

# Free for All



THE MAGAZINE OF THE VENTA GROUP

APRIL 2025

There's something for everyone in our churches this Easter  
Come and remember and celebrate with us

**All invited to our**

**Easter Fun afternoon!**

Good Friday 18th April,  
2-4pm at the Community Hall

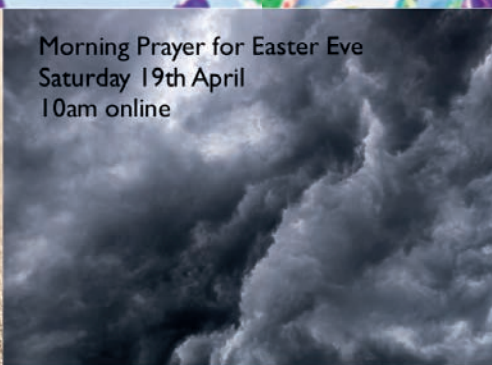
Join us for Easter crafts,  
egg hunt, cakes and drinks,  
come rain or shine!



Maundy Thursday 17th April  
Vintage Church  
10.30am at the Church Hall  
Informal Communion Service  
6pm at Framingham Earl



Morning Prayer for Easter Eve  
Saturday 19th April  
10am online



Good Friday Service  
18th April  
10am at Arminghall



**Easter Sunday 20th April**

Sunrise Service | 6am at Caistor St Edmund (with breakfast)  
Celebration Service for all ages | 10.30am at Stoke Holy Cross  
Easter Songs of Praise | 4pm at Dunston



## IN THIS MONTH'S ISSUE:

- KIRSTY ON SIGNS OF NEW LIFE
- STOKE HOLY CROSS THURSDAY CLUB
- RAKING PARTY AT CAISTOR CHURCH YARD
- ST GEORGE'S DEMENTIA SUPPORT GROUP
- AND MORE....

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Let it not be said that life is not full of surprises, and that we can't learn things in unexpected places.

On Shrove Tuesday I was helping at our Sparklers toddler group, and we were in full pancake mode. Pancakes were coming out of the kitchen; there were pancake crafts for the children to make; pancake games to play; pancake songs to sing; and to finish it all off, a story about Mr Wolf making everyone pancakes.

Mr Wolf decides to make pancakes, but he has a problem. He doesn't know what to do, and he doesn't have what he needs. Worse than that, no-one will help him. (Maybe they are just too busy, and not being very kind to him, or perhaps we are

supposed to sympathise with all the other characters, who might just be finding excuses not to be in the same place as a wolf with a sizzling frying pan.)

Anyway, he presses on alone, and in the end he produces some absolutely delicious pancakes. At that point it begins to look like party time, and suddenly all the others come creeping back. Could they possibly have some of his delicious pancakes? Might they be able to be friends after all?

The stage is set for a heartwarming moment as the reconciled friends gather together to enjoy the delicious pancakes together. But no: Mr Wolf eats everyone instead.

This amazing twist at the end (which was edited out of story time at Sparklers) made me laugh a lot, but it also made me reflect. We might not be wolves, but we also have ways of reacting when we feel let down.

This month we are heading towards Easter, remembering the last week of Jesus's life. Though it seems a bit odd to look at everything that has happened so far and notice all the people who let Jesus down, they are there if you look. Did all the 5000+ people Jesus fed stick with him? The ones he healed? What about the many religious leaders who rejected him? The times his best friends got it plain wrong? Heading towards Easter, it only gets more obvious. Some of the same crowd who were welcoming him as King on Sunday were baying for his blood on Friday. His disciples have been with him for three years, and in the space of a week different ones of them argue about which of them is his favourite; show little sign of understanding who he is at all; betray him for money; deny they even know him; and fall asleep when he most needs them.

How will Jesus respond? Will anger and resentment build in him so that he (metaphorically!) eats them all alive? Will he do what we all might if we feel disappointed enough, and take it out on them in some slightly more subtle way?

In a moment that the whole of eternity hinges on, Jesus chooses "No". On the cross, faced with the rejection of so many, Jesus chooses to pray "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing." Of course he has in mind the people who put him on the cross; who found him guilty of a crime he didn't commit; but we can also extend that to include everyone who let him down then, and everyone (including me, first of all) who has let him down since. The wolf's anger turns on others and devours them, but Jesus carries all of that in himself, on the cross, and offers all of us an extraordinary promise as we come to him: "Today you will be with me in paradise."

It's understandable to wonder what might happen if we come to Jesus, especially if we feel we aren't sure about him, or we've let him down, or whatever it might be. But there is nothing to be afraid of. It is finished, we are forgiven, and we can be with him in paradise.

Happy Easter, everyone.

Rob

### VICAR OF THE VENTA GROUP

Stoke Holy Cross with Dunston, Arminghall and Caistor St Edmund.

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## CHURCHWARDENS

Stoke Holy Cross & Dunston

Viv (493438) & Andy (07777 675193)

### Arminghall

Rob (492305) or Lyn (493422)

### Caistor St Edmund

Jani (493572) & Lia (494137)

## ST GEORGE'S HALL BOOKINGS:

Rob Baker (492305)

## STOKE CHURCH HALL BOOKINGS:

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what we can do!

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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.

### FUNERAL

#### RICHARD RAINES

Friday 14<sup>th</sup> March

at Stoke Holy Cross Church

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.

## FOR ALL COPY PLEASE

send by email to Rob to

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By 10<sup>th</sup> of this month please.

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# Signs of New Life

I love this time of year as everywhere I look there are signs of new life. There are daffodils and bluebells shooting up all over the place, baby green leaves and blossom are appearing on trees, birds are busy collecting materials to build their nests and lambs are skipping in the fields. How wonderful it is to see, after the long cold winter where everything seems to have been asleep or dead.

Every year at Easter I tune into channel five's 'Springtime on the Farm'. A program which follows a family run farm near Barnsley in the springtime and shows the highs and lows of farming life. Many of the highs include the birth of different farm animals including lambs, kids, crias, calves and foals. Scenes which the farmers and television presenters are always excited by and never seem to tire of.

Another popular feature on this show is ducklings and chicks hatching from their eggs. Eggs are often a symbol used at this time of year for new life and were often given at springtime before the first ever Easter. The Greeks, Chinese and Persians exchanged eggs with each other to celebrate new life in nature.

Nowadays in the UK it is chocolate eggs which are often exchanged and represent Jesus rising to new life from the tomb as written in the Gospels. Luke 24:1-5 says "On the first day of the week at early dawn, they (Mary Magdalene, Mary, mother of James and Salome) came to the tomb, taking spices that they had prepared. They found the stone rolled away from the tomb but when they went in, they did not find the body. While they were perplexed about this, suddenly two men in dazzling clothes stood beside them. The women were terrified and bowed their faces to the ground, but the men said to them, why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here but has risen."

Jesus' resurrection completely changed things as death no longer had the final say. What was dead was now alive! That is the same today for all who believe and trust in Jesus because when we turn to follow him, we are putting to death our old self and becoming a new creation. In other words, we are given a new life in Christ. And just like every spring when the dormant daffodils and bluebells come back to life and have a new beginning, we too have a new beginning in our walk with God.

This new life is something we can continually have because God is a god of forgiveness and fresh starts. If we drift away from God or if we have not been living in a way which we should, we always have the option to turn back to him in repentance and have a new beginning once again.

As we approach Easter towards the end of this month let us spend some time enjoying the new life which is springing up all around us. As well as taking some time reflecting and saying sorry to God for all those things we have done wrong in his sight and turn to him for the first time or again so that we can have new life in Christ.

*With every blessing this Easter time, Kirsty*

## Stoke Holy Cross Thursday Club, St. George's Hall, Upper Stoke

Are you lonely, bored or just enjoy meeting new people and have new experiences then come and join our over 55's groups that meet the first Thursday of every month for a cup of tea or coffee and biscuits, to play games e.g. cards, dominoes, scrabble etc plus to enjoy a good chat and a catch up on all the gossip.

Our members come from all walks of life and have some lovely and interesting stories to tell and would love to hear yours.

On the other Thursdays during the month we have bingo where you can win prizes and catch up with new friends. We also have meals out at different places locally or perhaps an afternoon tea with entertainment.

### OUR DATES FOR APRIL ARE

Thursday 3<sup>rd</sup> for tea and biscuit starting at 1pm,

Thursday 10<sup>th</sup> April is our Easter Bingo, eyes down 1.30pm,

Thursday 17<sup>th</sup> for a games afternoon, if there is a game you really like please bring it with you and last but not least

Thursday 24<sup>th</sup> for another game of Bingo.

Please come and join us, meet new friends and have a really lovely afternoon.

*You will be made very welcome.*



## Thank you for helping with the raking at Caistor Church Yard

Thank you to all those who helped with cutting down and raking the 'wild' areas at Caistor Churchyard on 1<sup>st</sup> March.

It was a beautiful morning and we cleared a big area.

It looks much better, and the idea is that the cleared areas will now get more light which will encourage the early flowering plants to thrive. The big heap of rakings is also a good place to shelter small animals.

Everyone enjoyed the coffee and cakes in the church afterwards.

Some of the area was covered in snowdrops, which is such a welcome sight at this time of the year!

Lia Day (churchwarden)







# St George's Dementia Support Group



During the recent periods of inclement weather and freezing temperatures, we've been heartened by lively and well attended cafe sessions at St George's Hall in Upper Stoke Holy Cross. Hot coffee, tea and biscuits are always available at low cost to help keep out the cold!

On the 10<sup>th</sup> February, apart from the usual busy mix of games, puzzles and craft activities, we were visited by the Norwich Harmony Ladies Choir who treated us to some wonderful renditions of favourite songs and melodies in their own inimitable 'a capella' style. More than that, as a result of their concert activities with St George's Support Group being their current chosen charitable organisation, we were presented with a handsome cheque for £1439.50p, seen here being presented by Harmony Choir Treasurer Pam Carver to Malcolm Cutts, St George's Chairman.

There was yet another very pleasant and welcome donation to come from Sue Allison, the Manager of the World's End in Mulbarton, who presented us with £72.00, from one of their several Quiz Nights, which they hold every year, the proceeds from which are generously given to local community organisations. All donations are greatly appreciated to help all our unpaid volunteers provide the support we offer for folk living with dementia and their carers, indeed we couldn't operate without such essential contributions.

On the 24<sup>th</sup> February, in addition to our customary activities including the usual Carer's Meeting, we had a visit from Mavin, a regular contributor to our entertainment and activities programme, seen here leading us in her particular speciality "Seated Keep Fit" (exercising in a chair), for many people a valuable and easy way of keeping as active and fit as possible, within their individual capabilities.

If you or anyone you know is interested in knowing more about our twice-monthly cafe sessions, please call: 01508 494742 or 01508 495580 for further information.



## St George's Dementia Support Group 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary

The idea of forming a dementia support group in Stoke Holy Cross was born after seeing a heart-rending interview from the late David Gudgeon on caring for his wife with dementia. He was traveling to Wymondham to the excellent Pabulum Cafe which he had helped set up. He was approached to find out if with his help we could start one in the village which would be nearer for him and others to access.

This was obviously going to be a team effort as we needed volunteers. It was quite overwhelming to experience the wonderful response from the local community. About 70 people came to the inaugural meeting on the 17<sup>th</sup> January 2015 including members of the council, local church and people interested in helping. From there a committee and a band of helpers responded. Funds were promised from organisations present which were much needed as we had no resources at that point, just an act of faith.

It took several months to organise everything needed today to set up a group, especially vulnerable people, as anyone who has done anything like this would know. We were then able to have our first cafe in April 2015.

Numbers do fluctuate inevitably and it is a big step for the carers and their loved ones to step over the threshold. The volunteers have done an excellent job in creating a warm and friendly environment where lasting friendships have been formed, problems shared and information given.

Several of the volunteers are still giving their time who were there at the beginning. We warmly welcome all new volunteers as inevitably time marches on and people begin to have their own medical problems. It is so worthwhile in that just for a couple hours we can ease the burden just a bit. During covid we obviously had to close but the counselling team and others kept in touch to keep some support going. I have great admiration and respect for all our carers and volunteers who are helping to ease life's problems. We have a great community the world is not all bad.

Ann Raines

# Coffee and chat

Want to meet others?

Come and join us and chat over a drink every Thursday morning except Vintage Church weeks (below)

10.30-11.30am at Stoke Church Hall

3rd, 10th & 24th April

1st & 22nd May

5th & 26th June

Short communion service at 10am right before Coffee & Chat on 3rd April, 1st May, 5th June

Join us for Vintage Church:

17th April, 15th May, 19th Jun—see separate posters etc

[www.venta-group.org](http://www.venta-group.org) | Facebook/YouTube "Venta Group of Churches" | [lyn@venta-group.org](mailto:lyn@venta-group.org) | 01508 493422



# Vintage Church



3rd Thursday of the month at 10.30 am  
At Stoke Holy Cross church Hall  
17th April 15th May 19th June  
All welcome

All invited to our Easter Fun afternoon  
Good Friday 18th April, 2-4pm at the Church Hall



Easter egg hunt at the park  
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in the new hall, come rain or shine!

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March

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13th: Club Night & Crafts  
20th: Theme Night: Traitor!  
27th: Club Night + TRACKS

April

3rd: Easter Party

For more details contact:

Gary Watson on [gwatson@norwichyfc.co.uk](mailto:gwatson@norwichyfc.co.uk)



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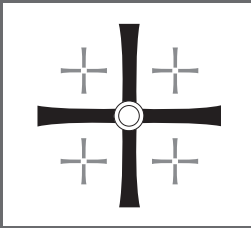


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# APRIL 2025

WORSHIP, PRAYER AND COMMUNITY IN OUR VILLAGE CHURCHES

*Look at our separate Easter posters for services and events from 17<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup> April*

*Tuesday to Saturday mornings until 18<sup>th</sup> April (except Maundy Thurs & Good Friday)*

9am Tue-Fri

Zoom—contact us to join

Prayer meeting

10am Sat

with Bible reading

*Sunday mornings at Caistor St Edmund*

6<sup>th</sup> April, 9.30am

Praise & Worship

*Morning Worship at Stoke Holy Cross at 10.30am*

6<sup>th</sup> April

**Church Family Meeting** (come early for croissants etc)

13<sup>th</sup>, 27<sup>th</sup> Apr

**Morning Worship** with communion and children's group

*Sunday afternoons in April*

6<sup>th</sup> April

**All invited** at the Church Hall from 3.30-5pm—

Food, fun and faith for all ages

*Midweek gatherings in April*

2<sup>nd</sup> April

7.30pm at the Vicarage

**"Deeper" Lent session—all welcome**

3<sup>rd</sup> April

10am at the Hall

**Communion**

followed at 10.30am by

**Coffee and Chat**

10<sup>th</sup>, 24<sup>th</sup> Apr

10.30am at the Hall

**Coffee and Chat**

17<sup>th</sup> April

10.30am at the Hall

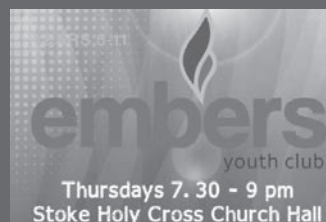
**Vintage Church**

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