Free for All






THE MAGAZINE OF THE VENTA GROUP DECEMBER 2026

For a child has been born for us, a son given to us and he is named Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.



The churches in Arminghall, Caistor, Dunston and Stoke Holy Cross wish you a very Happy Christmas and invite you all to our Christmas Celebrations held at venues across the Venta Group
(see inside for details)

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Wrapped or unwrapped?

When it comes to wrapping Christmas gifts, I'm a reluctant gift wrapper. I don't mind buying gifts, I don't mind giving gifts, I struggle with wrapping gifts and I hesitate with unwrapping gifts. I hear you say, really, Lyn, I find that hard to believe, but it's true.

The date goes in my diary to go Christmas shopping with my daughter (I used to do it with my mother when she was alive). We go Christmas shopping, sometimes buying the gifts we expected, sometimes having to be content with what the shops actually have in stock and sometimes by the end of the day deciding that we'll need to find alternative gifts elsewhere. I get home with the bags, have to decide where to hide some gifts from other members of the family and then comes the realization. I've got to wrap the gifts – and inevitably I leave it until the last minute. Even though I've bought the gifts in plenty of time, I procrastinate in doing the wrapping but they do get done, eventually! But I also struggle with opening gifts. For a few reasons: several years ago a member of our family thought they would wrap gifts up with lots of sellotape, leaving little gap to get a finger in-between the wrapping paper. Secondly, I want to watch other people unwrapping their presents – seeing the expressions on their faces gives me joy. Finally, I like to savour the moment and make the opening of gifts last as long as possible.

At Christmas, we celebrate the gift of Jesus. God sent his Son to bring joy to a joyless situation, to bring peace into a chaotic situation and to demonstrate love for people. He is good news. Jesus is a good gift yet Jesus is a gift you can decide to keep wrapped up or unwrap. Maybe we sometimes hold back on unwrapping Jesus, hold back from getting to appreciate the gift because, like my reluctance to open gifts, we don't know where to start to open the gift, it appears difficult to unwrap him. Or we watch other people getting to know Jesus, see the expressions on their faces and settle for that, let them enjoy following Jesus. Or maybe we are too busy, in too much of a rush to make time to open the gift of Jesus.

As you unwrap gifts this year, perhaps you could ask yourself – have I opened the gift of knowing Jesus? If not, what's stopping me doing it? Maybe you would like some help, if so please contact me or one of the other contacts on this page.

I hope to see you at one of our Christmas gatherings but if I don't let me wish you, dear reader, a blessed Christmas and the desire to unwrap the gift of Jesus.

Lyn

CHURCHWARDENS

Stoke Holy Cross & Dunston
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Caistor St Edmund
Jani (07557 774520)

ST GEORGE'S HALL BOOKINGS:

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STOKE HOLY CROSS COMMUNITY HALL BOOKINGS:

email: shc.communityhall@gmail.com
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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

MARION COY

30th November 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.

We would love to feature your village organisation

IN A FUTURE MAGAZINE

just get in touch and we will see what we can do!

Email: ventafree4all@outlook.com

For all enquiries please contact:

Viv (493438) *or Jani* (07557 774520)

or email: admin@venta-group.org

Search Facebook and Youtube for "Venta group of churches"

www.venta-group.org **@venta_group**

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or
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By 10th of this month please.



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Christmas Tree Festival

Wed 2 Dec – Sun 13 Dec 2026
at St Peter Mancroft Church Chantry Road, Norwich (opp the Forum)
(Organised in conjunction with the Rotary Club of Norwich St Edmund)



Festival Viewing Times

Daily: 10.30am – 3.30pm.
Closing time on Thurs 3rd Dec – 6pm

The public will be invited to vote for the best decorated tree and there will be a "Hunt the Elf" competition for children.

A large memorial tree will also be erected in the church. This "Tree of memories" will provide an opportunity for the public to make a dedication in memory of a loved one during the Festival.

Admission is free, but donations received will be used for the benefit of local charities



Lyn's Relicensing

Many church members and friends enjoyed attending our much-loved Lyn's licensing by Bishop Ian at Stoke church on 17th December.

Lyn swore her allegiance and was presented with the formal deed as Associate Priest in the Venta Group.

STOKE HOLY CROSS THURSDAY CLUB

St. Georges Hall, Long Road, Upper Stoke Holy Cross

I cannot believe that as I am writing this I am looking at trees still full of leaves. It makes one feel that we should be getting outside and exploring new things and ideas.

One new thing that is very easy to explore and get that lovely warm inside feeling is to pop along to our over 55's club. We promise that you will be glad that you did. As you can tell from our name we have something on every Thursday. The first Thursday of every month is our club day when we meet, put the world to rights over a lovely cup of tea/coffee and of course biscuits. Alternate Thursday's we play bingo and the remaining Thursday's out come the games, anything from cards to scrabble to domino's etc.

We have a break over Christmas and January so why not mark a date on your new 2027 calendar for the 4th February to join us to make new friends and have a laugh, we promise you will not regret it.

I would like to add my thank you to all the members who throughout the year have made it possible for our club to be the happy place that it is. I would also like to thank the members who have consistently given their time and helped with all the jobs that are needed to keep the club running eg setting up tables chairs every week, shopping for prizes, making the tea, washing up etc.

A very big Happy Christmas and a very prosperous and healthy 2027 to all our members old and new.

DATES FOR DIARIES:

Club Day

December 3rd.
February 4th - 1pm start

Bingo

December 10th
February 11th & 25th
Eyes down 1.15pm

Games

February 18th - 1pm start.

POST OFFICE®

Open 9.45 to 10:45 every Thursday at Stoke Holy Cross Church Hall

St George's Hall Dementia Support Group

I can't believe we are so near Christmas but here we are. The mad few weeks of preparation are upon us.
Take a few deep breaths and enjoy the season every thing always gets done in the end.
That's what I try and tell myself anyway.
The Café has had a good programme through the year with a variety of speakers and table activities available.

Dates for December

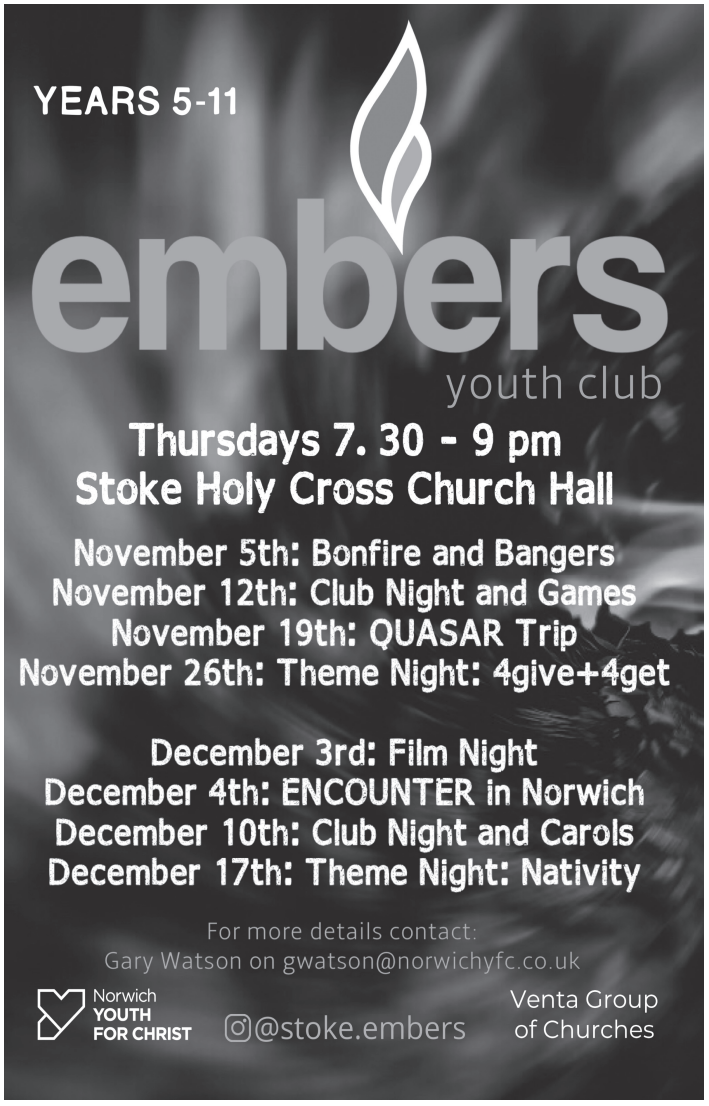
7th December. Our Christmas lunch at The Old Feathers

14th December. Our Christmas party with Stuart Hull who will be entertaining us with familiar songs. Some may even have a dance.

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 no referral is required. We also welcome anyone interested in becoming a volunteer. Please note that because numbers are increasing and the capacity in the hall and car park we may be shortly have to implement a waiting list.

For further information call, 01508 494742, 01508 495580 or 01508 493661
Website is www.st.georges-dementia-support-group.uk





Autumn Music Concert



We, once more, enjoyed a splendid concert of music on Saturday 31st October in Stoke Holy Cross Church.

Tatiana from Ukraine sang some wonderful opera music for us. Sadly Natalia who sang at our previous concert had lost her voice so Veronica Wilson accompanied Tatania on piano. Natalia's young son Andrii played some beautiful solo piano pieces. We enjoyed delicious refreshments in the interval. Then in the second half The Tas Valley String Quartet played some Brahms followed by some unusual piano music from Nik Kusov-Lipp and 2 Chopin Etudes played beautifully by Veronica. Finally we heard a talented classical guitarist Chris Davis who played some medieval folk music concluding with some lively flamenco.

We raised nearly £500 to be shared between the St.George's Dementia Support Cafe and Stoke Church Building Fund. It was, as Rev Lyn Marsh said at the end, a real treat.











YOU ARE INVITED TO AN

ADVENT RETREAT

An evening of quiet reflection based on the Christmas story with space to journal and pray in the midst of a busy season.

STOKE HOLY CROSS CHURCH HALL

DECEMBER

WEDNESDAY 2nd 7PM

FREE TO COME, NO NEED TO BOOK.



Christmas Community Choir

Please do remember to come along and join our Christmas Community Choir.

There are just 2 December rehearsals on the evenings of Friday 4th and 11th at 7:45 to 9pm in Stoke Church Hall.

Please let us know if you are coming or you can't make all the rehearsals by email to Lynmarsh@gmail.com



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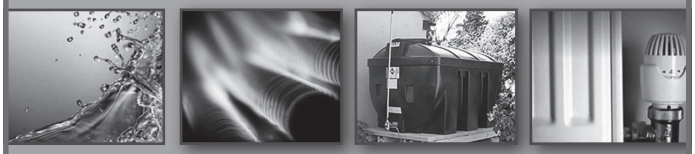
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DECEMBER 2026

WORSHIP, PRAYER AND COMMUNITY IN OUR VILLAGE CHURCHES

Sundays and Christmas Services at Caistor St Edmund

6th December	**Praise and Worship at 9.30am**
20th December	**Carol Service with choir at 4pm** (refreshments from 3.15pm)
24th December	**Midnight Mass at 11.30pm**

Sundays and Christmas Services at Stoke Holy Cross

6th December	**Cafe Church** (in the Church Hall) **at 10.30am**
13th December	**Carol Service with Stoke Primary School at 10.30am**
24th December	**Crib Service at 3pm**
25th December	**Christmas Day Communion at 10.30am**

Sundays at Arminghall Church

13th December	**Carol Service with choir at 6.30pm**

Christmas Eve at Dunston Church

24th December	**Carol Service at 5pm**

Other Gatherings in December in Stoke Chruch Hall

Wed 2nd December	**Advent Retreat 7pm**
Thur 3rd December	**Holy Communion 10am, Coffee & Chat at 10.30am**
Thur 17th December	**Celtic Morning Prayer 10am, Coffee & Chat 10.30am**

At Stoke Community Hall

Sat 19th December	**Carols Round the Christmas Tree at 6pm**

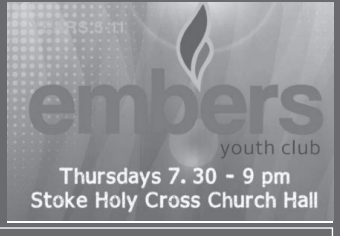
Caistor church building open daily 10-4pm for prayer / reflection



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Every Tuesday morning from 10-11am at Stoke Church Hall, Find out more at www.venta-group.org



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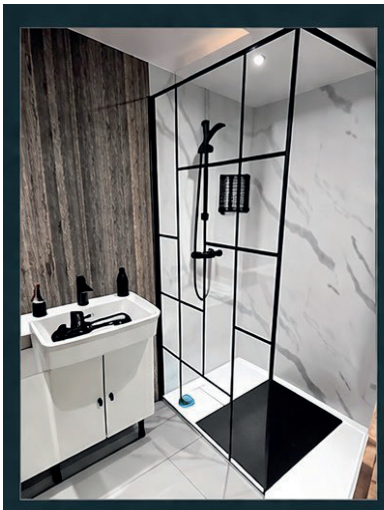
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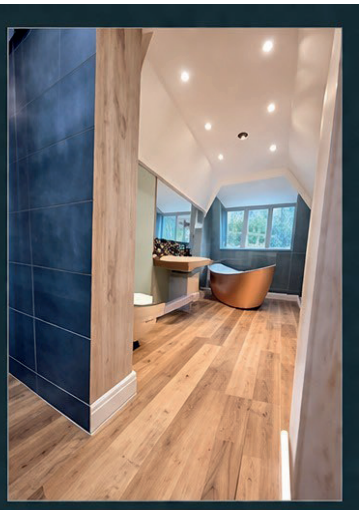
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