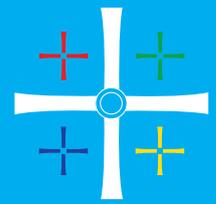


Free for All



THE MAGAZINE OF THE VENTA GROUP

JANUARY 2023



FROM THE PRIMARY SCHOOLS VISIT TO STOKE CHURCH

THE MEMBERS AND CARERS ENJOYED THE DEMENTIA SUPPORT CAFE'S CHRISTMAS LUNCH CELEBRATION. ARTICLE INSIDE.



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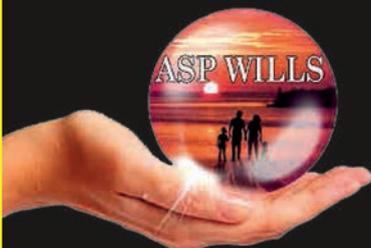
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I have recently spent a lot of time listening on loop to a song called Assembly Bangers, which might very well have made it to Christmas number 1 by the time you read this. It is the top-selling song on iTunes at the moment, because everyone my age remembers singing them when they were at school. You can find it on YouTube, but please buy it as well because all the proceeds are going to Foodbank charities. It has caused some controversy, if only because you can only fit a certain number of songs into 3 minutes, so lots of people's favourites missed out.

One which I particularly remember began "When God made the garden of Creation." You may well be humming it now. It went on to describe how God made the world, in words which are

both too numerous for the tune and enormously repetitive. It's quite something.

With the remainder of my word limit this month, hopefully I can say a little bit more about God and Creation than that particular 90s assembly classic managed.

In some ways the Bible is a book about gardens. It begins in Eden: the garden of Creation. It was here that Adam and Eve lived in God's presence, and he saw that it was good. It was here, too, that they turned away from God, and were sent away from that place.

At Easter it was in a garden that Jesus wrestled with God, coming to understand that in order for us to come back into the relationship that we enjoyed with God in the beginning, he would have to die in our place.

Moving forward now to the last few pages of the Bible, the book of Revelation describes a vision of Eden restored, with the tree of life which Adam and Eve reached for now bearing fruit for the healing of the nations, and the curse that was on them removed.

So these three great moments in the whole story of Creation play out in a garden. And this is one of many reasons for us to stop and think about how we relate to the world that God has given us, through Adam, to steward and care for. The song reminds us (repeatedly) the God created the world out of love, and that part of our worship is to love it as he does.

This January on Sunday morning we'll be asking some big questions about what it means to care for God's creation, and we'd love you to join us. Flick through the magazine to find out more.

Rob

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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

BRENDA DIXON

Wednesday 7th December

STOKE HOLY CROSS

We are always happy to record the names
of anyone from the villages whose funeral
has been held recently, even if it wasn't
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From the Curate's Egg

Thank you

Let's make this month, the month of thank yous.

When I was a child, after Christmas, my parents would get me to write thank yous. I can remember not being easily persuaded to do them; not because I didn't like the presents I received, it just took time to write the thank yous and I wanted to do other things, like play with the presents during the school holidays. But as I get older I realise the importance of thank yous although I still struggle sometimes to remember to write it or say it.

My presents mainly came from family but now most of those family are dead, no longer around to give or receive presents or thank. I can't remember what the presents were or even have them now. Yet I still remember them, the people. Auntie Dora who was always up for playing my latest board game and who was full of laughter and just seemed to love being with us.

The words "thank you" can be found in 53 verses of the bible but the words are not necessarily side by side. Most often the writer is being thankful for what God has done. Thanking him for looking after people; thanking him for answering prayers; thanking him for sending someone to help or for his own help. Thanking him for his wisdom, his righteousness for who God is.

I want to start off this year by thanking people, not for their presents but their presence. For all those who last year I met at Coffee and Chat – thank you, without you coming along my life would have been the poorer, less laughter, less joy. Thank you to those in the school community – staff, parents and children – without you my life would have been the poorer, less fun. Thank you to those who joined the community choir – without you my life would have been the poorer, less music. Thank you to those who are in the worship band – without you my life would have been the poorer, not only less music but my sung worship of God would have been poorer. Thank you to those who clean our church buildings and halls – you do a fantastic job and have enabled others to meet together. There are so many people in our community for which I am thankful – and I hope you dear reader will now be reminded of someone to thank. Closer to home I want to thank my family, particularly my husband Gary. Thank you for all you do but also for who you are, I thank God.

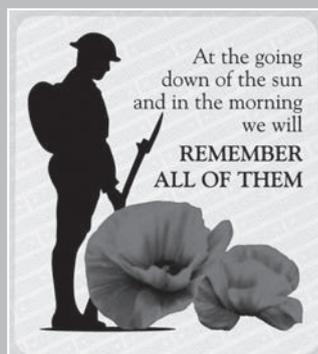
St Paul who wrote a lot to the early churches, did a lot of thanking God for people and wrote: I always thank my God for you because of his grace given you in Christ Jesus (1 Corinthians 1:4). Perhaps we would do well to follow his example, not just to thank God for what someone has done but for who they are, who God has created them to be, in Jesus.

Lyn

CAISTOR ST EDMUND POPPY APPEAL

The total raised in the House To House collection was £277.09. Also £528.47 was raised from donations given on local business premises and with a further £336.03 from other donations a total of £1,141.59 was sent from this district for the RBL Poppy Appeal this year.

Thank you to everyone who helped to raise, which was a record amount for this district. Graham Ford, Hon District Organiser.



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Flying on the Meadow

Recording butterflies on Jubilee Meadow

The recent media coverage of results from the 2022 Big Butterfly Count again highlighted the continued and dramatic decline in butterfly numbers. Loss of habitat is consistently cited as a major contributor to the falling number of insects and a core aim of the Jubilee Meadow project is to create more habitat for pollinators by providing wildflowers, hedges and trees. One way to see how we're doing will be to record what's visiting the meadow. With this in mind Pauline and I set up the meadow as a recording site (known as a transect) on The UK Butterfly Monitoring Scheme (UKBMS). This involves walking the same route, in our case the boundary of the meadow, once each week up to the end of October and counting what we see within a defined radius of the route.

We didn't start the survey until late June so we won't have a full year of data but at least we'll have a benchmark for part of the year. So far we've recorded a reasonable variety although not in large numbers. To date we're on 14 butterfly species (Essex Skipper, Brimstone, Large White, Small White, Green-veined White, Small Copper, Brown Argus, Common Blue, Small Tortoiseshell, Red Admiral, Peacock, Gatekeeper, Meadow Brown & Ringlet) with Meadow Brown the most numerous followed by Large White, Small White and Gatekeeper. The highest daily species counts were 19 each of Meadow Brown and Gatekeeper (on the 8th and 15th July respectively). The last butterfly was also our first record of a sulphur-yellow male Brimstone flying through the meadow on a warm sunny spell on the 27th October (possibly lured out of its winter hibernation by the conditions). As well as recording butterflies, the survey records moths (most moths are active at night but many species are also day-fliers). During the surveys we recorded 9 species of moth. Three species of grass dwelling micro-moths known as grass-veneers often far out-numbered the butterflies - on the 8th July we counted at least 46 Garden Grass Veneer (*Chrysoteuchia culmella*) and that was probably a considerable under-count of these small flighty moths! The last moth recorded was another micro-moth, a Rush Veneer on the 27th October - this is a regular migrant to this country probably brought up from the continent on the warm southerly airflow at the time.

As well as recording the butterflies and moths, we enjoyed encounters with other wildlife on the meadow including several sightings of a Red Kite gliding gracefully overhead, screaming gangs of Swifts scything through the skies at the end of summer as well as seeing numerous other insects and bugs. Nearby we enjoyed watching the tireless work of Bee-Wolf wasps digging out nest tunnels in the sandy soils alongside the less numerous Hairy-legged Mining Bee (aka Pantaloon Bee).

Comparing butterfly numbers is difficult as numbers can fluctuate wildly and will be affected by weather conditions but by collecting and collating data nationally through schemes such as the transect walks, an invaluable picture of the fortunes and distribution of butterflies in the UK has been built up. If you are interested in butterflies and want to contribute to this work there are a range of great options available including:

- Taking part in the annual Big Butterfly Count which will run next year from Friday 14th July 2023 to Sunday 6th August. You can find out more and register your interest at <https://bigbutterflycount.butterfly-conservation.org/>
- Using one of the recording schemes run by Butterfly Conservation such as their excellent free iRecord Butterflies smartphone app or by submitting regular sightings from your garden or other space through the Garden Butterfly Survey.

Go to <https://butterfly-conservation.org/butterflies/recording-and-monitoring>



Dave Jones

Norfolk Churches Trust 2022 sponsored Bike Ride

It has turned out to be another amazing success. The latest total for the 2022 ride is an extraordinary £129,925. We will be processing the cheques to send out to over 300 churches who have raised sponsorship money.

We are enormously proud of the fact that this year the Bike Ride surpassed the £4 million mark raised since it started back in 1983. This is an astonishing amount of money which has helped support our historic Norfolk Churches.

The 2023 ride will be Saturday the 9th of September.

Best wishes to all our supporters.

Norfolk Churches Trust Bike Ride Committee

We give thanks to Savills for sponsoring the event this year.



St George's Hall Dementia Support Café

Our annual Christmas Lunch was again held very successfully, on Monday 5th December, at the Old Feathers Restaurant in Framingham Pigot. We hope you liked the great photos on the cover taken by a supporter.



Some 35 folk, comprising people living with dementia plus their partners, relatives or carers, enjoyed the great selection of festive food on offer, whether traditional turkey roast or one of the equally delicious alternatives. The usual tempting choice of lovely desserts followed.

As always, many of our loyal band of marvellous volunteers were there in support, to help ensure it all ran smoothly. We couldn't run the cafe without their unstinting assistance. Everyone agreed that, as usual, it had been a thoroughly enjoyable time.

A full programme of events is being planned for 2023 and will be available on our website early in the New Year. We welcome existing members and potential newcomers and helpers to our twice-monthly activities on the 2nd and 4th Mondays. There are no fees and no referral is required.

Our website can be found at st-georges-dementia-support-group.uk
Or further information call, 01508 493661, 01508 494742 or 01508 495580

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.

We had a lovely time together at our December Christmas meal at the Old Feathers.

We have no meetings in January so we wish you all a very happy new year.

And we start back again on 2nd February.

We welcome new members so why not come and join us for coffee, chat and good company in a nice warm place.

Stoke Holy Cross Church Repairs progress



We are so grateful to so many of our members and supporters who have help us raise around £20,000 and for the Grants we have received from the R C Snelling Charitable Trust, the Paul Bassham, Norfolk Churches Trust and the Geoffrey Watling Trust.

We have now managed to have the all the north roof slopes cleaned of damaging moss, the cast iron gutters cleaned restored and repainted, repairs to the tower tiled roof and the parapet walls. Also some internal plaster repairs have been done.

This last couple of years we also were faced the need to raise the boiler off the floor and repair it as it had flooded after heavy rain. And we sadly had to have a huge copper beech tree taken down as it was clearly dying. We extend our thanks to members of the church who have done so much in trying to keep the church grounds in good order for the community. Our church yards provide a wonderful peaceful place for everyone to visit and enjoy.

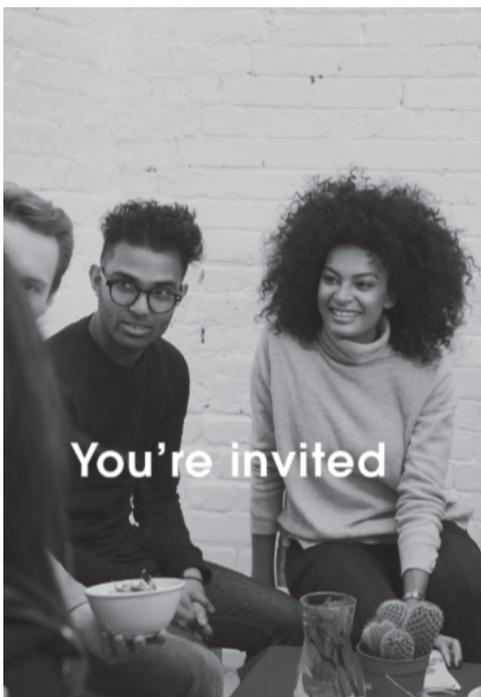
FOUNDATION VISIT & CAROL SERVICE

It's been an exciting time at Stoke church recently. At the end of November, Foundation Class (ages 4&5) came to visit us at the church building. It was the first time any of the schoolchildren had been to see us since the pandemic. It was great to give them the chance to think about the Christmas story, and to remember why Mary, the shepherds, the angels and the wise men are important to us. We remembered that Jesus came for all of us, and they wrote their names or drew their picture on a label to hang on the Christmas tree to remind us (see front cover).

On 11th December some of them came back to church as part of a group of singers to perform songs from their nativity play. They did a really good job of singing for us and we want to say a big thank you to them for coming. Here's a picture of them all going for it!



Thank you so much to Mrs Greenwood and the foundation team of helpers for walking the children all the way down to the church building, and to Mrs Gorman and Mrs Smith for giving up their Sunday morning to bring the children to the carol service.



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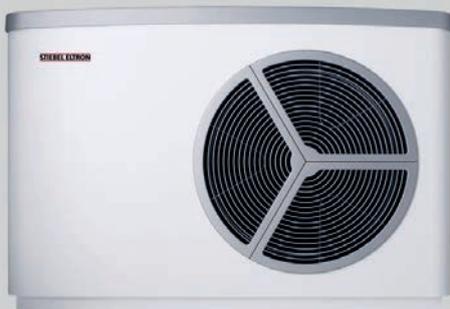
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