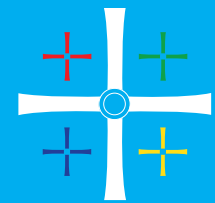


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THE MAGAZINE OF THE VENTA GROUP

DECEMBER 2023



Christmas Fair

STOKE HOLY CROSS PRIMARY SCHOOL
SATURDAY 9 DECEMBER
2-4pm

- Father Christmas in his grotto
- Raffle
- Crafts
- Games
- Tombola
- Christmas karaoke
- Scavenger hunt
- Refreshments
- Mince pies and cookies
- and lots more...



DETAILS OF ALL
OUR CHRISTMAS
EVENTS THIS
YEAR ON PAGE 10



HEAR MORE ABOUT
OUR 2023 LIGHT PARTY
ON PAGE 7



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What's your Christmas day routine?

By the time we have done the service at Stoke, then got to either set of grandparents, opened a few presents and sat down to eat, it's normally well into the afternoon. It means that for us the King or Queen's Christmas Broadcast is something to catch up with later, rather than sit down in front of every year at 3pm without fail.

I'm sure preparations for this year's broadcast are far ahead of me writing this message to you. Maybe it is filmed already. I am sure it will feel very different for King Charles writing it this year; last time it was very much a response to the death of the late Queen just a couple of months earlier.

If you were the king, what would you say? With a long history of promoting cooperation between faiths, I'm sure he will refer to the conflict between Israel and Hamas, and the plight of Israeli hostages and civilians in Gaza. Perhaps he'll also mention the war in Ukraine. Last year's message also made reference to people serving in different ways, from the armed forces, to emergency services and health and social care workers, teachers and public servants of all kinds.

If you ask Mr Google, he will tell you that the first King's Christmas message was George V in 1932. But it wasn't. The Bible is full of Christmas messages from the king. Many centuries before Jesus was born, the prophet Isaiah looked forward to one who would one day come and change the world forever:

For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the greatness of his government and peace there will be no end. (Isaiah 9:6-7)

That's what the angels come speaking: peace. Peace to a broken world, where conflict seems to increase rather than diminish. Peace to every heart wondering, in spite of everything, if God is for them. Everlasting, measureless peace.

Happy Christmas to you all

Rob

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

ASSISTANT MINISTER

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


CURATE

Kirsty Long, 1 Ponsonby Way, Poringland, NR14 7FJ
kirstylong204@gmail.com 07878 047289, 01508 830368

For all administrative enquiries please contact admin@venta-group.org

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IN A FUTURE MAGAZINE

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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

DAVID CARRINGTON

Friday 10th November
at Stoke Holy Cross

MILDRED HOSKINS

Thursday 30th November
at Stoke Holy Cross

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Kirsty's Advent Calendar

As a child I always looked forward to the beginning of December when my dad would go into the loft and fetch down the family advent calendar. It was long before the type of advent calendars that we see in the shops now which have chocolate, toys, alcohol, beauty products or other exciting things behind each window. It was literally a piece of card with a nativity scene on with twenty-three small numbered windows and one larger window which was number 24. There was no such thing as 25th window like nowadays.

Each morning my brother and I would take in turns to open that day's window which had a picture of different characters, animals and objects which feature in the nativity story, with the picture behind the final window on Christmas Eve being the whole nativity scene put together. We used to both get excited about seeing behind this window every year even though we knew exactly what was going to be behind it.

And it was this scene that the children in year 1 used to act out every year in the primary school in which I worked. Each child would want to play either Mary, Joseph or an angel, leaving many disappointed children. The role of the donkey was always hard to fill until they realised they had the responsibility of playing the coconut shells in time which then made this part much more appealing. After what seemed like a hundred rehearsals the children were ready to perform to the rest of the school and their parents and generally it all went to plan. I bet we all can remember similar nativity plays which we were involved in.

Taking on a role of a character in a story can be fun and sometimes challenging but at the end of the day its only acting and we are not actually that character but pretending. However, there is a story that we can all be involved in which does not require acting but just to be ourselves. Unlike a school nativity there will be no lines to learn, no songs to practice over and over again and certainly no old sheets and tea towels to wear as clothing, unless you really want to!

A story which started at the very beginning of time as John's gospel says in the beginning of the first chapter, "In the beginning was the word, and the word was with God and the word was God. He was with God in the beginning." This is God's story, a story of complete and utter love. Throughout the Old Testament we hear of God's love for all the world as he rescues his people time and time again. He used different individuals throughout that time to show them the way to live and how they could be reconciled with God. Some prophesised that a saviour would be born to the world. A prophecy which was fulfilled because God loved the world so much that he sent his only son, Jesus to be born as a baby, to live amongst his people and then to suffer death on the cross so that all who believe in him can be forgiven and live with him for eternity. Since Jesus' death this story has been continued, first by those who witnessed it all with their own eyes, who then started telling others the good news and is continuing today through those who believe.

From creation to now, there have been a great multitude of people involved in different parts of God's story including characters such as Adam, Eve, Abraham, Moses, Mary, Joseph and Paul to name but a few. Some with larger parts than others but all have been important and have played a vital role in continuing the story. A continuing story that we are all invited to be part of too. So why not this advent take time to explore this story further and look into being part of this amazing story too.

May God bless you this Christmas time.

Kirsty

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

DECEMBER 2023

December 6th CHRISTMAS MEAL
FOR MEMBERS AT THE FEATHERS

December 7th CLUB DAY

December 14th CHRISTMAS BINGO
AT 1.00PM

WE DO NOT PLAN TO RESTART
UNTIL THURSDAY 8TH
FEBRUARY 2024 (Club Day)
so have an enjoyable festive break
and thank you all for your
support in 2023

CHRISTMAS IS REALLY QUITE BIZARRE.

When else would you sit around
a dead tree in your living room
eating sweets and satsumas
out of your socks?

Anon

CHRISTMAS BLESSINGS

May
You know
The LOVE of God,
the JOY of the angels,
the HOPE of the shepherds,
the guiding LIGHT of the star,
the WONDER of the wise men, and
the abundant BLESSINGS of Jesus
In your heart and home this

II

CHRISTMAS

with thanks to The Leprosy Mission

The New Community Hall for Stoke Holy Cross

As many of you will already know the building works for the replacement Pavilion are due to start very shortly. It has been a long journey for the Parish Council and it is very exciting that the village will have a modern up to date building to use, for a wide variety of purposes. The space will include a large multipurpose hall, a meeting room, space for a café/ bar area as well as a patio area overlooking the sports field. There will be bespoke provision for the Pre School as well as a kitchen and café facilities.

If you would like to offer any help with the new hall or wish to express interest in using or running classes and events in the hall please contact the Parish Council via Parish Clerk D Wickham on 01603 339139 or email stokeholycross.pc@gmail.com.

To accommodate the pre-school while the building work is taking place, we will be installing a temporary classroom in the car park. This is due to arrive on 11 December. Therefore, there will be a significant impact on the number of parking spaces available.

There is no obvious alternative for parking and so it is likely that the streets near to the school will have many cars parked on them during school drop-off and pick up times. If possible please consider walking to school or car sharing. We would ask parents not to park in front of driveways and residents to be tolerant of more difficult driving conditions around school drop-off and pick-up times.

We hope to be able to keep the village up to date with progress each month, as we see this very exciting project finally come into being.

This Project has been supported by South Norfolk Council, through the Co-investment Fund



Stoke Holy Cross Parish Council

Coming soon

New Community Hall

- Large multi-purpose hall
- Cafe and bar facility and area
- Meeting room
- New pre-school area
- Outside patio area

January 2024 February 2024 Late summer 2024

Demolition of existing building Start building work Opening of new building

If you would like to offer any help with the new hall or wish to express interest in using or running classes and events in the hall please contact the Parish Council via Parish Clerk D Wickham on 01603 339139 or email stokeholycross.pc@gmail.com.

One man with many friends

I count it a privilege to have known David Carrington. A man who was devoted to his wife Vivian, their children and wider family. A man who was also a disciple of Jesus exemplifying love for God and love for neighbour, in word and deed.

During the time I have known David I can testify to him and Viv's commitment to young people. They offered hospitality and opened their home to several young trainee youth workers. These youth workers engaged with young people in our villages, offering a listening ear, sharing their musical gifts and joys in life and also drawing alongside those struggling with life. These youth workers may have only stayed with Viv and David for a few months, their work however went beyond these villages lasting years. I am sure that David's words of wisdom and guidance transformed those Norwich Youth for Christ interns' lives and those they met and shared the good news with.

David and Viv also opened their home to those attending the Alpha course. David often doing the cooking but always finding time to join in with the conversation about faith and about his faith in Jesus. He wanted others to know the love, peace and hope he had found in knowing Jesus as his Saviour.

David was a churchwarden for many years at Stoke Holy Cross and consistently approached newcomers in church and church events, regardless of age, background or level of faith. He was gracious and welcoming, kind and wise and everybody he spoke to felt accepted and validated, heard and loved for who they were. He had a sense of fun and never shied away from joining in with games even if that meant being wrapped head to toe in toilet paper or a funny wig. He served on the Parochial Church Council for many a year and when it came to appointing a new vicar, the church council asked David to be their representative, knowing his gifts would be important and right for the task. He was also a man of prayer too and during the recent pandemic grappled with technology to join us praying on Zoom as often as his health allowed him – but getting frustrated when the computer said no!

Beyond these villages David supported a number of charities, some local like the Matthew Project, others such as Christian Aid, the Leprosy Mission and Embrace reaching the oppressed in other countries. David encapsulated in his life and encourages those of us left behind to live out Jesus' words in Matthew's gospel, chapter 25: "I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was ill and you looked after me".

May he rest in peace and rise in glory

Lyn

Light Party

We welcomed 35 children and young people to our 2023 Light Party, where we had a great time doing light-themed games and crafts, reminding ourselves that the light always wins! If your child had a good time at the Light Party, we do things like this every couple of weeks on a Sunday afternoon at All Invited, so please come along!



Christmas Craft Night

Tuesday 5th December
7.30pm at Stoke church hall

Come and join us for mulled wine, Christmas treats and time to try different crafts and make festive decorations.

Let us know you're coming on cathryn.baker@gmail.com

Organised by the Venta group of churches
in Stoke Holy Cross, Dunston, Caistor and Arminghall



Here are some of the charities we will be supporting at our Christmas events this year:



The Diocese of Norwich appeal for the Ahli Anglican Hospital in Gaza



The Vidiyal Trust, working for three decades with disadvantaged people in Southern India.

St George's Hall Dementia Support Group



On the second and fourth Monday of each month except bank holidays this is a great place to relax for the dementia and for their carers. Come and join us for fun activities and refreshments. There is always room for people living with dementia and their partners or carers whether on our subsidised outings or at our regular Café sessions from 10 am to 12 noon in St George's Hall at Upper Stoke Holy Cross. Referral not necessary.

Volunteers always welcome and will find a very friendly and happy atmosphere and a very rewarding thing to do. For more information phone one of the numbers listed below.

December dates: No Café 4th but we all meet at Old Feathers Restaurant at Framingham Pigot for our Christmas lunch. If anyone is needing a lift please contact one of the telephone numbers below or ask personally.

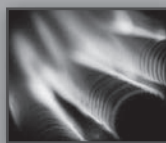
11th December is Christmas party with entertainment by Stuart Hull 25th December No Café

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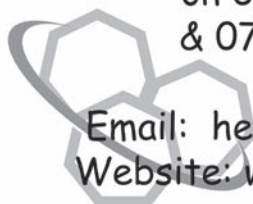


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December and Christmas 2023

IN STOKE, DUNSTON, CAISTOR AND ARMINGHALL

3

9.30am Praise & Worship at Caistor
10.30am Morning Worship at Stoke

10

10.30am Holy Communion at Stoke
4pm Carol Service at Caistor*
(Join us for refreshments from 3.15)

17

10.30am Family Carol Service at Stoke*
6.30pm Carol Service at Arminghall

21

10.30am Christmas Coffee & Chat
6-8pm Open air Carols around Stoke
Starting & finishing at the Church Hall

22

7pm Dunston Carol Service

24

4pm Crib Service for all ages at Stoke
11.30pm Carols, Readings & Communion
at Caistor

25

10.30am Christmas Celebration Service
at Stoke church

31

2pm New Year Walk
3pm Tea, cake and time to pray

Refreshments are available at all our Christmas events except for Christmas night, and on Christmas morning. For events marked with a *, you can watch live or later at youtube.com/@ventachurches

Let there be peace

For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders.
And he will be called Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.
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(Isaiah 9:6-7)

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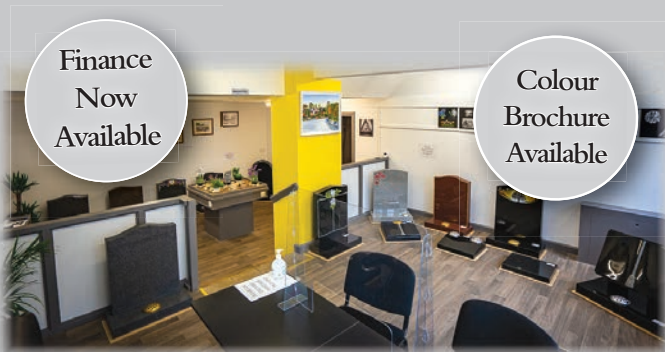
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