

Safeguarding in January 2017. (LH)

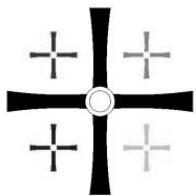
Stoke Holy Cross with Dunston

There is nothing significant to report in this area, with no further requests for DBS checks since the last report. I would like once again to make people aware that if they intend to work with children and do not hold a current DBS check then they must apply for one.

Alison Peck

Loddon Deanery Synod

Jani Wymer, the elected Deanery Synod representative for Caistor St Edmund, attended two Deanery Synod meetings during the year and reported to PCC meetings any significant items for discussion.



The Venta Group of churches
Arminghall, Caistor St Edmund,
Stoke Holy Cross with Dunston



A look across the churches:

Final annual report 2016

Financial reports, including the independent examiner's report, along with an agenda for the APCM and minutes of previous APCMs, will be available as separate documents.

	Creating Community	Deepening Discipleship	Encouraging Evangelism
I will...	Catch opportunities to bless people that come my way	Develop a pattern of spending time reading the bible and praying every day	Expect to have opportunities to share my faith, and try to take them
Our small group will...	Connect with the community around us in ways that show God's love	Devote ourselves to growing in faith through worship, prayer and the bible	Expand and grow, involving new people and aiming to multiply
Our congregation will...	Continue to be known in the community for generosity and kindness	Decide to meet together with God often, to learn to follow Jesus closely	Explore ways to make new people welcome when we meet, and make leading people to faith a priority

glazed window in the storeroom. In 2006, the main hall floor was resurfaced and this work has been extended this year by resurfacing the kitchen, toilet and lobby with a non slip surface to comply with Health and Safety regulations. All this work has been authorised, supervised and approved by the fabric officer, Mr Roy Harding. Perfection comes as second nature to Roy as it does to Brian Williams. Brian's hallmark is neatness and tidiness. He saves the Hall's funds hundreds of pounds each year with his plumbing and carpentry skills, fixing things before they become a problem. Brian is Health and Safety conscious paying scrupulous attention to electrical and other in house issues that could otherwise be a potential cause of accidents. Both Brian and Joyce have been beset by illness over the last two years but this has not prevented them from doing their very best for the hall and all the hirers. Joyce continues to combine her Booking Secretarial skills with her public relation skills. She makes existing hirers and potential hirers feel special and does her utmost to accommodate all enquirers. Roy Dack completes the team and it is very evident when Ray had strimmed the front verge and kept the boundary vegetation in check. His hard work transforms the appearance of the whole site. It is a pleasure to thank our regular team publicly for their tenacity and dedication in keeping St George's Hall a safe and clean asset for the community.

Some other nuts and bolts

Child and Vulnerable Adult Protection Report

Caistor St Edmund

Liz Humphrey was re-elected as the 'Safeguarding Children and Vulnerable Adults Officer' for 2016. No issues have been reported to the PCC during the year, although Safeguarding features on each PCC agenda and all members of the group are fully aware of our responsibilities of care, and awareness for all potential risk to both visitors and members of the congregation. There are frequently a significant number of children in Church but they are always accompanied by their parent or carer, and members of the congregation are aware of their responsibilities. I completed a refresher course in

There is a monthly Tuesday Group meeting, a monthly Thursday Matinee group, each of these offering a social occasion with visiting speakers, and an Allotment Society with a twice yearly quiz.

The hall is also available for private hire.

The monthly Café Church has continued to be held in the hall and is attracting more people from the local community. This gives more work for those who set up for the worship songs, but is easier from a catering point of view. From 2017 this will be held on the second Sunday of the month with a “Church 4 All “ service on the fourth Sunday. This is a new initiative, an informal service, which we hope will attract people from our wider community.

The Christmas Programme in the hall was well supported. There was a tea party in early December organised by the Pastoral care group, and an Evening of Carols around the Christmas Tree, followed by drinks and refreshments in the hall

Maintenance of the hall

We await a safety rail on the north side of the ramp, but the rear fire door has been replaced.

The hall continues to pay its way financially and indeed the income was up on the previous year. We have recourse to the Church Buildings Fund for capital expenditure.

The charges continue to be £15 for the first hour and £11 for subsequent hours and £15 per session for village organisations.

St George's Hall Report

There were sufficient funds saved up to install six new electrical heaters which have gained the approval and appreciation of all the hirers. The fascia boards and guttering to the main hall and octagon were replaced in 2009 and this year the work has been completed by replacing new fascia boards and guttering to the storeroom and kitchen end of the building as well as the installation of the new double

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Rob's report for 2016



Every year when we look back in the group of churches, I am struck by one of the phrases which I will be touching on in my APCM address. It comes from 1 Samuel 7:12, where Samuel reflects on one of the many battles God's people have won over the Philistines, and puts a stone in the ground, which he calls Ebenezer, saying "This far God has helped us." (Ebenezer means 'stone of help'.) There are a couple of things in this sentence which are really important, and one more in the rest of that passage. The first two are that we recognise what God has done in our midst, which is the point of this fantastic report, and second, that we notice that Samuel says 'This far...' It means that there is more to come! Zooming out a little to look at the rest of the story, we notice that the victory God's people won was a victory through prayer, rather than through human strength alone. They say to Samuel, 'Do not stop crying out to the Lord our God for us...' It has caused me to wonder how much of my 'job' as a leader should be ceaselessly praying for the churches here, and how much of your 'job' should be reminding me!

God has helped us so much this year. The biggest move forward we have seen has been in renewing our vision for 2016 and beyond inspired by the Diocesan model, *Committed to Growth*. For me this began with a period of reflection last January, where I made room in my diary by inviting different people to come and preach for us on prayer, and spent a week reading, reflecting and praying by myself, and then another fortnight where I listened to many of you share your stories of being in the churches here, and your hopes for the future. This gathered shape between Easter and the summer, and in July we had a fantastic joint PCCs away day, where we began work on a vision statement which settled down through the rest of the summer into the three key areas of Creating Community, Deepening Discipleship, and Encouraging Evangelism. It has been lovely to meet with members of the PCCs to explore each of these strands of our life together, and to find ways forward. We will be looking at next steps together when we meet at the APCM.

In the course of the year there have been some very special occasions which have encouraged us along the way. The Queen's 90th birthday was marked around the villages with different events, from the Queen's Cream Tea at

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Churchyard

Again this year the area designated for mowing has been well maintained, but the cost of this is something the PCC should be mindful of in years to come.

Windows

These are in good order, but would benefit from cleaning both inside and out by professional window cleaners.

In 2017 a Quinquennial inspection by the architect is due to take place and will be submitted to the PCC. Graham Ford, Fabric Officer

Church Hall report 2016/2017

Hall Cleaning

Thanks are due to Cathryn, Karen, Jan, & Viv who have cleaned the hall for much of 2016, however the cleaning is now being undertaken by a paid cleaner. Thanks are due also to Delphine who launders the tea cloths and keeps an eye on supplies.

Hall Users

The hall continues to be well used:

The Post Office is open on Monday mornings and Wednesday afternoons;

Sparklers is flourishing on a Tuesday morning;

Framingham Earl & East City Children's Group met on a Thursday morning until the summer break and now meets on a Friday morning.

repairs seem to have held.

Internal- Nave

The oak panelling which was replaced in 2010/11 appears to have now settled down as there has been no more swelling of the boards which caused them to “spring out”..

The lime wash on both window sills has flaked in places.

The vertical crack on the south corner of the Nave arch appears no worse. This was noted by the architect in his 2012 report

The timber floor on the north side of the Nave still give cause for concern as where the nails have rusted this has caused decay in the boards and a number of holes are visible.

Generally the decorations are in a fair condition although there is small flaking of the lime wash in some areas.

The Hatchment (Queen Ann coat of arms) was removed for the painting of the screen and is away for cleaning and restoration.

Kitchen/Vestry/Toilet

Generally the decorations are in a reasonable condition but there is some cracking along the top of the wall above the window in the kitchen. It is now 6 years since these were decorated so it may worth the PCC considering having them redecorated in the next 2/3 years.

Porch

There is some evidence of dirty marks in places on both the walls and seat

Caistor to the tea parties in Annie and Stan’s garden in Arminghall, and at the school in Stoke. At Easter we held another very busy Good Friday family afternoon, and there was a very jolly evening in the hall for the Last Night of the Proms. In Arminghall there were 2 splendid informal dinners for Harvest and Christmas, which we look forward to repeating some time soon, and the ever popular St George’s Day bellringing. Caistor cream teas came along in the summer and were a great success again, thanks to hard work from an enormous team of people. A very successful charity concert was held at Caistor just before Christmas. We continue our connection with families through our work with the school and more besides, like the Light Party on 31st October; Year 2 from Stoke school visited church in the autumn. A Songs of Praise service was held in Arminghall in the summer. The St George’s Dementia support group now meets fortnightly. We were glad to welcome everyone to the Vicarage once again for our summer barbecue. Christmas with its dinners, services and tea parties was a lovely success this year, buoyed by the prayer meetings in the weeks running up to this special time.

Besides all these events, we welcomed the Archdeacon for one of his regular visits in May; he encouraged us in Arminghall to think about the mustard seed—a great place to it, not least because of our plans for the building there which are really gathering more momentum now, working with Geoff Freeman from the diocese. At Stoke we were excited to launch a new family service in the Autumn, Sunday 4 Everyone, welcoming new people to the Church Hall. The second Sunday service at Caistor also took on a new and improved format, becoming Praise and Worship in 2016.

For all of us in the group there have been ups and downs this year on a personal front, and I would like to mention, at the risk of excluding others, the joy of Brian & Lia’s wedding in August, along with the sad loss of Margaret Elvin, so long a lynchpin of Arminghall Church, around the same time. I’d like to pay tribute to Pat & Jim Howlett, who have continued to work faithfully in Arminghall despite Pat’s increasing health problems this year.

So much to celebrate, so much to thank so many people for, and so much of which to say “This far God has helped us.” I wonder how far we will be next year?

Churchwardens' corner

Stoke Holy Cross with Dunston

Once again, Pete & Viv would like to begin by thanking everyone who has contributed to the smooth running of the churches. So, **thankyou** to those who cut the grass so faithfully in the mowing season, **thankyou** to those who do a month of church cleaning, **thankyou** to those who provide coffee for everyone after the services, and the evening celebrations (**thankyou** also for the delicious cakes!).

Thankyou to those who set up for the communion services and those who welcome people as they arrive. **Thankyou** to those who read lessons and prepare prayers. **Thankyou** to those who set up for worship and handle the the audiovisuals during services and those who play and sing. **Thankyou** to those who act as vergers for funerals. **Thankyou** to those who provide the food and drink for Café Church, for Church parties, and other church events.

Thankyou to those who bake Christmas cakes for our church outreach, and those who distribute Christmas Cards when needed.

Thankyou to those who clean and help maintain the halls, and keep the hall diaries. **Thankyou** to those who help with Sunday Club, and those who help with Sparklers. **Thankyou** to those who lead assemblies at the primary school, and those who lead services across the Venta Group.

Thankyou to those who lead and host homegroups and the "House of prayer".

Thankyou for all who serve on the P.C.C. and all who dedicate their time and efforts, especially the

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The bottom gate needs attention. The posts are rotten and the gate needs replacing. The Kidner family have kindly offered to finance this replacement.

Caistor St Edmund Church

During the year a number of small maintenance jobs were carried out:-

1. The R H side gate post for the road gate was replaced.
2. Rain Water Gutters on the porch were cleaned & drain at west end of tower cleaned
3. Notice Board treated with Danish Oil and gates to road entrance stained ,Walnut
4. The screen between the Nave and Tower and also the Priest Door were painted Satin Beach Walk (503107)
5. Organ case was painted same colour at screen.

External

The tower roof has been inspected and all satisfactory and from the tower roof this give the opportunity to inspect the slates on the nave and chancel roofs and these all appear in order.

There appears no obvious problems externally.

Internal- Chancel

Small areas of lime wash are lifting on the north wall of the Sanctuary, this has been ongoing for a number of years. Cracks above the East Window and staining are still obvious and were commented on by the architect in is last Quinquennial report in 2012 .

Staining caused by a small leak in the roof on the north side of the arch has not got worse so the

There is potential for more informal choir get-togethers in the future, as a way of connecting with people in the villages.

As Pete Sluman leaves us soon, we will need to find and train at least one more person to help with sound on a Sunday morning. A big thank you to Gillian Martin, who continues to play on 3rd Sunday mornings and at some other services too.

Bricks & Mortar: Fabric reports

Dunston Church

The “bat problem” still has not been resolved although reports have been submitted to the Diocese.

An area of rendering outside the front entrance needs attention.

Church Hall

The small room has been repainted, by Roy. Thanks to him for his hard work.

The aerial has been replaced on the outside of the building. The chimney where the old aerial was fixed needs attention.

A replacement fire door has been ordered.

Stoke Church

The boiler house roof has been re-felted and retiled and some fascia replaced.

The lime plaster in the chancel and a small patch on the south wall have been redone and re painted.

The small patch above the pulpit has been redone.

A small area in the corner of the new burial ground has been seeded with appropriate wild flowers.

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secretary and the treasurer.

Thankyou to all those who give sacrificially to help us pay our way as a church, and to outreach to others with our charitable giving and our pantry. **Thankyou** to those who have committed to giving or fund raising for our twinned church in Okunguro in Uganda. This initiative ended in December 2016.

A huge thankyou to Rev Rob Baker & his wife Cathryn for all they do faithfully to live out the gospel in this place.

AND FINALLY THANKYOU TO GOD WHO CONTINUES TO LOVE AND CARE FOR US ALL.

Caistor St Edmund

We continue to unlock the church each day and we thank all the volunteers who are willing to give up their time especially through the winter months

Some community groups continue to make use of the church for meetings-Tas Valley Society, Joint Advisory Board for Venta Icenorum and the Parish Council. The official programme of Health walks came to an end but regular walks are still organised by willing volunteers and we provide refreshments for them when possible.

In May we had an Archdeacons Visitation, a 4 yearly event, following the visit we received a very favourable report from the Archdeacon.

Over the weekend of 18th and 19th June we held a special cream teas to mark the 90th birthday of Her Majesty The Queen. This was well attended and the children from the preschool made buntings and

children from the primary school made a large Union Jack made of paper flowers which helped to decorate the church.

The Parish Council has taken over responsibility for organizing the annual litter pick but the Church still provided a Barbeque at the end of the evening in the Church.

Cream Teas served during August weekends proved again to be very popular and we thank the large band of volunteers who helped with making scones, serving teas and providing items for the produce stall. This has become a regular item on the church's social calendar and is an important fundraiser.

An event called The Spirit of Christmas was held in December in the church to raise funds for both the church and the Big C charity. Cliff Norgate performed seasonal readings from classic literature with carols sung by Acapella choir. As a result £265 was sent to the Big C.

We continue to support Elizabeth House, Beccles with gifts for the children at Christmas and donating the produce from our harvest festival service. Children and staff from the home attended the Carol Service and Harvest service. Invitations come to the church for us to attend events held at Elizabeth House during the year, which we are happy to do when possible.

We thank Louise Collins for taking over as PCC Secretary and all the work she does to ensure efficient running of meetings and communication to all our contacts about regular services and events. We thank everyone for all the work they do to keep the church clean and looking beautiful with flower arrangements and a special thank you to Margaret Ford for her continued organ playing.

We also thank Brian Day for leading us in the Praise & Worship and Taizé services each month. Thanks also go to those who provide the Intercessions for Holy Communion and to those who organise

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with the adults in church and Karen uses the resources which have been provided to give teaching and activities for children on a termly basis.

Café Church now takes place on the *second Sunday* of the month; the activities for this have always been based on the teaching for Café Church. Cathryn provides a range of activities suitable for children of all ages.

On the *third Sunday*, there is now no provision for children's activities at Stoke Holy Cross church as there is a Family Service at Caistor St Edmund.

On the *fourth Sunday*, Tracey works with the children in the prayer room at the Church Hall, basing the children's work on what Rob is covering with the adults. The prayer room works for a small group of children but is really not large enough for more than four or five (as two adults would be needed to cover this number). Please continue to pray for the work with children:

- For an increase in numbers of children coming to services
- For the talented group of leaders who willingly lead the children's work

For the children themselves, that they will grow in their love and knowledge of Jesus.

I give thanks for all the children and helpers and pray that they will be greatly blessed.

Eostre Caswell

Worship (Stoke Holy Cross):

Our worship team have faithfully served in services at Stoke over the last year, leading everyone in praising God and focusing on him together. At Christmas we gathered a small choir of other singers, some of whom are not yet part of the churches, and we all sang together at two of our carol services.

There have been more suggestions about activities, and feedback on what we do. We're always looking for opportunities to chat about God and invite people to church events, particularly Cafe Church and Sunday 4 Everyone.

We have a lovely team of helpers preparing drinks and welcoming people to Sparklers, but it would be very helpful for us to find one or two more helpers from the churches to join our rota and help once or twice a month.

School Work

We continue to be really grateful to the staff and governors (among them Lyn) of Stoke Holy Cross Primary School for allowing us the privilege of going into the school to talk about Jesus and the gospel every week. They are kind and generous hosts, and we enjoy it an awful lot. Children are full of curiosity about all aspects of faith, and I hear lots of reports from the parents about the things their children are asking them about God. Sometimes they don't know how to answer the questions, so they come back to us! Having Lyn on the governing body has been a great opportunity for her to spend time with the school staff, not only playing her role there, but also working as a kind of chaplain alongside. There is bags of potential for more work with the school, and further and deeper relationships, and we hope and pray this will continue as they see significant changes in leadership in the coming year.

Rob Baker

Junior Church

As there have been several changes to the service format in the last year, these have obviously affected the ongoing work with children.

As it now stands, the children are only using the Portacabin once a month on the *first Sunday*. Hayley and Karen alternate the teaching for this Sunday; Hayley bases the teaching on what Rob is covering

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refreshments after various services during the year

Graham Ford and Jani Wymer

The Risky bit... Stoke and Dunston Risk Management Report

Risk Management Report 2014/15

Financial Risks

This year it has been necessary to withdraw considerable funds from our small reserve. This was necessary to enable us to pay even just £29,670 toward our full parish share allocation for this year which was actually £46,000. We have raised nearly £22,001.59 through generous committed tithing by our quite small congregation.

We have a great financial challenge to face in the months and years ahead.

We have, however, felt it right to continue our Charitable giving, and have agreed to give £300-00 to the Norwich Youth for Christ, and £300-00 to New Wine church planting initiative.

We believe it is right to repeat the statement made for several years now concerning the need for more generous giving if we are to continue our church ministry and outreach. The share contribution from Stoke Holy Cross & Dunston remains the major portion of the overall group figure although this has been reduced to 64.5% of the Venta Group parish share. The bulk of this is paid by the relatively small

congregation at Holy Cross. Once again it is only thanks to those generous members who truly tithe that we can come close to meeting our parish share target.

- With the increase now due to the Diocese we would like to thank all members at our churches who have increased their commitments to enable us to maintain and expand our ministry and mission.
- Without increased giving we will continue to struggle to meet our costs and our desires to live up to our Christian calling. Much of our outreach continues to be sustained by the refreshments being generously donated, and other costs are not claimed back by many members.
- The combined Churchyard & Building Fund now stands at £3581.70. This has, and will allow us to carry out essential repairs and improvements to our buildings.
- The use of Holy Cross Church by disabled people remains difficult, but possible with able bodied assistance. We continue to pursue the possibility of providing a toilet with disabled access at Holy Cross and an improved kitchen. We will also look into the possibility of removing the redundant pulpit which will give more space at the front of the church.

• Statutory and Legal Requirements

- We are grateful to Alison Peck who carries out the Child Protection & Vulnerable Adults checks.

We have no one currently to look after the Health & Safety matters. A Health & Safety Policy appears not to be mandatory as we have less than five employees but it would seem sensible to have such a policy in place.

- While there are no obvious signs of asbestos we should still carry out formal checks and provide

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We have continued to meet monthly to pray for our community, the church and the world, and it has been wonderful to have different home groups from within the church host us and encourage us with their different ideas to get us praying. A good number of folks from Stoke church attended a meeting in the autumn where we thought a little more about ways we could get more people praying across the group, in services, prayer meetings, and beyond. I am really grateful to our hosts and organisers for these different evenings, but also to all of you who have joined us to pray on any occasion, and so been involved in the building of God's kingdom with us.

Just as a little bonus feature, a faithful group met to pray in the run-up to Christmas that Jesus would be made known in the services and other events, and that people would come to know him. We had a very encouraging word that we should be looking for the unexpected people rather than just the expected ones, which we feel has been answered in the months that have followed. Prayer works!

Rob Baker

Work with children and families

Sparklers

Sparklers: This year, Sparklers has continued to thrive, with plenty of families coming each week and a welcoming, friendly atmosphere. We have got to know a number of families who have recently moved into the village, as well as others from further afield. Each week our session includes crafts and activities on a particular theme, toys for different age groups, and a singing time at the end of the morning. We have refreshments for children and grown ups too!

We've been trying to encourage people who come to have a sense of ownership of and belonging to the group, and I think this has increased recently.

Prayer Ministry

Another opportunity to reflect on the previous year and to thank God for the way that people's lives have been touched by others praying for them. It is also a good time to thank everybody on the ministry team for so willingly praying for others and also for encouraging others to pray as well.

During the last year prayer ministry has been taking place in a more informal way within the new service structure. On some occasions time has been spent during the services waiting on God and praying for each other. At other times individuals have prayed with others sometimes before, sometimes during and sometimes after services.

God answers these prayers in His most precious way and at His timing. There is no doubt that people are blessed when others pray for them. As an encouragement to everybody to keep praying for healing, we do know of one member of the church who had a large kidney stone which totally disappeared after prayer. Thank you, God!

We are still praying and considering the best way forward for prayer ministry to take place on a regular basis and would love suggestions for possible ideas from others.

It is always such a privilege to be involved in praying for others for healing, whether emotional or physical and it is so encouraging for all of us when we hear of people praying with others outside the security of the church setting. We hope and pray that during 2017 we will all have more opportunities for praying for others, wherever this takes place. Thank you, Father God.

Henry and Eostre

House of Prayer

Our first calling as Christians is to relationship with God through Jesus, and the principal way that we express that relationship is through prayer. We can have many other worries and concerns in life, but in the midst of that God calls us to pray.

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reports on any asbestos that may be present in all our church buildings.

- Our fire extinguishers are serviced each year, and regular checks are carried out on portable electrical appliances. The portable appliances need to be retested this year.

Operational Risks

- Members will be aware, as reported elsewhere, that Holy Cross seeks to maintain a high level of outreach to the community at most age levels. We remain a relatively small number of people and there is a need for us all to take on as much as we reasonably can as we seek to shine the Christ light in our community.
- We continue to be grateful that God sent us Rob & Cathryn and their lovely family to be a part of God's family here. We are aware of the pressures of looking after three parishes and four churches with their varying needs. We are grateful for the support of Lyn and of our retired clergy in the running of our churches, and we are putting our trust in God for their future.

Pete & Viv- Church Wardens

A year in words: Secretaries' reports

Caistor St Edmund

Background

Caistor St Edmund with Markshall PCC has the responsibility of co-operating with the incumbent in promoting in the parish the mission of the Church, be it pastoral, evangelistic, social or ecumenical. It also has responsibility for the maintenance of Caistor St Edmund Church and Churchyard.

Membership of the Parochial Church Council (PCC)

During the year the following people served on the PCC:

Incumbent - The Reverend Robert Baker (Chairman of the PCC)

Churchwarden - Mr Graham Ford (Vice Chairman; Treasurer; Fabric Officer) Churchwarden - Mrs Catherine (Jani) Wymer (Electoral Roll; Deanery Synod rep)

Elected members:- Mr Bryan Elsey
Mrs Jenny Sheldrake
Mrs Elizabeth (Liz) Humphrey
Mrs Louise Collins (Secretary)

Groups and Committees

During 2016 the PCC operated with one sub group, **the Social Committee**, which plans and coordinates social and fundraising events.

Church Electoral Roll

At the end of the year there were 29 people on the electoral roll with 13 not living in the parish. This is consistent with recent years.

Church Attendance

Excluding special services, there were four different types of **regular services** held throughout 2016: Holy Communion, Praise & Worship, Taize, and Family Services.

Holy Communion. 22 services with an average attendance of 16*.

In 2015, average attendance was 15; in 2014 it was 15; in 2013 it was 16; in 2012 it was 16; in 2011 it was 14; in 2010 it was 13; and in 2009 it was 14.

Praise and Worship. 5 services with an average attendance of 12*.

In 2016, Praise and Worship replaced Morning Prayer. For information, average attendance at Morning Prayer was 11 in 2015; 9 in 2014; 10 in 2013; 8 in 2012, 9 in 2011, 9 in 2010 and 10 in 2009.

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During this year we have also made an even bigger effort to raise funds for Okunguro, culminating in a Christmas sale in December. This was run with the extra help and support of some members of Viv and David's group, as well as family members of the Caistor Lane homegroup. Almost £600 was raised to send to the church in Okunguro (which was twinned with Stoke Holy Cross church). It has been such a blessing to us all to hear of how the money we raised, whether as individuals, as a homegroup or as a church, has changed the lives of people in a small village in Uganda.

It has also been encouraging for us all to hear how members of the homegroup have taken opportunities to pray for others, whether at work, on bus journeys or in shops. We have a creative God who gives us so many chances to reach out to others and it is such a joy when we join in!

Homegroup provides a great opportunity for us to grow in faith as well as to receive and revitalise ourselves. During this year it has been a tremendous time of encouragement as we have experienced the works of the Holy Spirit in our lives, both individually and as we meet as a group.

Thank you to everybody within the homegroup for all that you do to encourage both of us.

Henry and Eostre

Women's home group:

Our group has continued to meet fortnightly, with up to seven of us gathering to talk about the Bible together, pray for each other and our community, and encourage each other in following Jesus. We have used a range of resources to help us, including the Frontline series, which has helped us focus on how God can use us in our everyday lives, and how to take opportunities to bring his kingdom. We are working towards planning and hosting one of the church prayer evenings soon.

and we thank God for the privilege which we all share, to be alongside others in Jesus' name.

God's love has continued to support us as we have supported each other with faithful prayers and practical help.

Viv and David's Thursday Group

We continue to try to meet on the first Thursday of the month to share soup, sandwiches and prayer. This group has also been challenged by ill-health, but God has continued to sustain us, and we thank him for his love and care for us.

Caistor Lane Homegroup

We have so much to be thankful for during the past year as a homegroup. We are so blessed to be able to meet together for prayer, study and fellowship on a regular basis.

Thank you again, Jan and Roy, for your unfailing love and hospitality as you host the Caistor Lane homegroup.

As in the previous year, we have spent time studying the Bible in more depth, as well as seeing how the passages apply to us in our daily lives today. We have learnt so much from doing this as a group. We have also brought reflections from our own personal daily readings, which we have shared together.

A real joy has been Veronica sharing the new songs which she has written. It has been such a joy to sing them as a group and the words have really spoken to us as individuals. Such a blessing to us all, as well as the wider church.

As individuals within the homegroup we all continue to be involved in a variety of activities in church, including leading worship, PA system, healing ministry, children's work and two teams catering for café church.

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Taize Services. 6 services with an average attendance of 11*.

In 2015, average attendance was 11; in 2014 it was 9; in 2013 it was 10; in 2012 it was 9; in 2011 it was 11; in 2010 it was 10; and in 2009 it was 12

Family Services. 9 services with an average attendance of 22*.

In 2015, average attendance was 18; in 2014 it was 20; in 2013 it was 20; in 2012 it was 25; in 2011 it was 25; in 2010 it was 13; and in 2009 it was 20.

*Rounding applied

The average attendance at regular services (42) during 2016 was 16. (In 2015, average attendance was 14; in 2014 it was 14, in 2013 it was 15; in 2012 it was 17; in 2011 it was 15; in 2010 it was 12; and in 2009 it was 15).

There were 9 special services with the following attendance:

Mothering Sunday **30** (of whom, 9 under 16)

Venta Group Holy Communion (Jan 2016) **39** (7)

Venta Group Holy Communion (Oct 2016) **28**

Easter **30**

Ash Wednesday **4**

Harvest Festival **34** (9)

Remembrance Sunday **48** (3)

Carol Service **73**

Christmas Day **56**

The total number services held during 2016 was 51.

The average attendance across all services (51) during 2016 was 22 .

In 2015, average attendance across all services was 23; in 2014 it was 20; in 2013 it was 21; in 2012 it was 21; in 2011 it was 22; in 2010 it was 20; and in 2009 it was 18.

Review of the year

Holy Communion services continued to be held on the 1st and 4th Sundays, usually at 9:00 am and this will continue throughout 2017.

Family Services followed by refreshments, continued to be held monthly, usually at 9.30 am on the 3rd Sunday and this will continue throughout 2017.

For 2016, Praise and Worship services replaced Morning Prayer. Praise and Worship services and Taize services were held on alternate months on the 2nd Sunday, with Praise and Worship, usually at 9.30 am, and Taize, usually at 6:30 pm. Towards the end of the year, it was decided that, for 2017, Praise and Worship would be held every month, usually at 9:30 am on the second Sunday, and occasional Taize services would be held at 5:00 pm.

The PCC met on 6 occasions

Caistor St Edmund Church celebrated the occasion of the Queen's 90th Birthday with a weekend of cream teas and floral displays on 18th / 19th June. A book: 'The Servant Queen' was given to each household in the village.

A PCC Joint Away Day was held on 2nd July. The focus was on our vision as a group of churches, with a particular emphasis on mission.

Cream Teas were held each weekend in August.

Once again, we welcomed staff and children from Elizabeth House in Beccles to our Harvest Festival Family Service.

Social events included a Harvest Supper on Friday 23rd September at Stoke Holy Cross Church Hall, St Edmund's Patronal Lunch on 20th November at the Wildebeest and a Christmas event: 'The Spirit of Christmas – reflections in words and music' on 10th December at the church.

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donations, grants, Old Mill Surgery (money from sale of books) and occasional fundraising events, also help with catering from local supermarkets. Grateful thanks to our wonderful impressive volunteers. They just turn up and join in with great compassion, understanding, humour and treat our guests as friends.

Home groups

Viv & David's group

We changed our format from Autumn 2016, finding it more successful to meet on a Monday fortnightly between 4-6pm. We have welcomed a new member to the group.

We have been following "Life on the Front line", reading the bible and praying for each other and for others.

We have been considerably hampered by ill-health, so our numbers have often been small.

We did however, once more, organise a Christmas outreach party on 7th December for the elderly bereaved in the Benefice.

We continue to cater for Café Church four times a year.

Six of our group are privileged to be part of the St. George's Dementia support group which meets twice a month, with two of us on the committee. We helped to provide a lunch for the pre-Christmas café.

We have met together, when we were able, to pray, study the Bible, and to share food and fun.

We are aware, of course, that many of our congregation are also involved in pastoral care and outreach,

A Lent course took place on the subject of "The Joy of the Gospel" and also a Church Community Outreach Event at the Stoke Pavilion on Good Friday, which was very popular
 The annual fund raising Plant Sale was held
 In June we held a community event to celebrate the 90th birthday of the Queen
 Several members have attended a New Wine Conference
 In August, a brand new website for the Venta Group was created
 A Community Outreach event – "Last Night of the Proms" was held in September and was well attended by local people
 Changes have been made to the services at Stoke. Week 1 is Cafe Church (held in the Church Hall), week 2 is Family Informal communion (held at the Church), week 3 is Traditional Holy Communion (morning) followed by the 6.30pm Gathering service (both at the Church), week 4 is Sunday 4 Everyone – a new initiative (held at the Church Hall) which commenced on 25th September
 All the Christmas events and services were well attended and appreciated by the village community.

Janet Harding
PCC Secretary

Some exciting areas of our life together

Dementia Café

The group will be two years old in April 2017. It continues to be a success, providing information, friendship, fun and much needed support for carers. Information has been provided by relevant organisations. The group caters for on average, 6-7 couples. We had a successful boat trip in the summer, which we shall repeat this year and a lovely Christmas lunch at Bawdswell Garden Centre. A Trip to Pensthorpe is in the planning stage for May. Our finances remain very healthy thanks to

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The church was open unmanned every day throughout the year. A monthly calendar of services and events is sent to an extended email list, as is the Diocese eNews.

Committed to Growth

During 2016 our Committed to Growth efforts were considered at each PCC meeting. The agreed strategies and tasks around 'creating community', 'deepening discipleship' and 'encouraging evangelism' roll forward into 2017.

Reserves Policy

The reserves policy of the PCC, as previously agreed, is to be prudent in managing the reserves to ensure the long term survival of the Church community and its building. Money will be spent where necessary for the health and growth of the church, however reserves will also be maintained for the regular major maintenance requirements as well as providing an income flow, where possible, to help offset the general running costs.

Stoke Holy Cross with Dunston

Stoke Holy Cross with Dunston PCC has responsibility for both Stoke Holy Cross and Dunston churches.

Membership

During the year the following people served as members of the PCC:

Incumbent: Revd Rob Baker

Wardens: Mrs Viv Carrington
 Mr Peter Sluman

Elected Members:

Mr Henry Caswell (Treasurer)
 Mrs Eostre Caswell
 Mrs Joy Clarke
 Mr Roy Harding

Mrs Janet Harding (Secretary)
 Mr David Carrington
 Mrs Jean Foster

Ex-Officio Members: Mrs Lyn Marsh

Church Attendance

There are 37 members on the Church Electoral Roll.

The average number of attendances at church for the year 2016 was:

4.00pm	Dunston Holy Communion (no services from October – March)	1 st Sundays – 6
10.30am	Stoke – 1 st Sunday Cafe' Church	29 adults, 18 children
	2 nd – 4 th Holy Communion	18 adults, 4 children
6.30pm	Stoke Evening Celebration Service (monthly) In May, this was renamed The Gathering	14 adults, No children
6.30pm	St George's Holy Communion (monthly) now ceased	9 adults No children

Additionally, special services took place during Advent at Stoke Holy Cross Church and Church Hall. In total the attendance of adults and children was 274. (This figure is not included in the average attendances shown in the above table). The services were:

Carol service

Crib service

Carols Round The Tree

A Carol Service (normally held at Dunston Church but on this occasion held at Stoke Holy Cross Church) also took place and was attended by 70 people

Throughout the year at Stoke Holy Cross there were 9 funerals, including 2 committals of ashes; there were no baptisms and no weddings.

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Throughout the year at Dunston there were no funerals, no committal of ashes, no baptisms and no weddings.

Review of the year

The PCC met five times throughout the year and has considered a wide variety of topics and issues. There were 10 members, including the two Church Wardens.

At the first PCC meeting

Henry Caswell (also co-opted) was appointed as Treasurer

Peter Sluman was appointed as Vice Chair

Janet Harding was appointed as Secretary

Regular reports on finance were received from the Treasurer

The Treasurer also produced a proposed budget for 2017

Mrs Alison Peck undertook the roles of Child Protection and Vulnerable Adult Protection Officer

Many discussions have taken place on the state of the finances and the importance of regular tithing

Regular reports were received on the fabric of Stoke Holy Cross Church, Dunston St Remigius Church and Stoke Holy Cross Hall

There are currently two vacancies for Deanery Synod Representatives

Reports have been received from the Sunday Club, Sparklers and the Worship Group There is need for more Sunday school leaders

Lyn Marsh continues the process of ordination and provides regular update reports

Cafe Church is continuing to be held in Stoke Church Hall and is well attended

The Sparklers group is very well attended and enjoyed by all

The Dementia Cafe' in St George's Hall is a great success and continues to grow

"Change a Nation" – Okunguru. Donations for this initiative have exceeded expectations