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THE MAGAZINE OF THE VENTA GROUP

FEBRUARY 2021

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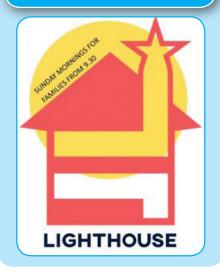




Christmas afternoon tea gift boxes being delivered - see article inside with more photos.



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Hello everyone!

friting to you now it seems like we've had a month of water in our villages and our churches.

It started with the amazing floods on 23rd/24th December; lots of you will have seen the river flooding all the way down through Stoke, Dunston and Caistor. We were sorry to see the damage it caused especially in the Mill car park, but at the same time it created an amazing temporary landscape, with otters swimming in plain view in the middle of the village on Christmas Day, and even running across the Norwich Road – look at the Stoke village Facebook page for both videos.

With the Vicarage so close to the river we look at it a bit nervously, but the slope is so steep it never quite gets up this high. But we didn't escape: when we got to the church building for our Christmas Eve event the water was six inches deep in our boiler house and the power had cut out.

Closer to home, the other day water started to come up through our floor, and even as I write the plumbers are digging up the concrete to try and see where it is coming from.

The Bible talks about water over and over, and the images are similar, but different. One of the Old Testament prophets, Ezekiel, pictures a great flood of water, flowing from the temple, as the glory and presence of God fill it. The further that Ezekiel wades into it, the deeper it gets, until it's so wide he couldn't even swim across it. (I am encouraged by the way he first spots it in one of the doorways, which is just about where it was coming from in our house.)

But this water isn't a destructive force; it brings life. The Dead Sea is made new, and filled with fish; fruit trees grow on its banks and bear fruit constantly because of the water that is flowing by them.

It seems to me that when Jesus and his friends visited the temple for Tabernacles, one of the Jewish festivals, he must have had this image of living water flowing from the temple in mind. But he said something amazing and different; he told his audience that the thirsty should come to him and drink, so that living water would flow not from the temple, nor a leaky Vicarage, but from within each of them.

Your recent experience and mine reminds us of how disruptive water can be in the wrong places, but Jesus wants to satisfy our thirst. Jesus wants us to experience water that brings life: the living water of his Holy Spirit. Jesus's water can be disruptive, actually: it can upset our way of thinking and living, and change things forever, but it always brings life. And look how it flows out, as well. The water you drink when you are thirsty is good for you, but Jesus's living water in you is good for everyone you meet, and it is meant to flow out of you.

We can all receive this water from Jesus today, but we have to see the need. We don't come to Jesus saying we are fine, or managing, or ok in the circumstances, because after all it's hard for everyone. We come saying, I am thirsty. I have learnt, and mostly remember, to come saying that I am thirsty. And so can you.

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**

CURATE

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

CHURCHWARDENS

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

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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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FROM THE REGISTERS FUNERAL

21ST JANUARY 2021

BRIAN MURPHY

GREENACRES, COLNEY

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

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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CHRISTMAS AFTERNOON TEAS DELIVERED



ue to the Covid restrictions we were sadly not able to run our usual pre-Christmas tea party for some of the more senior folks in our villages. Instead, this year we worked with Tina from Flour Pot Catering who did a wonderful job in making up and delivering around thirty Christmas tea boxes to doorsteps.

These are just some of the deliveries we were able to make and an idea of what was in each gift parcel. We gather they were much enjoyed and we received some lovely thank-yous.



SUNDAY MORNING LIGHTHOUSE FAMILY SESSIONS



LightHouse family sessions run every Sunday at 9.30 on our Youtube channel below before our main morning service.

There are songs and stories and craft and prayers and games and loads more. So we'd love you all to join us, whether you sit down and watch and comment when it premieres, or you find time to catch up later.

If you want to see some of our recent sessions they are all on that channel.

(https://www.youtube.com/channel/ UCKCaYtz4EyHAOofr4lKd9aw)

TRANSFORMING LIVES FOR GOOD (TLG)



The following letter was received by Stoke Holy Cross Church as we were able to send some money from our Christmas collections and our charitable giving fund at Christmas to TLG.

The charity has raised over £48,000 to bring hope to struggling children! We want to start this New Year off by saying a massive THANK YOU to everyone who donated to TLG's urgent Box of Hope Christmas Appeal. The sheer scale of the impact has been astounding with over 160 TLG partner churches actively delivering hope to families across the country through the Christmas holidays.

We always knew the winter months would be tough, but none of us anticipated that we would begin 2021 back in another national lockdown. So it is simply amazing that we can start the year knowing so many churches across the country are already helping those who will be impacted yet again.

Thanks again for keeping in touch with TLG and for everyone who has been involved in Box of Hope. May God give you peace at the start of this New Year. Tim Morfin



Caistor St Edmund Churchyard

If you have walked through the Churchyard recently you may have been wondering what has been going on. There are signs of lots of digging. It had become evident that the drainage system to handle the considerable amount of rainwater from the large church roof was failing. During November and December, the whole network of pipes was replaced and 2 new soakaways were dug and brick-lined. The need for this work to be done was identified during the 'quinquennial' inspection. Every 5

years the Church Architect looks over the church building and surrounds to identify any work required to make sure the church is maintained in good order.

Because the Church is within the Roman Town site an archaeologist was present whilst the new trenches were dug to ensure care was taken to preserve any notable finds, and he is in the process of writing up a report on the various items that came to light.

All this has resulted in the churchyard currently looking rather messy but come the Spring we will re-seed the bare earth areas and we hope it will not be too long before it is back to looking neat and tidy again.

Curate's Egg article by Lyn

Hands

think I'm in danger of taking my hands for granted. I use my hands every day, in so many ways. Preparing food, when I'm exercising, in my work (typing), and in personal hygiene – which is particularly important at the moment. It's been said that this generation will be the ones with cleanest hands through their lifetime because they've had to do it from an early age.



It reminds of one of the stories behind a picture you may have seen, Albrecht Dürer's Praying Hands. The picture was a sketch and just has two hands joined together, showing some of the sleeve but nothing else of the body of the person. The hands are seemingly knarled or afflicted. The story goes that Albrecht came from a poor family and his younger brother supported him financially through art school by working in the mines. Then when Albrecht had finished his education he said to his younger brother it was now his turn to go to art school but his hands were so afflicted from working in the mines, he could not become an artist like Albrecht. In honour of his brother, the story goes, Albrecht made a sketch. It's a lovely, heart warming story of sacrifice.

We have had many people in this country who have sacrificially given of themselves through this pandemic. People who have used their hands to clean our schools, shops and supermarkets, hospital and doctors' surgeries, libraries, shops and restaurants and other buildings, including churches. But how many of us have prayed for them? How many of us have thanked God for them? Maybe you were instructed at school that when you pray you were to put your hands together, eyes closed. Why not join me, this month, by making a small sacrifice of your time to pray every day for cleaners? You may find it helpful to use these words:

Thank you for those who clean the buildings we visit. I particularly pray for X (say the person's name) who I know who does that. Father God I ask that you protect them and their families from catching viruses and that you encourage them in their work. Help them to be diligent and thorough. Provide them with the right tools and equipment to do their jobs. Amen.

If you struggle with words, why not get a pencil and draw round your hands and write the name of someone you know who cleans in the middle of your drawn hands. If you're an artist, perhaps you could paint/etch a drawing and send a photo to the editor and we can publish them at a later date.

Did you try anything new in lockdown?

Local wildlife lover Laura did and here is her story:

've always been very creative. I feel I have a good eye for detail and love all varieties of art and photography. In March 2020 our lives changed significantly, having no choice but to stay

at home, I personally couldn't work and we were all forced to live a new normal. For me, this time ignited my passion for wildlife photography. Since I was a child I have adored animals and nature. So when we started seeing a stunning male Marsh Harrier flying and hunting in the field behind our hours every day, my first thought was 'I need a good picture of him'! I quickly learned his behaviours and patterns as he would visit us around the same time every day and we really enjoyed watching him as a family. A very good friend lent me her Canon DSLR camera, somebody else kindly lent me a large telephoto lens and I got some fantastic shots on that first day. I was so happy and that was it, I was completely hooked...the rest, as they say, is history!



I started going out with the camera on our family walks and by myself very early in the mornings taking pictures of all the amazing wildlife we are so lucky to have right here in Norfolk. Once lockdown eased slightly, I started venturing slightly further afield. Horsey Gap is one of my favourite places to visit; I just love observing the seals and I am also a volunteer Seal Warden. I started taking hundreds of pictures of them, of course whilst always keeping a safe distance away, which is imperative for their wellbeing.

Since I started, my images have been featured by BBC Earth, BBC Countryfile, Norfolk



Magazine and wider afield in the North American Nature Photography Association. And some of you may have seen me when I appeared on BBC Look East, discussing the fact that I've been shortlisted for the British Photography Awards in the 'Water Life' category for one of my seal images. I still can't quite believe this, considering I only began taking pictures in March and thousands of images are entered by some of the world's top photographers!

My main goal with my photograph is to inspire others. The stories I have told through my

photos during these difficult times gave many people something to look forward to daily; it helped them to rediscover and appreciate nature and the wildlife which surrounds us. This really means a lot to me and makes it all worthwhile because, as much as I adore it, it is not exactly easy. It takes a lot of research, time and patience; at the end of the day these are wild animals and they certainly won't just pose the way you want them to! To be in the presence of these creatures is an experience in itself and if I happen to get a picture too, that is a wonderful bonus.

At the end of 2020, I decided to produce a 'Norfolk Wildlife' calendar of some of my favourite and most popular images, with some of the proceeds going to the Friends of Horsey Seals and I raised around £80 for this. I'm so grateful for all the support and comments I've received since I began my photography journey. I never imaged I would achieve so much in a short time and I hope and pray I can continue to do what I love. It's wonderful when you truly discover your passion.

If you would like to know to know more, my Facebook page is 'Laura Lake Photography, you can follow me on Instagram -@laura_jane_lake or on my website www.lauralakephotography.com

And if you tried something new in these difficult times why not tell us what you have been up to and we might publish it to encourage others.

We really like to include some photos.

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This service is streamed online every week. You are welcome to join us on Zoom at https://us02web.zoom.us/j/706580961 or use the Zoom number 706-580-961 in the app. If you do not have internet you can join the service by phone—please get in touch for help. Everything will also be available live or later on our Youtube channel "Venta group of churches". This service includes communion every other week.

LightHouse family sessions

9.30am on our Youtube channel every week

Going deeper this February...

Online only at 7.30pm Weds 17th Reflective Evening for Ash Wednesday

Lent 'breakfasts': Deepening Discipleship Saturdays Online only from 9.30am from 20th

Connect with us on Ash Wednesday and for our Lent breakfast on Zoom: https://us02web.zoom.us/j/978718212 or use Meeting ID 978 718 212 in the App.

Caistor church is normally open from 10-4 on Wednesdays and Sundays. At the moment everything is of course subject to change, so keep checking our website, Facebook, and Youtube. Please get in touch if we can help you in any way.

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

NOTICE

We are recruiting for an administrator to work one day a week with us supporting the mission and ministry of our churches. If you'd like more information, please email rob@venta-group.org.

Applications will close on 28th February.

Creation Wordsearch

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BIBLE	IMAGE
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CREATURES	LORD
DARKNESS	MAN
DAY	NIGHT
EVE	RIVERS
FIRST	SKY
FISH	SNAKE
FLY	TREE
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GARDEN	WOMAN

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