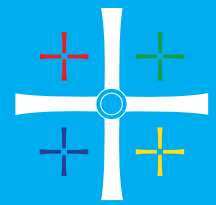


Free for All



THE MAGAZINE OF THE VENTA GROUP

FEBRUARY 2025

"Christmas continued – some more pictures from December 2024 around the villages."

Following on from our pictures from early December in the last magazine, here are a few more of people celebrating at a range of other events as the month went on. By the end of the month we had gathered in all the church buildings as well as the hall, and the Dementia Support Group had done a great job making St George's Hall look very seasonal too. It was especially exciting to have a first look at the new Stoke Community Hall, and sing carols there with the whole village. Congratulations to everyone from the Parish Council and beyond who worked so hard to finally make it happen!



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Have you moved around a lot? One of the things that you quickly notice when you move to Norfolk is that quite a lot of people haven't. If you're someone who's not moved around a lot, then I expect that this place feels very like home.

I am by nature a bit restless. In my office I have on the wall a wooden tent peg which reminds me that although I might stay in one place, in a way as I follow Jesus I am always on the move. I wonder if you feel anything like the same restlessness sometimes. Are you looking for home?

Perhaps like you, as a family we went and watched Paddington in Peru during the holidays. Like the other Paddington films, it explores very important questions about home. It continues the adventures of our friend from Darkest Peru, who has been sent to London by his Aunt Lucy, armed only with the clothes he is

inexplicably wearing, a suitcase full of marmalade, and a label reading, "Please look after this bear." And the Brown family adopt him, name him after the station where they find him, and give him a home.

As this third film begins, Paddington finds himself heading back to Peru, and by the time that it ends, he is back where it all started. He's in the perfect orange garden that he fell from as a cub; he's surrounded by all the bears and all the perfect fruit he could ever want. And the decision he has to make is about what he does next; does he stay there in the garden, or return to London with the Browns?

That one was for the writers of Paddington to decide, and for you to find out when you see it, but when God inspired the authors of the bible story, he made the garden the final destination. The last chapters of the bible picture a tree full of life, constantly bearing fruit for the healing of the nations. It's a place where God's people will dwell with him, in his presence, always, and there will only be good.

If we believe in Jesus, we can lose sight of this amazing promise. Sometimes this world with all of its marmalade sandwiches and other attractions can be quite a distraction. But whether or not we believe in Jesus, surely the picture is so inviting?

Think how now, you and I can feel so dry and thirsty, when one day God's Spirit will run through the land like a river.

Think how now, we long for the world to be sorted out, and for people we know and love to be healed, and one day the healing will just be hanging on the trees, and we will be free just to reach out and take hold of it.

Think how now, God can feel far away, and one day he will be there in the city and we will see his face.

Think how now, even with Jesus, it can feel like it is dark, and one day we will not even need the light of the sun, because the light of God will be so much greater *even than the sun*.

Jesus has brought us so far, though we are not there yet. But one day we will be. Whatever you think happens at the end of *Paddington in Peru*, that's how our story is going to end.

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 - *Please contact Rob or Kirsty instead of Lyn for the time being*

CURATE

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Arminghall

Rob (492305) or Lyn (493422)

Caistor St Edmund

Jani (493572) & Lia (494137)

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Rob Baker (492305)

STOKE CHURCH HALL BOOKINGS:

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*Maybe you would like us to pray God's
blessing over your new home, for
example. Please do get in touch with
Rob, Lyn or the churchwardens if you
would welcome a visit. Also members of
the church are always pleased to come
and bring communion to you if you
would like to get in touch.*

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send by email to

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By 10th of this month please.



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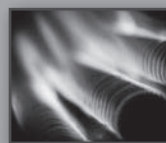
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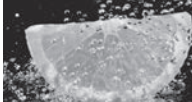
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Showing God's Love

No sooner than the Christmas decorations and stock has disappeared from shops, the Valentines stock fills the shelves and shop windows in time for 14th February – St Valentines Day. This day each year is when individuals show their love and affection to the person they love. Gone are the days when you would just buy an anonymous card for that someone you were sweet on. Nowadays there are cards and gifts suitable for a whole range of different relationships including your partner, children, parents, siblings and even your pet.

Love is demonstrated on Valentines Day in the UK through the giving of cards, red roses (and other flowers), chocolates, jewellery, heart-shaped balloons, teddy bears and enjoying a candle lit meal or weekend away together amongst other things. All lovely things to give and receive. But surely demonstrating love is much more than any of these things and not just restricted to one day of the year in February and just to our nearest and dearest.

In the bible, when writing to the Corinthians Paul says

'Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonour others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.' (1 Corinthians 13:4-6)

The question is, are we showing love in this way, not only to our loved ones but to all we have contact with.

Are we patient at all times and in all things? Are we kind, friendly, generous, considerate, putting others needs above our own? Do we show envy or jealousy? Do we boast or big ourselves up so that the attention is drawn to us? Instead of being proud, are we humble, building others up in praise? Do we dishonour others and cause their reputation to be damaged, or do we speak about and to them in a gracious, considerate and thoughtful way? Are we selfish, or do we think of others first and take their feelings into consideration? Do we control our temper even when things do not go our way? Do we keep a record of the wrongdoings of others, reminding them of them at every opportunity? Do we delight in wrongdoing and injustice towards others and sweep our bad behaviour under the carpet? Do we always protect, trust, hope and persevere in the relationships we have with others?

If not, are there things which we can change and do so that we are demonstrating the love Paul describes in his letter better this February and the rest of the year?

God bless,

Kirsty

Years 5-11



Thursdays
7.30 - 9 pm
Stoke Holy Cross
Church Hall

January
9th: Club Night
16th: Theme Evening
23rd: Movie Night
30th: Cardboard Adventures
31st: Encounter @ NYFC

February
6th: Taskmaster
13th: Theme Evening
20th: HALF TERM
27th: Club Night + TRACKS

For more details contact:
Gary Watson on
gwatson@norwichyfc.co.uk



Norwich
YOUTH
FOR CHRIST

Venta Group
of Churches

@stoke.embers

Thank you!

We're so grateful to everyone who came to one of our Christmas services at Stoke Holy Cross or Caistor St Edmund, or to our special Hope into Action service on 19th January, and made a contribution to the offerings we collected. It's really important to us over Christmas to give away everything that's offered at those services, and to find causes where we think that people's need will really be met through our giving. This year between the different events we have donated over £250 each to Embrace the Middle East and the St Martin's housing trust in Norwich, and £550 to Hope into Action Norwich. It's so good of you to be part of it as well.



Celebrating 2024



January

A great visit to Caistor church by friends from Hope into Action Norwich



February

Just a few of the brilliant and hungry people who came to All Invited during 2024



March

Some of the Roman artefacts from Caistor churchyard exhibited at County Hall last year



April

Another fantastic Good Friday family afternoon



May

Prayer space at the primary school for all 7 classes and over 200 pupils



June

We have a great team of volunteers who worked really hard on the churchyard at Stoke last year



July

Celebrating Kirsty's ordination with our neighbours from the Poringland churches



August

In the summer our painting party worked really hard to make the Church Hall look fresh and new



September

For the second year we had a Harvest celebration at Arminghall jointly with our All Invited congregation



October

Our first ever Vintage Church, continuing on the third Thursday morning of every month in the Church Hall



November

We filled the hall and raised over £400 as part of Tearfund's national Big Quiz



December

We could have shared so many great Christmas pictures, but here's one from the Stoke carol service featuring the primary school singers.



All Invited in 2025: everyone's welcome

Sundays from 3.30-5pm

9th & 23rd Feb, 9th & 23rd March

all at Stoke Church Hall

Activities, crafts and games for all ages

Space to reflect and time to chat

Community Pantry:

help yourself or contribute

Pop in for cakes, drinks and chat,

or stay and eat together



search for All Invited Stoke Holy Cross

rob@venta-group.org | www.venta-group.org

Venta Group of Churches:



Stoke Holy Cross, Caistor and Arminghall

Sparklers

Toys, crafts, songs and new friends for 0-4s and their parents, grandparents and carers.

Tuesday mornings in school term 10-11am at Stoke Church Hall

Find out more at

www.venta-group.org



'Sparklers Stoke Holy Cross'

cathryn baker@gmail.com

or call 01508 492305

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

2nd, 9th, 23rd & 30th January

6th, 13th & 27th February

6th, 13th & 27th March



Short communion service at 10am right before Coffee & Chat on 2nd Jan, 6th Feb, 6th March

Join us for Vintage Church:

16th Jan, 20th Feb, 20th Mar—see separate posters etc

www.venta-group.org | Facebook/YouTube "Venta Group of Churches" | lyn@venta-group.org | 01508 493472



Vintage Church



3rd Thursday of the month at 10.30 am

At Stoke Holy Cross church Hall

16th Jan 20th Feb 20th March

All welcome

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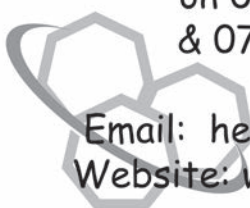


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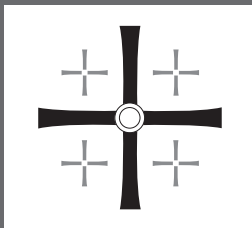


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Tuesday to Saturday mornings

9am Tue-Fri Zoom—contact us to join
10am Sat

Prayer meeting
with Bible reading

Sunday mornings at Caistor St Edmund

2nd February, 9.30am
16th February, 9.30am

Praise & Worship
Holy Communion

Morning Worship at Stoke Holy Cross at 10.30am

2nd, 16th Feb
9th, 23rd Feb

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

Sunday afternoons in February

9th, 23rd Feb

All invited at the Church Hall from 3.30-5pm—
Food, fun and faith for all ages

Midweek gatherings in February

5th February 7.30pm at the Hall
6th February 10am at the Hall
followed at 10.30am by
13th, 27th Feb 10.30am at the Hall
20th February 10.30am at the Hall

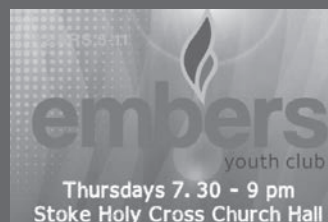
Evening Prayer meeting—new for 2025!
Communion
Coffee and Chat
Coffee and Chat
Vintage Church

Caistor church building is open about 10-4 daily – space to reflect, and to pray



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