in the difficulties we all face, it is easy to mistake his silence for his absence. But the Scriptures tell us that God is near.

There is a second better question my friend could have been asked. Not what is God, or where is God, but who is God? Here again the story points us past the obvious – the king in the palace – and towards the unexpected; the King is in the peasant house in town. It's the God promised us by the angel at the beginning of Matthew's gospel; Immanuel, God with us. Jesus is God – and God is Jesus. It is easy to mistake Jesus for a well-meaning religious teacher for whom things ended really badly, but the Scriptures tell us that God is Jesus.

So when we sit and pray, we actually have all the encouragement we need. We have Jesus, who is God himself, right there with us, even though we might not always realise it, or believe it. We might not know what God is, but we know something better; who he is, and where he is. Let's pray.

VICAR OF THE VENTA GROUP

Stoke Holy Cross with Dunston, Arminghall and Caistor St Edmund
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Arminghall

Pat (492622) & Annie (495580)

Caistor St Edmund

Jani (493572)

ST GEORGE'S HALL BOOKINGS:

Joyce Williams 492143

STOKE CHURCH HALL BOOKINGS:

Viv Carrington 493438

STOKE HOLY CROSS PAVILION BOOKINGS:

Anita Rose (Parish clerk) 491709

FROM THE REGISTERS FUNERAL

JOYCE PARISH

7th January 2019
Stoke Holy Cross Church

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.

We would love to feature
your village organisation

IN A FUTURE MAGAZINE

*just get in touch and we will see
what we can do!*

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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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St George's Hall Dementia Support Café



On the 2nd and 4th Monday morning of each month this is a great place to relax for those with dementia and for their carers. Come along and join us for fun activities and refreshments. 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 from 10am till 12 noon 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/>

If you would like to come along but have transport problems in reaching the cafe one solution might be to contact the voluntary organisation 5+ Good Neighbours on 07934195724 or maybe one of a regular members can offer the occasional lift.

Our meetings in February are the 11th and 25th when we hope to have a film show.

We would love to see you there.

EACH Nook Appeal

Building work on the wonderful new children's Hospice is well under way at nearby Framingham Earl.

The original appeal figure of £10,000,000 has nearly been achieved with around £1,000,000 still to be found.

If you would like to help get the hospice completed there is now a chance to buy bricks to form some of the pathways. You can sponsor individual bricks with your name on them at £100 for a brick with black inset lettering or £200 for a brick with gold inset lettering.

Our churches have sponsored some bricks and if you would like to do the same you can contact EACH as below.

Tel 01953 666767 or go to the website norfolk@each.org.uk



Stoke Holy Cross Parish Council Elections

There will be elections in May for the election of Parish Councillors for the next 4 years. Stoke Holy Cross Parish Council is likely to have several vacancies as some of the existing councillors are retiring after over 60 years' service on the Parish Council between them.

An active and enthusiastic council is necessary to carry through to completion the New Pavilion at the Playing Field and to progress the Footpath to Upper Stoke.

With all the new residents in Broomefields and Harrolds Place we feel sure there are residents with talent that will be useful for the future improvements to the Village facilities.

If you are interested and would like to find out more why not come to PC meeting to see how things work.

The dates of the next meetings are at 7.30pm on January 10th and February 21st in the Pavilion and we would be very pleased to see you there.



SERVICES FOR FEBRUARY IN THE VENTA GROUP OF CHURCHES

3rd Feb Presentation of Christ in the Temple

9.00 am Traditional Holy Communion
Caistor St Edmund Church

10.30 am Informal Holy Communion
Stoke Holy Cross Church

10th Feb 4th Sunday before Lent

9.00 am Traditional Holy Communion
Arminghall Church

9.30 am Taize Service
Caistor St Edmund Church

10.30 am Café Church
Stoke Holy Cross Church Hall

17th Feb 3rd Sunday before Lent

9.30 am Family Service
Caistor St Edmund Church

11.00 am Traditional Holy Communion
Stoke Holy Cross Church

6.30 pm The Gathering
Stoke Holy Cross Church

24th Feb 2nd Sunday before Lent

9.00 am Traditional Holy Communion
Caistor St Edmund Church

10.30 am Sunday 4 Everyone
Stoke Holy Cross Church Hall

4.00 pm Evening Service
Arminghall Church

*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.

STOKE HOLY CROSS TUESDAY GROUP

The Group's February meeting will take place at the Church Hall on February 19th, but please note that it will be at 2 pm, as turning out on winter evenings is not always popular with members! (We shall revert to our normal timetable in March, hopefully looking forward to spring!) The meeting this month promises to be of great interest – Sandy Sankar JP DL, who is a Deputy Lieutenant of Norfolk, will tell us about the Office of HM Lord Lieutenant of Norfolk. This is the person who acts on the Queen's behalf in our county.

It will be the first of a number of interesting talks and other events held by our Group during 2019, and everyone is invited. A small charge is made for non-members, but please bear in mind that our annual membership charge is just £15. Compare it with the fees charged by similar groups countrywide, and you will find it represents a bargain package of enjoyment....

We were pleased that our collection at the Carol Service at the church in December amounted to £113, which we considered was pretty good, and the funds were sent to the East Anglia Children's Hospices appeal for The Nook at being built at Framingham Earl.

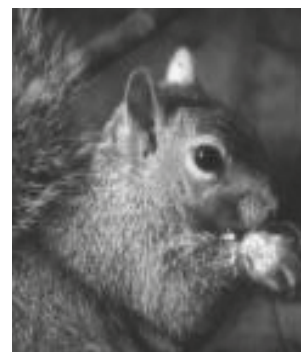
STOKE HOLY CROSS THURSDAY CLUB

Our next meeting will be held in St. Georges Hall, Upper Stoke Holy Cross on Thursday 7th February, 2019.

Why not come along and start the new year by meeting lots of lovely people and enjoy the benefits that we offer at the Thursday Club. We meet in the afternoon at 1.30pm. We have a table sale and a raffle, you can enjoy a game of crib, scrabble and dominoes or just sit and chat. We have minimum two meals out during the year, outings in May, June, July and September plus the occasional entertainment. If you are interested in coming along please get in contact with our chairperson, Susie Curson on 01508493990 who will be pleased to give you more information. Oh most importantly don't forget the lovely cup of tea and biscuit.

Bingo dates for February, 2019 - 6th and the 20th

Bowls dates for February, 2019 - 13th and 27th



Calm and Natural Beauty on our Doorstep

I wonder how many reading this have lived in local villages for a number of years and been unaware or haven't experienced the calm and natural beauty that is High Ash Farm at Caistor St Edmund just opposite the Roman town.

The 600 acres and 7 miles of public access walks permitted by Chris and Daniel Skinner at High Ash Farm first opened due to their generosity and EU funding in 2006. Yet day by day, week by week, year by year I passed on my journey to work without knowing the wonder and beauty available to me!

In 2013 I got my dog Alfie and my life changed, because I found the farm and all of a sudden was motivated to walk Alfie each morning, enjoying the sights and sounds of nature. I breathed fresh air, I exercised effortlessly, I lost weight, got fit, enjoyed bird song and got back to nature. Also, I made new friends, because dog walkers tend to be creatures of habit and I got to know some lovely people and dogs!

Dogs are walked on leads, so no surprises for our pets or us from unwanted advances of other dogs. I see joggers, Nordic walkers, bird watchers, photographers and painters all enjoying the wonders of the farm. It's a beautiful place to get fit, clear your head and experience nature at its best. Such a treat to see a swooping owl or a grazing deer! Plus hearing the occasional Scottish Piper – John!

Walking around the permissive walks I see the seasons unfold, and each one has its own special beauty. Chris and Daniel work very hard to maintain this amazing place, with mown walks and trimmed hedgerows. The views at every time of the year are wonderful and ever changing. From the Christmas card frosty fields with the frozen lake and grazing sheep to the bluebells of May, the swans, the sunflowers, the teasel walks, butterflies! I could go on... Even in heavy rain, it can be a pleasure, rather than avoiding passing cars as I walk along the paths of the village.

The farm permissive walks are still free to the public, however, since late 2016 when EU funding suddenly stopped, the farm has opened two additional walks for sponsors only, requesting help to fund the walks and pollen and nectar fields. These fields, which provide no financial income to the farm, support our native butterflies, bees, birds and so many other wonderful creatures that we enjoy. They improve our quality of life and the air we breathe. Sponsorship, however large or small, be it £5 a year or more is greatly appreciated, to help towards seeding those pollen and nectar fields and mowing the pedestrian walks. Due to the generous support of the public over the past 2 years, the farm has been able to continue to be enjoyed by so many of us from the surrounding villages far and wide. High Ash Farm would like to continue providing this wonderful facility rather than closing its gates. It is the oasis of calm we have on our doorstep and anyone kind enough to sponsor will play a part in keeping it there for us all to enjoy. I for one hope it continues for many years.

I still walk, I don't have my own dog now, but I'm addicted, one stone lighter and much calmer than before I found High Ash Farm. I strongly recommend trying it for yourself. There is more information and a map of the walks on www.highashfarm.com

Written by **CAROL SANDERS**



HighAshFarm

Disturb Us, Lord

Disturb us, Lord, when we are too well pleased with ourselves,
When our dreams have come true
Because we have dreamed too little,
When we arrived safely
Because we sailed too close to the shore.

Disturb us, Lord, when
With the abundance of things we possess
We have lost our thirst
For the waters of life;
Having fallen in love with life,
We have ceased to dream of eternity
And in our efforts to build a new earth,
We have allowed our vision
Of the new Heaven to dim.

Disturb us, Lord, to dare more boldly,
To venture on wider seas
Where storms will show Your mastery;
Where losing sight of land,
We shall find the stars.
We ask You to push back
The horizons of our hopes;
And to push into the future
In strength, courage, hope, and love.

(attributed to Sir Francis Drake -1577)

Archbishop Justin Welby mentioned this in a recent article using the beginning 5 lines of the final verse as his prayer for 2019.

CHRISTMAS AT CAISTOR ST EDMUND CHURCH

We were pleased to welcome children and a member of staff from Elizabeth House in Beccles to our well attended Carol Service back in December. Thank you to everyone who contributed to some lovely gifts for the children.

Once again Caistor PCC decided to donate the Christmas offertories to charity and with further contribution from church funds we have sent £400 each to both St Martins Housing Trust to help local homeless people and to the Christian Aid Christmas Appeal to help bring peace to those affected by conflict worldwide.

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We are getting pretty full but do make contact Cathryn as if you would like to join us - Cathryn Baker 01508 492305 - cathrynbaker@googlegmail.com facebook - Sparklers Stoke Holy Cross

ADAM'S FEBRUARY RECIPE SUGGESTION

Leek and Potato Soup -
An old favourite

1 tbsp vegetable oil
1 onion - sliced
225g potatoes - cubed
2 medium leeks -sliced
1.2 litres stock
150ml double cream or crème fraiche
salt and freshly ground black pepper
Heat the oil in a large pan and add the onions, potatoes and leeks. Cook for 3-4 minutes until starting to soften. Add the stock and bring to the boil. Season well and simmer until the vegetables are tender. Whizz with a hand blender or in a blender until smooth. Reheat in a clean pan, stir in the cream or crème fraiche, heat through and serve.



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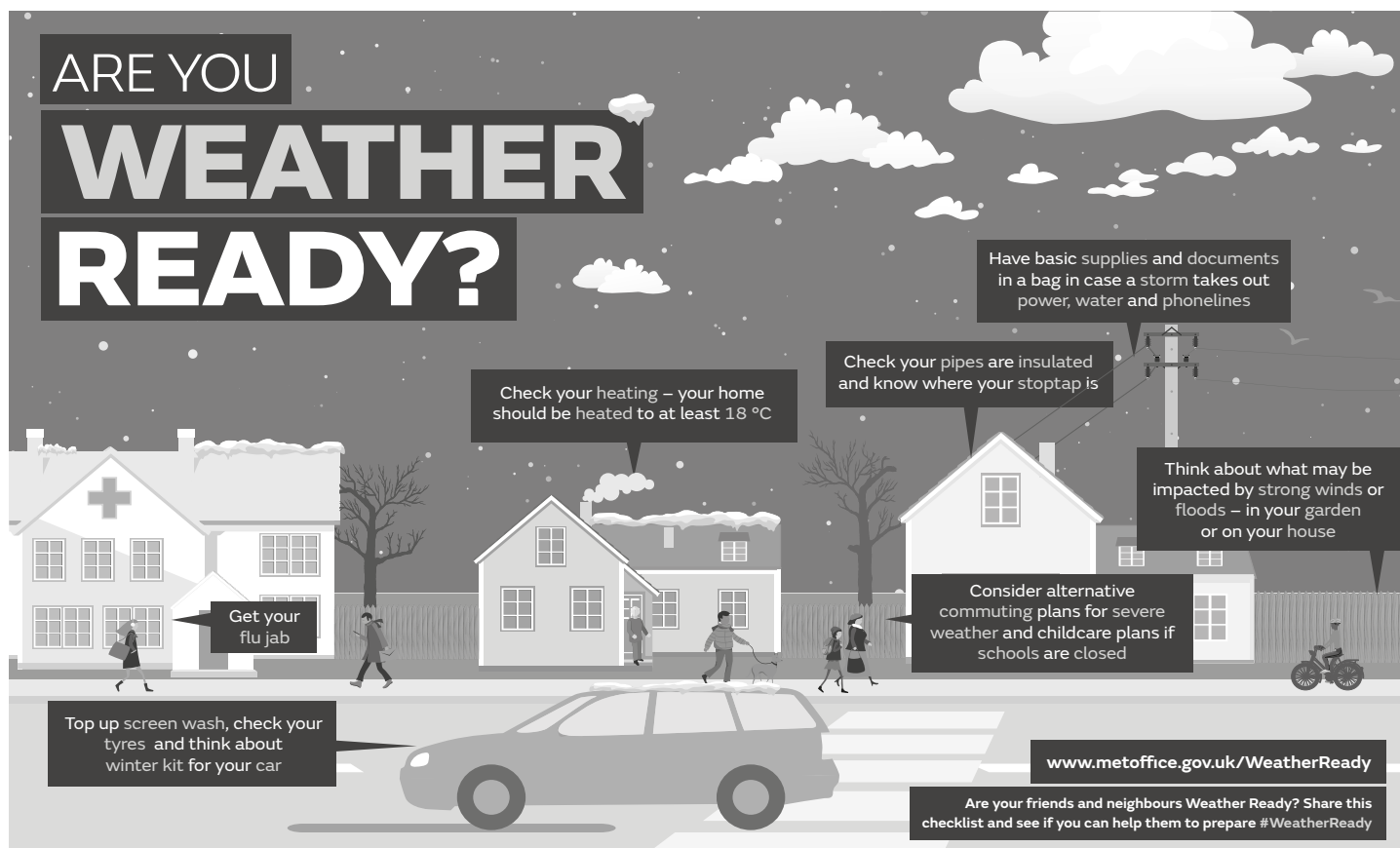
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10 STEP WINTER READINESS CHECKLIST ISSUED BY THE MET OFFICE

1. Get your flu jab
2. Top up anti-freeze screen wash, check your tyres and think about winter kit for your car.
3. Consider alternative commuting plans for severe weather and childcare plans if schools are closed.
4. Check your heating – your home should be heated to at least 18 °C
5. Consider how you would access vital information if a storm takes out power and phone lines
6. Think about what may be impacted by strong winds or floods – garden items, guttering, pipes, roof tiles/slates, items stored on your ground floor.
7. Check your pipes are insulated and know where your stop tap is.
8. Make sure you have basic supplies in case you have to leave home quickly or your power and water are disrupted.
9. Share this checklist with your neighbours, see if they have any other tips and tell them if you can help in severe weather.
10. To find out what else you can do to help your community prepare for severe weather go to our website below www.gov.uk/government/publications/preparing-for-emergencies/preparing-for-emergencies

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Adams Gardening Tips for this month can be found on the venta-group.org website

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