

# Free for All



THE MAGAZINE OF THE VENTA GROUP

SEPTEMBER 2025

*"Great summer fun in the Venta group of churches, with Holiday Club and the Vicarage service and BBQ!"*



*All Invited  
in 2025:  
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**14<sup>th</sup> Sept, 12<sup>th</sup> Oct, 9<sup>th</sup> Nov at the Church Hall**

**28<sup>th</sup> Sept at Arminghall, 26<sup>th</sup> Oct &  
23<sup>rd</sup> Nov at the Vicarage**

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rob@venta-group.org

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**3<sup>rd</sup> Thursday of the month - 10.30am**

**at Stoke Holy Cross Church Hall**

**18<sup>th</sup> September**

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Free for All



*Hello everyone*

The summer months often feel very different, with people away on holiday, children off school, and lots of other things which can either keep us from home, or feel that there aren't so many people around when we are here.

Feeling someone's absence can be a powerful and difficult thing, as all those of you who have been bereaved will know only too well. Earlier this summer I was thinking again about the time Jesus himself went to the funeral of his friend Lazarus. Now there is a lot about this story which is remarkable including, of course, Jesus raising Lazarus from the dead, but one of the things that struck me was the sense of how much difference the absence of Jesus made. "Lord," Martha said to Jesus, "if you had been here, my brother would not have died."

For Jesus's friends during his earthly ministry, it is easy to understand them thinking this way. A lot of what Jesus does happens when he is visibly present. He wasn't with Martha, and Lazarus, and their sister Mary, when they really needed him. It would have made all the difference in the world.

As I reflected on this story for the second time this summer, Martha's words were playing over in my head again, and I realised something in a way I never had before: they're not ones that we can say any more. Jesus promises that if we believe in him, we will never be on our own. It might raise a lot of questions for us that Jesus was there when difficult things happened, but what we can't say is "If you had been there."

Something you might like to do, which helps me sometimes, is to think through difficult times and situations, and see if we can picture Jesus in them. How did he look? What was he doing? What did he say? It helps remind me that the fact that Jesus wasn't physically present doesn't mean that he wasn't absolutely there with me, by his Spirit, then and always.

It is sad when someone is absent, and a shame (sometimes!) when we can't be in lots of different places at once, but perhaps it's a helpful reminder that Jesus is the one person of whom we can never say "If you had been here..."

*Rob*

## VICAR OF THE VENTA GROUP

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

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Search Facebook and Youtube for "Venta group of churches"

[www.venta-group.org](http://www.venta-group.org)

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## CHURCHWARDENS

Stoke Holy Cross & Dunston  
Viv (493438)

## Arminghall

Rob (492305) or Lyn (493422)

## Caistor St Edmund

Jani (07557 774520) & Lia (494137)

## ST GEORGE'S HALL BOOKINGS:

Rob Baker (492305)

## STOKE CHURCH HALL BOOKINGS:

Karen (07761 076954)  
email: [karenp1963@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:karenp1963@hotmail.co.uk)

## STOKE HOLY CROSS COMMUNITY HALL BOOKINGS:

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*We will do our best to come and say  
hello to new people moving into the  
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very happy to come and visit you.*

*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.*

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](mailto:ventafree4all@outlook.com)

## FOR ALL COPY PLEASE

send by email to Rob to  
[admin@venta-group.org](mailto:admin@venta-group.org)  
By 10<sup>th</sup> of this month please.



# Give Your Wellbeing a Boost!

**Are you always looking out for other people?**

**Do you sometimes feel stressed and overwhelmed?**

Take some time out for yourself, and give your wellbeing a much needed boost!

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0344 800 8020 (option 5)**



## September

"Do you remember, the 21st night of September?" The first lines of a song by Earth, Wind and Fire from 1978. Apparently the 21st didn't have any specific meaning to the writer of the song – but it may do to you? Maybe you started university? Or maybe it's an anniversary or birthday. For me September reminds me of celebrating my mum's birthday (6th), my parents wedding anniversary (8th) and also the month when I had my first date with a guy (I later married!) who ran up 6 flights of steps at the Norwich Union in Surrey Street, to ask me out. And September was when Gary and I first attended a service at Stoke Holy Cross.

September was also an important month for the church. I remember how the church would have nightly meetings with a visiting speaker, Fred Smith, with a focus on praying for healing. People of all ages came were seeking healing for themselves, or for someone else, or even wondering if God would heal them. The chapter about the parish in the book *Ten Praying Churches*, edited by Donald English, says this about those times:

"There was no sense of sensationalism at all, and yet as that mighty man of God prayed, they came out in streams to give their lives to the Lord. They often fell on the new carpet (good job we had it) and rested serenely in the Spirit. Many were healed – too many to tell. I remember one lady who came back after losing an 8lb growth from her stomach. Many of the wonders trickled back to us after weeks and even months".

The book was published in 1989 yet there are still people in the village today who remember those times. Wouldn't it be great to see healing on that scale again? God, I believe still heals today – body, mind and spirit, when we say, "Yes Lord, I need you." The West window in Stoke Holy Cross church depicts a story from the bible (Numbers 21) to remind us to turn to God. The Israelites grew impatient wandering through the desert after coming out of Egypt and spoke against God. God sent snakes among them, but the people realised they had done wrong, and asked Moses to pray to God to take the snakes away. Moses prayed and God said to Moses to make a bronze snake, and to put it on a pole, so that whenever someone looked at it, they lived. Jesus referred to this incident in his life, indicating he would be lifted up on a cross, so that if anyone believed in him, they would have eternal life in him. I invite you this September to do just that, to say to God, "I believe in you, help my unbelief."

For some this year, the 21st will be the day they move out of their family home, or perhaps into another new situation. This autumn, I will be doing that too, so this is my final article for the Free for All. Thank you for reading and commenting over the years. May God bless you all – real good!

*Lyn*

PS Sometimes not everyone is healed and all our prayers aren't answered as we hoped. I have found God on Mute by Pete Greig to be an excellent read on such on such occasions.

### STOKE HOLY CROSS THURSDAY CLUB

Are you over 55 and getting bored with no-one to chat with. Perhaps just watching television or reading about how the world is disintegrating around you.

Although we can't put the world to rights we definitely have the solution to your boredom and loneliness.

We are the Stoke Holy Cross Thursday Club for the over 55's and meet the first Thursday of every month at 1.00/1.30.

Come and have a cup of tea/coffee plus of course biscuits play cards/dominoes etc or any game that takes your fancy. Or you could just sit and chat and let us get to know you and you get to know us.

On other Thursdays we meet for bingo or a games afternoon. We can explain all our other events at your first meeting.

Don't be shy or worried whether you will fit in, come and have a cuppa and be pleasantly surprised. Why don't you bring a friend/relative/partner with you.

We really look forward to seeing you on Thursday 4<sup>th</sup> September.

Also put these dates in your diaries, Saturday 6<sup>th</sup> we are holding a Jumble Sale, 11<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup> eyes down at 1.30 for bingo and 18<sup>th</sup> for a fun packed games afternoon.

October Dates: Thursday 2<sup>nd</sup> October, 9<sup>th</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup> eyes down for bingo and last but definitely not least 16<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup> for a games afternoon.

**Remember you will be made very welcome.**

## St George's Dementia Support Group



**Dates for September are:**

8<sup>th</sup> September Café session please note the outing date has been changed

22<sup>nd</sup> September Café session

The Café we held on the 11<sup>th</sup> of August was quite busy with different activities which included some clay modelling and painting. We were also pleased to welcome one new couple and a new volunteer.

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.

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 494742 | 01508 495580 | 01508 493661  
[www.st.george's-dementia-support-group.uk](http://www.st.george's-dementia-support-group.uk)



# Charles Bussey

It is with great sadness that we learnt that Charles Bussey had passed away on 11<sup>th</sup> July. Over the years, in addition to his busy professional life, Charles devoted much time to Stoke Holy Cross. He was a Parish Councillor for over 40 years and was the Chair and Vice Chair of Stoke Holy Cross Parish Council, for many of these. He was heavily involved in all Parish Council matters during this time and ably represented the Parish Council on various external groups and Committees. He was also responsible for sourcing and obtaining significant amounts of grant funding for village facilities, over the years.

Charles also actively worked on many Parish projects and activities, regularly cutting the grass path between Lower and Upper Stoke, mending play equipment, undertaking general repairs, and restoring the lovely wooden notice boards now sited around the village. He could regularly be seen driving his tractor from Upper Stoke to and from the playing fields, to carry out some form of maintenance and repair, often at very short notice.

Charles was also heavily involved in the design, funding, and construction of the recently opened Community Hall on the playing fields, and the former Pavilion it replaced, that opened in 1983. Both of these projects involved a considerable amount of his time and drew on his extensive development experience and practical skills. Charles personally commissioned the Stoke Holy Cross roundel, depicting Stoke Mill, which is above the front entrance of the new Community Hall. This hall is a legacy of the huge contribution he made to the village.

Charles was a devoted family man and had many friends in the village and throughout Norfolk. He will be greatly missed, and our thoughts and condolences are with his wife Judy, sons Paul and David, and the rest of the family at this time.

Glyn Davies



## Thank You

A big thank you to the Community Payback team who came to Stoke, Dunston and Caistor churchyards at the beginning of August, and did a huge amount of work strimming, moving, clearing, and painting. We are very grateful to them and all they gave towards making everything look so welcoming for all of you who come to remember people there, or just to sit and appreciate God's presence and the peaceful space.



YEARS 5-11

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**Thursdays 7.30 - 9 pm**  
**Stoke Holy Cross Church Hall**

**Sept. 11th: Crazy Games**  
**Sept. 18th: Theme Night - HEROES**  
**Sept. 25th: Club Night + TRACKS**

**Oct. 2nd: Club Night & Cooking**  
**Oct. 9th: Theme Night - GOSSIP**  
**Oct. 16th: Talent Show!**  
**Oct. 23rd: Club Night + TRACKS**  
**Oct. 30th: HALF TERM**

For more details contact:  
Gary Watson on [gwatson@norwichyfc.co.uk](mailto:gwatson@norwichyfc.co.uk)



@stoke.embers

Venta Group  
of Churches

### Help Us Reimagine the Playground in Stoke Holy Cross

We want to improve the local play area for children in Stoke Holy Cross — but we need your help!

We want to create a space that families will enjoy for years to come — an environment that encourages outdoor play, supports early years development and uses sustainable and long-lasting materials.

Please scan the QR code and take a few minutes to complete the short questionnaire and share your thoughts.

Thank you for being part of this project!



[www.shc-communityhall.com/community-park-questionnaire](http://www.shc-communityhall.com/community-park-questionnaire)

CAISTOR ST EDMUND CHURCH

## Songs of Praise

ALL WELCOME



Sunday 7<sup>th</sup> September, 5pm  
Right after our last Cream Tea!



## Stoke Holy Cross Flower and Produce Show

**Early Autumn Show**  
**Sunday 7<sup>th</sup> September 2025**

Entries to **Community Hall** between

8.30 am and 10.45 am Sunday 7<sup>th</sup> Sept

25p per entry

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For Further Information and schedule

Len Finch 01508 492253

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**Saturday 13<sup>th</sup> September 2025**  
**9.00 am - 5.00 pm**

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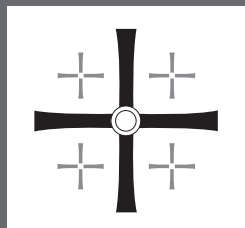
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# SEPTEMBER 2025

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Join us to pray in person and online in September!

8.30am in person on Tuesdays (more formal morning prayer)

2/9 @ Church Hall    16/9 @ Caistor    23/9 @ St George's Hall    30/9 @ Arminghall

6.30pm informal prayer online on Sundays 14<sup>th</sup>, 21<sup>st</sup>, & 28<sup>th</sup> September -  
Contact us for connection details

Morning Worship at Stoke Holy Cross at 10:30am

7<sup>th</sup>, 21<sup>st</sup> September

Morning Worship with children's group

14<sup>th</sup>, 28<sup>th</sup> September

Morning Worship with communion and children's group

Sunday afternoons in September

7<sup>th</sup> September

Songs of Praise at Caistor St Edmund, 5pm

14<sup>th</sup> September

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

21<sup>st</sup> September

Service of Remembrance and Hope  
at Caistor St Edmund, 4pm

28<sup>th</sup> September

All invited for Harvest at Arminghall from 3.30-5pm

Midweek gatherings in September

4<sup>th</sup> September

10am at the Hall  
followed at 10.30am by

Communion  
Coffee and Chat

10<sup>th</sup> September

7.30pm at the Church Hall

Time to pray together

18<sup>th</sup> September

10.30am at the Hall

Vintage Church

25<sup>th</sup> September

10.30am at the Hall

Coffee and Chat

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

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