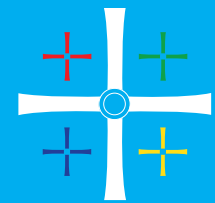


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THE MAGAZINE OF THE VENTA GROUP

FEBRUARY 2023

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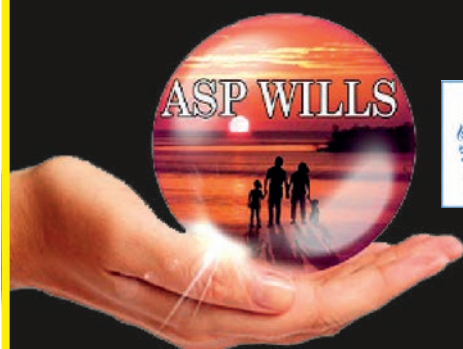
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Recently I found myself thinking again about the Olympics, and reflecting on what an amazing gathering it is, with people coming together from all across the world with a shared purpose, a shared spirit. Like me, you've probably watched the opening ceremony and seen teams large and small from countries which you know well, have visited yourself, or perhaps needed to be reminded of.

As I thought some more I remembered how many different nations and peoples are mentioned in the bible. If you ask Google a question like this, rather than spending all week trawling through 66 books full of names, you'll find that the answers vary, but there are certainly dozens of different ones, from Spain to India, and Italy to Ethiopia. Not just

mentions, either; the story of the bible takes us to lots of different places.

I've not travelled to many different countries, unlike some of you: I know that one thing that lots of people were itching to do as lockdowns lifted globally was to get in the car, or on a train or plane again. The bible story reminds us that people have always travelled, and until recently perhaps more than ever.

That got me wondering not so much where you might have travelled to, but where you might have travelled from. I've had the most fascinating conversations with people in the villages who have ended up here from all over the world, and enjoyed hearing their stories, but I reckon there are lots more. If you've got time to chat about the place you came from, and how you moved here, I'd love you to get in touch so I can come and say hello. Maybe we can start making our own list of the different places people have come from. It might even be as long as the bible's.

The bible's story of the nations ends not with where people come from, but where they are heading. The book of Revelation, right at the end of the bible, paints a picture of "a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and before the Lamb." It reminds us that the reason that all these nations are mentioned in the bible is because of God's desire that, one day, they will be united in him. A gathering from across the world with a shared purpose, a shared spirit.

It's an amazing picture to look forward to, but in the meantime I'd love to gather some more stories of people who have come from different places to make their homes here. Please get in touch and I'll pop by and say hello.

Rob

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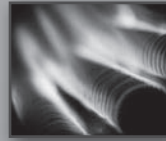
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From the Curate's Egg Resolutions?

How's it going? 2023? Did you make any resolutions? Maybe you didn't maybe you set yourself some goals? Either way, it's a month into 2023 and there's still time. February sees the start of Lent, which for some people is also another time to make resolutions. I was encouraged in my early life as a Christian, to give things up in Lent eg chocolate or Coke Cola (other drinks are available). Most years I did it successfully but at the end of Lent, I went back to doing those things. Is that what a resolution is all about?

In recent years I've started to do more difficult things in Lent. To start doing something. Reading a book written for Lent. Going for a walk every lunchtime. Meeting up with other Christians every week at work. I have not been so successful at picking things up and even if I do manage it, I still stop at the end of Lent. How can I keep up my resolution.

February is the month, as a teenager, I stood up and publicly declared the promises my parents and godparents made when I was baptised as a baby. Confirmation. 25 February 1979. I resolved. I confirmed I wanted to follow Jesus, receive the Holy Spirit and agreed to be sent out to worship and serve God. A lot has happened since then. At times I have wandered from the pathway. But I am reminded that at the confirmation service I agreed I could do things, with the help of God. It is still the same today and it was the same for Jesus.

Jesus spent 40 days in a desert and was tempted by the devil – each time Jesus quoted words from the scriptures he knew. He had stored those verses in his mind to strengthen him. I need to do the same. To continue in my resolution to follow Jesus I need to know scripture. So the 40 days of Lent could be a start but like Jesus, I need food every day. Jesus quoted from the bible right through his life, even at the toughest times like when he was on the cross. I find the words of the bible help me every day, even in tough times, if I let them or if I let them into them. If you're unsure of where to start drop me a line, come along to an All Invited session or Coffee and Chat on 2 or 16 February.

For now I leave you with the words of a hymn you may have heard of and which you may like to pray:

O Jesus I have promised, to serve thee to the end
Be thou for ever near me, my Master and my friend.
I shall not fear the battle, if thou art by my side,
Nor wander from the pathway, if thou wilt be my guide.

Lyn

St. George's Dementia group

Here we are in February and Christmas seems a bit of a distant memory. We did have a great Christmas party in December with music by Stuart Hull, practically everyone getting up to dance and joining in the singing. A great activity for the people we cater for. We hope to have more music sessions during the year.

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 and no referral is required. We also welcome anyone interested in becoming a volunteer.

Our February dates are: 13th February & 27th February

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

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



CHRIST AS A LIGHT

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.

A FEW TERRIBLE JOKES FROM CHRIS

Have you heard of the new restaurant called 'Karma'? There's no menu; you get what you deserve.

My brother-in-law is addicted to doing the hokey-cokey. It was a tough couple of years but he finally managed to turn himself around.

If Dracula can't see his reflection in a mirror, how come his hair is so neatly combed?

Man walks into a pet store and asks for a dozen bees. The assistant counts out thirteen bees. That's one too many says the man. The assistant replies 'It's a freebie'

There's no official training for refuse collectors. They pick it up as they go along.

Will glass coffins be a success? Remains to be seen.

Two Eskimos in a kayak were chilly, so they lit a fire in the craft causing it to sink. This proves that you can't have your kayak and heat it

Christmas service at Dunston, St Remigius, church

On Friday 23rd December, neighbours and friends from the little community of Dunston gathered for an intimate and inspiring Christmas celebration at St. Remigius Church.

The pretty little church building, which sadly has been closed to the public for several years due to the mess made by the bats roosting in the roof space, was especially cleaned and opened up for the event.

Dunston residents met at the Common in the early evening and walked together around the wood in the winter twilight with lanterns and torches. The church interior was lit with candles and ambient lighting and looked beautiful. I had the honour of hosting the simple service which was interspersed with Carols (led by friends from King's Community Church in Norwich), a stunning duet from Hope Watson and Alfie Bailey as seen in the photo. And we were blessed with a simply delightful performance of 'Papa Panov's Special Christmas' enacted by the young people of Stoke Holy Cross.

The theme of the service, which wove through the carols, readings, drama performance and a short talk, was that of Jesus coming to identify with us in our poverty and humanity. One that

is especially poignant in the present political and economic climate.

- 'Who is this who lives with the lowly;
- Sharing their sorrows, knowing their
- hunger?
- This is Christ, revealed to the world; In the
- eyes of a child, a child of the poor.'

- When the service was over the friends
- and neighbours made their way back to
- Bob and Sara's to celebrate further with
- food, drink and some lively conversation.
- The atmosphere was very friendly
- and relaxed and, from what I gather,
- everyone felt extremely welcomed and
- comfortable.

- One of the attendees remarked, "It was
- great to see the Dunston church brought
- to life again after so many years, and
- really lovely to have such a community
- Christmas evening."

- Personally, my family and I would just
- like to take this opportunity to thank
- everyone who gave anything at all, no
- matter how small, to make the evening
- a resounding success. We are so
- privileged to live amongst such generous
- and supportive people. We love living
- in Dunston and hope to continue
- experiencing community events like this
- for years to come.

- Gary Watson Youth Worker



Our Christmas Services

Despite the cold weather our Christmas services were enjoyed by many people. We had a service on the playing field as well as some lovely carol services and one at Dunston church too.

At the Stoke Carol Service we were delighted to have a group of children from the primary school who did some of the traditional readings for us and sang beautifully too. We also were treated to a performance of a Christmas play called "Papa Panov's Special Christmas" very well enacted by several children.

These are a few photos from the service and the play.

Thanks to the very generous donations made at the Stoke services we have been able to send £500 to the YMCA and Christians Against Poverty to help struggling young people and those needing debt counselling.



Shrove Tuesday and Ash Wednesday

This year Shrove Tuesday takes place on Tuesday 21st February. Shrove Tuesday is also known in some countries as Mardi Gras (Fat Tuesday) and in Great Britain is usually called Pancake Day.

Shrove Tuesday is actually the day before Ash Wednesday, which is the beginning of Lent. Traditionally it used to be a very solemn day. 'Shrove' comes from an old word 'shriven' which means going to confession and saying sorry for the things you have done wrong.

Gradually over the years, however, Shrove Tuesday changed into a day of using food up, which wouldn't be eaten in Lent, and generally a day of celebration. So Mardi Gras developed in some countries as a time of carnival and generally having fun.

In Great Britain there are different traditions around the country, including pancake races. But, of course, it is a great day for making pancakes at home. A breakfast or tea time treat maybe - enjoy! See below for a simple recipe.

A Simple Pancake Recipe from the BBC

Ingredients: 100g plain flour, 2 large eggs, 300ml milk, 1 tbsp sunflower or vegetable oil plus a little extra for frying, lemon wedges (optional) and caster sugar (optional)

Put 100g plain flour, 2 large eggs, 300ml milk, 1 tbsp sunflower or vegetable oil and a pinch of salt into a bowl or large jug, then whisk to a smooth batter.

Set aside for 30 mins to rest if you have time, or start cooking straight away.

Set a medium frying pan or crêpe pan over a medium heat and carefully wipe it with some oiled kitchen paper.

When hot, cook your pancakes for 1 min on each side until golden, keeping them warm in a low oven as you go.

Serve with lemon wedges and caster sugar, or your favourite filling. (our grandchildren love to have Maple Syrup or Nutella (or equivalent). (Just for a treat of course)

You can prepare them in advance too- Once cold, you can layer the pancakes between baking parchment, then wrap in cling film and freeze for up to 2 months.



Ash Wednesday

Ash Wednesday is the beginning of Lent and always falls 40 days before Easter (Sundays are not included in the count). On Ash Wednesday many Christians go to church and often have a sign of the cross put on their foreheads by their minister, as an outward symbol as a sign of repentance.

Lent is a time when Christians traditionally prepare for Easter and is considered to be a time of moderation. Many people give things up for Lent (quite often chocolate!) However, other people choose to do something special each day for Lent, like helping others in some way. If you would like to do something like this, charities like Tearfund often have ideas for activities for the 40 days of Lent.

We're praying for your street!



Every week in our churches we give time to praying for specific areas in the village here. We also often walk around them so you might see us about near you on those weeks. Please say hello and let us know if you have anything you want us to pray for - or you could email admin@ventagroup.org

This month we are praying for:

Week 1. Caistor Lane from High Ash Farm / Valley Farm Lane towards Poringland, including Southwood Drive and St Edmund's Close.

Week 2. Upper Stoke: Poringland Rd, Brickle Rd as far as Abbots Farm, Brickle Loke.

Week 3. Upper Stoke: Chandler Rd / Boudicca Way, Carol Close, Birbeck Close & Pine Loke.

Week 4. All the residents of Arminghall.

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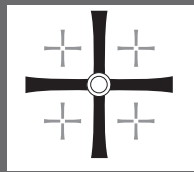
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Thursday 2nd February

10am

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Traditional communion and coffee

Sunday 5th February

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10.30am
3.30pm

Caistor St Edmund
Stoke Holy Cross
Stoke Church Hall

**Praise & Worship
Morning Worship
All Invited**—come together over food,
have fun, explore faith together

Sunday 12th February

10.30am

Stoke Holy Cross

**Morning Worship with
Holy Communion and children's group**

Sunday 19th February

9.30am
10.30am
3.30pm

Caistor St Edmund
Stoke Holy Cross
Stoke Church Hall

**Holy Communion
Morning Worship
All Invited**—come together over food,
have fun, explore faith together


Sunday 26th February

10.30am

Stoke Holy Cross

**Morning worship with communion
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