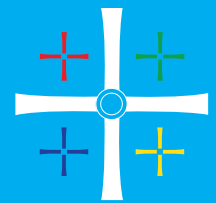


# Free for All



THE MAGAZINE OF THE VENTA GROUP

MAY 2024



**Dementia Cafe**



**Easter Morning at Stoke**



**Easter Family Fun**



**Stoke Family Meeting**



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Following on from my message a couple of months back, when I talked about Easter coming at just the right time, I am reminded that not everything seems to happen at quite the right time. Writing in the middle of April, I am wondering if it is a bit early for the baby blackbirds, three of which have appeared in our garden in the last few days, soon followed by two tiny dunnocks. They are giving us a lot of pleasure, but perhaps not their hassled parents, responding to the constant calls of "Feed me! Feed me!"

As I read over the Easter story again in recent weeks I enjoyed the story of Peter's recommissioning by Jesus. There's lots of amazing parts to it, but what struck me this time was the way that Jesus tells Peter to feed his followers. He uses a different animal image from my birds – he calls them sheep

and lambs – but I was reminded of the way sheep and lambs also get very excited at the sight of food: it's as if they are bleating "Feed me! Feed me!"

It got me wondering how hungry I am, or perhaps rather what I am hungry for. It's not just food: it's other things as well. Some of them we all need, and they are good for us in moderation, but we can go looking for them in the wrong places. Other things are more obviously harmful.

I'm intrigued, and honestly a bit alarmed, that the stuff that appears on my social media is called a "feed". It makes it sound like something that ends up sustaining us, and which we need to go back to again and again. This year I've read an equally alarming book about Ultra-processed foods, and the sort of physical food that we are filling ourselves with. Is that what Jesus meant?

Well, whether we're talking about Twitter or turkey twizzlers, the answer is no. That's not what he meant. And while Jesus certainly wanted Peter to look after his followers when he went back to the Father, he probably didn't really mean physical food of any kind. Jesus knew that our hearts and minds and souls needed feeding even more than our bodies, and that's what he really wanted Peter to do.

And he did.

In the months and years that followed, Peter consistently told people about the good news of salvation through Jesus. Together with some equally faithful friends, he gathered the constantly growing church into smaller groups that could feed on the Scriptures and the apostles' teaching, could break bread to remember Jesus, could pray and pray and pray. Peter fed the sheep.

God's call on the church hasn't changed: he still asks us to feed people, recognising that we all need to be fed, and that we will all fill ourselves with something. There's a lot out there that is artificial and Ultra-processed and all kinds of bad for us, and I'm aware I eat plenty of it too. But Jesus wants to meet our urgent calls for food with the stuff that we really need, and that will help us grow and thrive like the birds in my garden. Jesus wants us all to be well-fed.

*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.

### BURIAL OF ASHES

#### JENNY OATES

Thursday 11<sup>th</sup> April  
at 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 taken by a member of  
our ministry team.

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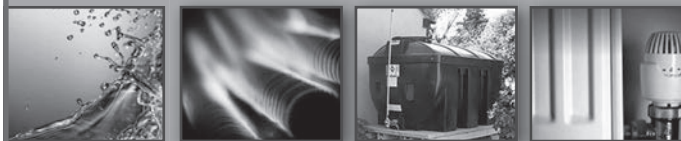
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# Waterloo and the Wombles

What has Waterloo and the Wombles got in common? I was recently watching the 1974 Eurovision song contest, which came from Brighton and was surprised to see the Wombles were the interval act. What message did the United Kingdom want to present to Europe, the rest of the world? (For those who can't remember or don't want to remember, wombles were furry, fictitious children's characters who cleaned litter up on Wimbledon common). It seemed strange to see these characters on a programme which, as far as I can remember, is transmitted late on a Saturday night.

What didn't seem so surprising was the winner of the contest. Sweden's entry, Waterloo by Abba, to me seemed the best on the night – a breath of fresh air from the ballads, Euro-pop and songs in languages I did not understand. Waterloo is a song about love and was sung by a group that makes its band name up from the initials of each band member.

So, Waterloo and Wombles both featured in the 1974 Eurovision song contest, that's what they have in common. I wonder what will feature on this year's song contest this month. (Don't worry neighbours I won't be holding a Eurovision party; you just might see the lights on a bit later than normal!) There's almost certainly to be a song about love from some country. Love for the environment or love for people?

May is the month Caistor St Edmund holds its annual litter pick – although it doesn't go as far back as the Wombles in 1974, participants show their care, their love for the locality in which they live. The volunteers on Jubilee Meadow in Stoke Holy Cross show their care, their love for the environment. All of us can show our care, our love for the environment by ensuring we don't throw away wrappers etc but take things home and put them in our rubbish bins.

Sadly battles/wars are still raging across the world. Waterloo is being repeated. Not just the battle but as the song points us to, to loving relationships. But even before 1974 Jesus said there were two commandments, Love God and love your neighbour. "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind." This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: "Love your neighbour as yourself." (Matthew 22:37-39). God the Father (Abba is another name for Father in Aramaic/Hebrew), through his son Jesus, demonstrated his love for the world by dying for it, dying for the people of the world. This month how will I demonstrate love for people and in some small way, love for God too?

Lyn

## Stoke Holy Cross Thursday Club

We are a friendly local group of over 55's meeting at St. Georges Hall Upper Stoke Holy Cross usually the first Thursday in the month at 1.30pm and run Games and Bingo alternate weeks.

However because of elections the hall will be in use on Thursday 2<sup>nd</sup> May so Club will be the following Thursday 9<sup>th</sup> May.

Bingo commences at 1.30pm on 16<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup> (Please bring a raffle prize)

Games commence at 1pm on on 23<sup>rd</sup> (Please bring your own games and share with your friends)

*Never too old to learn a new game!* Cost £1.00 and includes refreshments.

Club members will enjoy a meal at the George Hotel in Norwich on Wednesday 29<sup>th</sup> May.

## Norfolk Churches Annual Charity Bike Ride 2023

We apologise for reporting this rather late but we are pleased to say that Andy Driver visited quite a number of churches back in September and raised nearly £100 towards Stoke Holy Cross church building fund and a similar amount to support the work of the Norfolk Churches Trust

## Stoke Holy Cross New Community Hall

There has been good progress on the construction of the new hall. It is now becoming clear where the doors and windows will be situated and the brickwork is looking good. The scaffolding put up during April has allowed work on the upper parts of the hall to take place with the roof beginning to take shape and Velux rooflights and the photo voltaic cells installed. The roof should be complete by the end of May, by which time the exterior of the building will look a little different as the black cladding is put in place on the walls.

So, the new Community Hall is really beginning to take on its full outward appearance. Some interest has been expressed about what villagers would like to see happening in the hall (especially on the Stoke Holy Cross Facebook page). This is very encouraging and we would ask you all to let us know if you have any suggestions for running classes and events, and help us make ideas, such as a bar and a café, actually come about. Please contact the Clerk to the Parish Council, Dan Wickham on 01603 339139, [stokeholycross.pc@gmail.com](mailto:stokeholycross.pc@gmail.com) for more details.

# Easter sunrise service at Caistor St Edmund

Very early in the morning on Easter Day we gathered at the edge of the Roman Town to watch the sunrise and remember the risen Christ. The mist was lying on the fields and it was incredibly beautiful. We lit a candle and sang hymns, and we were reminded of the promise of new life by looking at nature all around us.

Afterwards we shared a breakfast of bacon butties, croissants and coffee and enjoyed talking to friends old and new. It was a really good way to start Easter Day.

Lia Day



# Annual Stoke and Dunston Family Meeting

Rather than have a formal Annual Parish Parochial Council meeting, the annual meeting of Stoke Holy Cross and Dunston churches took place as part of our April 14<sup>th</sup> Sunday morning service in Stoke church. It was a wonderful mixture of giving thanks for all that God has done, as well as the formalities which have to take place.



One person talked to us about what was happening at our All Invited services while another explained some of the work carried out by our great team of churchyard volunteers. Yet another spoke about how Coffee and Chat on Thursdays is blossoming.

The Family Meeting also included a video of many of the wide range of events which have taken place over the whole Venta Group of churches during the last year.

As well as giving thanks for all that had happened during the year, time was taken in groups to talk about one thing which the church might do during the coming year as an outreach to the whole community.



# St George's Hall Dementia Support Cafe



We warmly welcome people living with dementia and their carers to our regular Café sessions in St George's hall, Upper Stoke Holy Cross on the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Mondays of each month (except bank holidays) at 10am to 12 midday. There are fun activities also entertainment to enjoy along with good conversation, helpful support and information we also have two subsidised outings a year.

A volunteer at the Café and took these photographs, with permission, at our Easter Crafts meeting yesterday 25<sup>th</sup> March.



The group was led by Patricia Halliday and both she and Ann Raines arranged beautiful floral table displays.

We also had a great session 8<sup>th</sup> April with the Squee Gees music with everyone singing along and some dancing, and an AGM on 22<sup>nd</sup>.

There are no joining fees, just a small charge for refreshments and no referral is necessary. We are pleased to welcome anyone wishing to become a volunteer, a very rewarding thing to do, and a place to meet new friends.

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

Website is [www.st.george's-dementia-support-group.uk](http://www.st.george's-dementia-support-group.uk)

Dates for May 13<sup>th</sup> May Cafe session but there is no Café on 27<sup>th</sup> May as Bank Holiday

Caistor Church  
Open evening  
Sunday 23rd June  
4-7pm



Everyone from the community is welcome to come and join representatives of Caistor Church and the Norfolk Archaeological Trust as we share some of our vision for shared use of the building, to benefit all potential users of this wonderful space long into the future. Come and look at plans for the building work, find about the Roman town, and have drinks and cake!

**There will be a short presentation and time for questions at 6pm.**

If you can't make it but would like to be kept informed, please email [rob@venta-group.org](mailto:rob@venta-group.org)



Stoke Holy Cross  
garden open days  
National  
Garden Scheme  
2024

Sunday May 26<sup>th</sup> and Sunday July 28<sup>th</sup> 11-4 pm  
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Saturday June 22<sup>nd</sup> 11-5 pm  
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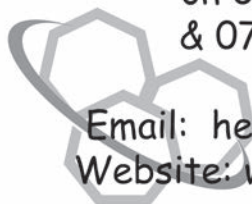


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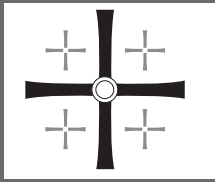


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## Midweek gatherings in May

1 <sup>st</sup> May	Arminghall church open for refreshments from 2pm, finishing with <b>Evening Prayer</b> at about 3.30	
1 <sup>st</sup> May	<b>Rural Dean licensing service at Stoke, 7pm</b>	
2 <sup>nd</sup> May	10.30am *at the Vicarage*	<b>Coffee and Chat</b>
9 <sup>th</sup> May	10am at Dunston	<b>Ascension Day Service</b>
16 <sup>th</sup> May	10.30am at the Church Hall	<b>Coffee and Chat</b>

## Sunday mornings at 9.30am

5th May	Caistor St Edmund	<b>Praise &amp; Worship</b>
19th May	Caistor St Edmund	<b>Holy Communion</b>

## Sunday mornings at Stoke Holy Cross at 10.30am

5 <sup>th</sup> & 19 <sup>th</sup> May	<b>Morning Worship with children's group</b>
12 <sup>th</sup> & 26 <sup>th</sup> May	<b>Morning Worship with Holy Communion &amp; children's group</b>

## Sunday afternoons and evenings in April

12 <sup>th</sup> & 26 <sup>th</sup> May	<b>All Invited</b> — Food, Fun and Faith for all from 3.30pm-5pm at the Church Hall
19 <sup>th</sup> May	<b>Prayer and Praise at 6pm at Stoke.</b> Join us to worship, pray and listen to God

**Coffee and chat**  
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2nd May 16th May  
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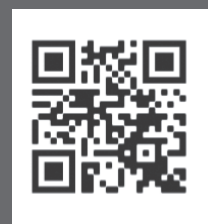
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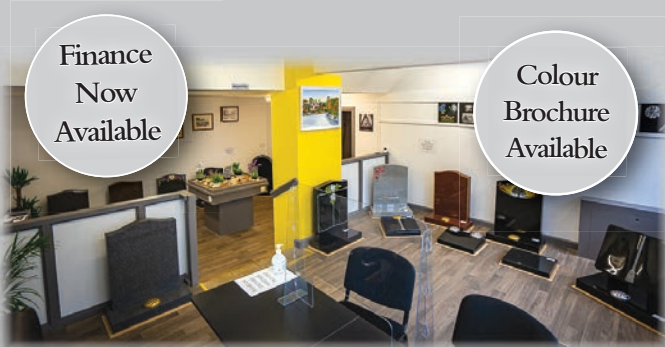
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