

All meetings of the Deanery Synod continue to be open to all, and we do encourage you to come along with us if you would like.

our churches.

This year the Synod met on 21st February, 23rd October, and 12th October. At the different meetings there were wide-ranging discussions on matters such as Christmas and Easter services and occasional activities; issues around marriage and same-sex relationships; Thy Kingdom come; the Bishops' prayer pilgrimages; and in October 2017 a special presentation from Geoff Freeman, Diocesan Legacy Advisor, who spoke about encouraging legacy giving to our churches.

Each parish is allowed to elect a representative to stand on the Deanery Synod, together with clergy who do so as part of their role in the wider church. The representatives for the Venta group are Annie Leathers (Arminghall) and Jani Wymmer (Caistor St Edmund); we continue to have a vacancy for a representative from Stoke Holy Cross and Dunston.

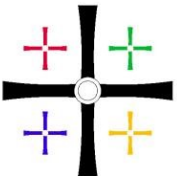
LODDON DEANERY SYNOD

Liz Humphrey

There have been no safeguarding issues this year although all members of the PCC and clergy, as well as various helpers, are now required to undertake a range of training programs, to raise our awareness of potential problems, and how to deal with them. It is hoped that this will be completed this Spring, and will give us all an added understanding and confidence to ensure that all members of our Church are safe and secure.

Caistor St Edmund Church

SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN AND VULNERABLE ADULT PROTECTION REPORT 2017/8



The Venta Group of Churches

Arminghall, Caistor St Edmund,
Stoke Holy Cross with Dunston



Final Annual Report of 2017

A Look Across The Churches

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

ST GEORGE'S HALL REPORT

The expenditure for 2017 has included:-

- A) The Storeroom—the settlement of the account for the replacement double glazed window.
- B) The Kitchen—The new replacement ceiling light, wall heater, taps and water heater.
- C) The Octagon—The rewiring of faulty wall light
- D) The Disabled Toilet—The damp stains treated and completely redecorated
- E) The Car Park—The 12 tons of resurfacing shingle. At the suggestion of the Norfolk County Council Highways a location sign has been attached to the outside of the building Notice Board, kindly designed, constructed and erected by Brian Williams, is also displayed on the outside wall. Also at the suggestion of the NCC Highways the vegetation has been cut back and the dead tree removed to aid visibility.

Still to be done: - The relocation of the 30mph sign by the NCC Highways. We thank the Stoke Holy Cross Parish Council for their support in this and for the many reminders they have given to the NCC Highways.

Priorities for 2018: - The roof over the Disabled Toilet requires re-felting to make it weather proof and the whole loft area insulated.

As always, we are very grateful to our unobtrusive but dedicated and effective team, Joyce and Brian Williams and Roy Harding, and our additional unsung hero, who wishes to remain anonymous, who over the years has treated the weeds in the car park 2 or 3 times a year. Each takes pride in keeping St George's a clean and safe place for the community to enjoy.

Finally, thanks to all our regular Hirers who treat the hall with great respect.

Richard Raines

STOKE CHURCH HALL REPORT

Hall Cleaning

During this last year we have funded the cleaning of the hall.

Hall Users

The hall continues to be well used:

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

Sparklers are flourishing on a Tuesday morning;

Framingham Earl & East City Children's Group meets on a Friday morning.

There is a monthly Tuesday Group meeting, but the monthly Thursday Matinee group has come to an end. The Allotment Society continues to use the hall offering quiz nights and a Pudding Club or a Cheese and Wine.

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 has been held on the second Sunday of the month with a "Sunday4Everyone" on the fourth Sunday.

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.

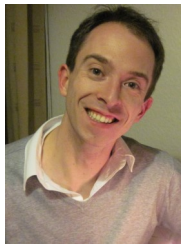
Maintenance of the hall.

The hall continues to pay its way financially. 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.

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ROB'S REPORT FOR 2017



To everyone who has helped in our churches in every way to see God's kingdom come, I want to say the biggest of thank yous. When Jesus set the church in motion as the way that God's great plan of salvation would be worked out in the world, it was a tremendous risk. People like us, with a mission like that, for a God like Him! But in the 2000 years the church has existed, people have demonstrated that, in the power of the Holy Spirit, we can do extraordinary things.

The Church is Jesus's body. Our churches are Jesus' body in the community where we live, for the people whom we serve. Each of us has a role in God's work in this place; Paul reminds us that none of us can say we don't need anyone else, and none of us can say that Jesus's body can do without us.

This year we have worked together to pursue our common vision of *Creating Community*, *Deepening Discipleship*, and *Encouraging Evangelism*. Before we come to those three strands, I want to say a little about prayer, which underpins everything that we do. I am so tremendously heartened that this year we have been able to increase the number of gatherings specifically to pray from one meeting a month somewhere around the villages, to meeting somewhere every week, and in every parish every month. There is more in the prayer report later on, but it is so important that I want to mention it here and now. Thanks to all of you who have been involved with this new and exciting development. In last year's report, by the way, I wrote '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!' I haven't had any reminders from you yet!

Creating Community... In the course of the year we did lots of things which helped us to build community, both within our churches, and in the wider villages. You will read elsewhere in this magazine of the way in which our home groups continue to meet to support one another in faith, and the deep community which that creates; we also built community over the course of Lent with the lovely group that happened there. Many of you still work hard week in week out to make visitors welcome at the different services we have here too, which is so much appreciated. Better still, there is lots happening to engage with our wider community, like the continued brilliant

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Caistor St Edmund Church

There were no major building works carried out on the church during the year.

After restoration the Queen Anne coat of arms were returned to the church and re-hung on the Tower Screen.

A full and certified inspection of the electrical system in the church was carried out by Phase 3. There were no faults found.

A blocked downpipe on the south chancel wall was attended to and at the same time all the gutters and downpipes were cleared

During very very strong winds early in the year a large part of one of the oak trees on the boundary had large limbs broken off. It was cleared up and the tree was re-shaped. There was damage to one gravestone.

Repairs were carried out to gate at the back of the church from the Roman Town car park and the boarded fence by the gates at the front of the church were treated.

New entrance gates were supplied and erected to replace the existing which had broken beyond repair. These were a gift to the church from the family who gave the original gates.

A Quinquennial Report was prepared in October by Peter Codling Architects and this has been presented to the PCC with recommendations for certain maintenance works to be carried out.

The churchyard has been well maintained in the area agreed for regular mowing.

Sometime in late October the cast iron book stand on the prayer table, the folding wood book stand used on the communion table, the light on the organ and the brass plug from the font were stolen from the church. This incident was not reported to the police or insurance company.

FABRIC REPORTS

Dunston Church

The “bat problem” still has not been resolved although reports have been submitted to the Diocese. A “Bat Survey” (funded by the Lottery Fund for Natural England) commenced in 2017.

Dr Charlotte Packham visited the church on 28 September, but, as yet, no significant progress has been made. An area of rendering outside the front entrance still needs attention.

The outer drainage which was highlighted in the Quinquennial Inspection has been cleared, but this will need to ongoing.

We were fortunate enough to have a visit from the Probation Service Team in the autumn. They attended to the mowing of the flower meadow and cleared a deal of the bottom branches of the outer line of trees. They cost just the price of the porta- loos. They also said they were put us in their programme for 2018 to mow twice a year.

Stoke Church Hall

All the electrical equipment in the hall (and in the other church buildings) needs PAT testing.

Guttering to the front of the hall has been replaced. The back of the hall has been weeded, and overhanging plants pulled back. The men’s toilet has been serviced and faulty parts replaced.

We continue to pay for the hall to be cleaned once a week.

Stoke Church

The bottom gate posts have been replaced, but the finials have not yet been finished. We are awaiting a decision about the replacement of the gates. The Kidner family have kindly offered to fund this.

The outer lights have been repaired to light the paths after dark. We record our thanks to Mr Ray Dack who is retiring after keeping Stoke Holy Cross Church Yard in such good order for more than 5 years. We will now need to try to make fresh provision for the mowing and strimming in the future.

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work of the St George’s Dementia Support Group, the schools’ work, and the various community events around the villages such as the group Harvest supper, and Fun at the Park on Good Friday. Caistor and Arminghall churches are open most days now, and we want to pray more and more that our church communities would be at the heart of our wider community too.

Deepening Discipleship... My sincere thanks to the Discipleship planning group, who have worked with me since September 2016 to plan together how we can deepen our faith across the churches. One big piece of fruit from this was the teaching on the Psalms which we launched into following the Bishop’s visit in January 2017. Sunday sessions across the churches, and material for discussion at home groups or privately helped us to discover Jesus’s voice as we travelled together through them. It still has not addressed some of the biggest questions completely—am I reading the Scriptures and praying myself every day? Am I more like Jesus than last month? Last year? But it has certainly helped, and it can certainly be built upon in the next year.

Encouraging Evangelism... Along with taking time to be with Jesus by ourselves, every day, we noticed at the begin of our vision process that the biggest challenge we face is having the courage to share our faith with those around us. To help with that this year, we invited John McGinley from Holy Trinity Church in Leicester to be with us for a weekend in November. We had a fantastic day with John on the Saturday reflecting on how we are doing with praying for 5 people around us who don’t know Jesus, what more we could do to tell a little of our story, how we can be encouraged to offer to pray there and then for people in any kind of need, and so on. We had a really wonderful day which we need to keep building on in order to encourage people to do more and more of this. In the run-up to John’s visit we also had a couple of evenings at the Church Hall where we thought about sharing our faith using material from Thy Kingdom come, which overlapped really nicely.

There is so much more that could be said, but this is only the beginning of the annual report: there is much more in the pages that follows which testifies to the hard work of many, and the wonderful work of God amongst us. I am thankful to Him, and to all of you.

CHURCHWARDENS' REPORTS

Stoke Holy Cross with Dunston

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

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

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

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

Thank you to those who lead and host home groups and the "House of prayer".

Thank you for all who serve on the PCC and all who dedicate their time and efforts, especially the secretary and the treasurer.

Thank you to all those who give sacrificially to help us pay our way as a church, and to outreach to others with our charitable giving.

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

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

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I give thanks for all the children and helpers who have contributed so much during this past year and pray that they will be greatly blessed. The leadership of Junior Church has now been handed over into the very capable hands of Tracey Symons, who has demonstrated such great talents and a real passion for work with children.

Eostre Caswell

WORSHIP (STOKE HOLY CROSS/DUNSTON)

Our worship team has continued leading us all in worship over the last year, meeting each month to practice and pray together. We are aware of the need to find and train at least one more person to operate the sound and vision at church services, and will continue to pray about this; plus it would be very helpful to have a few more instrumentalists! The solution I think is to pray, and for us all to be sharing Jesus with people around the village - some may turn out to be musical and find a way into church and faith through our team.

We again organised a Christmas choir to sing at Caistor carol service and Stoke carols around the tree, and several parents from school joined in with a group of us from Stoke and Caistor. There is potential to repeat this and include more people from outside the churches, helping them to make a connection with church.

the adults in church and Karen uses the resources which have been provided to give teaching and activities for children on a termly basis. After many years of faithful service, Karen has now decided to stand down from working with the Junior Church, transferring her talents to the new AllStars club for primary school age children on the fourth Thursday of the month.

Junior church activities are incorporated into Café Church on the second Sunday of the month; the activities for this have always been based on the teaching for Café Church. Cathryn, with occasional help from others, provides a range of activities suitable for children of all ages.

On the third Sunday children are encouraged to go to the Family Service at Caistor St Edmund, as there is no provision for children's work at the more formal service.

On the fourth Sunday, Tracey continues to work with the children in the prayer room at the Church Hall, basing the work with children 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).

Tracey and Rob (with Cathryn as well) have worked together as a team for various services and events throughout the year. They made a particular impact at the Crib Service on Christmas Eve, which was really well-received by all who attended this family-friendly service.

As always, 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.

What have we been doing this last year?

- Our Lent breakfasts began on March 4th and were hosted by different churches in the Benefice.
- We held a Plants' Sale on May 6th to raise funds for the Buildings' Fund, and the selling of plants continued for some time after.
- Lyn Marsh our Lay Reader completed her Third year of her ordination training and was ordained on July 1st in Norwich Cathedral. (We ask everyone to continue to support her in prayer, as she copes with the challenges of work, family and new responsibilities). We followed this with a BBQ at the school to celebrate with the wider community and some of Lyn's work colleagues.
- There was a Community Gift Day on Saturday 23rd September when members of the community were invited to bring their gifts to Stoke Holy Cross Church.
- We were blessed by a visit from Rev John McGinley to the benefice in early Nov 2017. He focussed on Discipleship and Mission and gave us food for thought and inspiration for the months ahead.
- We have continued with our pattern of services with the 1st and 3rd services being in church and the 2nd and 4th in the Church Hall.
- Dunston Church closed for the winter after the 4pm service on Oct 1st 2017 and will reopen in the spring.
- Cathryn has continued to lead a successful women's group.
- Viv & David have continued to meet from time to time with their Post Alpha Group.
- Roy & Viv, the church wardens, have continued to meet monthly with Rob.
- The PCC has met in the Portacabin four times and latterly at 51 Norwich Road.
- As a Benefice we have been meeting together to further create community, deepen discipleship and encourage evangelism. Each group had a spread of people across the Benefice.

- The Home Groups have met regularly, joining together once a month for a “House of Prayer” meeting hosted by the Home groups in turn.
- We have continued to meet for joint services across the group when there is a 5th Sunday and, occasionally at other times.
- Once more we made a big effort to outreach in Advent and over the Christmas Season.
- Painted “Jesus” stones were prepared at Café Church at the beginning of December. These were then varnished and an invitation to the Crib Service added to the back. They were then “hidden” around the village. We were delighted to see so many stones “found” and brought to the service on Christmas Eve. The presentation of “The Very Greatest Journey” was very well received. Refreshments were served as people arrived for the service.
- David & Viv’s home group organised a party in early December for many of the people with whom they have contact throughout the year, especially the elderly bereaved.
- Sunday 17th December saw our Carol singing around the Christmas Tree followed by drinks and refreshments in the hall. This was very well attended by 120 (adults and children).
- The Christmas Day service at Stoke Holy Cross was well attended.

We thank God for His grace, His love and His patience with us as we continue to know Jesus better and to make Him better known in our community.

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frequent Bible story-times, and story-bags to borrow. We also make sure that Sparklers families are invited to our most family-friendly services and events, and many have come to Christmas services and Easter Fun at the Park in particular. We would love to see more families moving into cafe church, Sunday 4 Everyone and Alpha courses through their connection with Sparklers.

Our vision for Sparklers is that we serve and reach the local community, but in the last year we have had a significant number of people coming from further afield. While it is encouraging that they value it enough to travel to us, it does mean that there is less space for families from Stoke and locally. Those who travel to us are also mostly childminders, which makes it harder to establish a connection in any case - so if the group stays very busy we will have to decide whether we need to create a kind of catchment area for Sparklers.

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. A big thank you especially to Mrs Sue Simmonds, who retired this year as headteacher after many years of fruitful and friendly working together.

Amongst the different highlights of our ministry in the school this year was a series where we looked at some of the stories from the Old Testament which lie behind the different Jewish festivals, and explored what these might mean for us in the light of Jesus. Once again we welcomed children from school, this time some of the youngest of them, to sing at our carol service, and to visit the church through the year, and we shared a book with the year 6 children as they left the school, to help them understand that God goes with them wherever they may find themselves.

Rob Baker

Sunday Club

With the new service format, the children are in the portacabin on the first Sunday of the month and Hayley and Karen have been alternating the teaching for this Sunday. Hayley bases the teaching on what Rob is covering with

Having long met once a month to pray on a weekday evening in a home, or in the Church Hall, this year we have expanded our range of prayer meetings so that we are praying in all of our parishes, every month. We now pray one lunchtime a month in Arminghall, and once a month in Caistor St Edmund. That leaves a fourth week for a fourth meeting, which have often been at the Vicarage, but occasionally somewhere else around the villages. I am really grateful to everyone who has joined us to pray at any of these meetings, but most of all to all of you who have kindly either hosted or organised one of our gatherings.

Alongside these expanded regular meetings we have once again joined together in the weeks between Ascension and Pentecost in the Archbishops' outstanding Thy Kingdom come initiative, which joins Christians from across the world and across the denominations in prayer that God's kingdom would come as those around us come to know Jesus. It was a privilege to join in this amazing wave of prayer, especially as so much that was involved in it reflected the work that we did with John McGinley when he visited us in November.

Thank you to everyone who continues to pray for our churches and communities, in every way.

Rob Baker

WORK WITH CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

Sparklers

This year we have been busy at Sparklers, often near "capacity" with a hall full of families. We have a lovely group of helpers, some from church and others not, who each help us once or twice a month - plus Vicky and Clare who give an enormous amount to Sparklers every week. We have carried on building friendships with the families who come, and seen lots of new children come along. They often tell us that it is the friendliest group they come to!

Each week follows a theme, with crafts, activities and songs based on a topic, such as the season or a particular animal. This gives us the opportunity to include sessions on Easter, Harvest, Christmas etc, and to share gently about Jesus. We are planning further ways to help people begin to explore faith at Sparklers, such as more

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Caistor St Edmund

2017 was the third year that the church has been opened 7 days a week. We can only guess at the number of visitors during that time but it will now be in the 1000's coming from many parts for the world. We know not every visitor signs the visitors' book but finding the church open is greatly appreciated as comments such as "how lovely to find the church open" and "it is so peaceful" are written. As your Wardens, we are extremely grateful to all the volunteers who take on the task of unlocking and locking each day. Without your help this would not be possible. *(We are always looking for more volunteers)*

Regular worship is maintained each Sunday throughout the year and we thank those who provide the Welcome Team for each service, the organists and for Brian Day who prepares and leads the Praise & Worship and Taize services.

We appreciate all those who help with church cleaning, flower arranging and the refreshments served after various services.

The church continues to be used for other purposes during the week:

- Meetings of the Parish Council, Tas Valley group and Roman Town Joint Advisory Board
- Serving coffee to groups of walkers
- Schools visiting the Roman Town make use of the facilities at the church

We were pleased to welcome David Spurgeon as Treasurer at the AGM this year, thus easing the burden of the role of treasurer for the Wardens. We thank the PCC secretary Louise Collins for the work she does in maintaining the church administration in a most efficient way.

In May , June and September Louise organised “Come for Coffee” on Thursday mornings, inviting people to just call in at the church between 10am and 12 for a chat and to meet new friends. This was a successful new venture.

In July and August, on Sundays only this year, the Cream Teas were as popular as ever with many people returning from previous years and also new visitors coming along. A special one off Afternoon Tea was organised by Jenny Pitchford and this was well supported.

We are extremely grateful and thank Mr & Mrs Antony Jarrold for hosting a Musical Picnic Evening at The Old Hall. This was a most enjoyable event with well over 150 people attending.

The church continues to support the Elizabeth House (formerly Grange Road) children’s home in Beccles by donating the gifts from the Harvest Festival and providing Christmas gifts for the boys. We are pleased to welcome them during the year to some of our services.

As your Churchwardens we appreciate all the support you give the church in so many ways during the year which makes our job much easier and contributes such a lot to making St Edmund’s an active and welcoming church.

Graham Ford , Catherine Wymer, Churchwardens.

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As well as following up the Lent course and other studies, one evening was spent with Lyn as she shared her journey towards ordination. We also were encouraged by time spent in a Poringland pub and intend to plan more evenings like this during 2018 with an emphasis on outreach.

As individuals within the homegroup we all continue to be involved in a wide range of activities in church including leading worship, healing ministry, children’s work, PCC membership, as well as two teams catering for Café Church, which is why it is good to take time out to refresh and encourage each other on Wednesdays.

Heartfelt thanks go to Jan and Roy for their unfailing hospitality in hosting the homegroup, as well as to Veronica and Nigel, who have also made us feel so welcome in their home.

Eostre and Henry

Women's home group:

Our home group meets fortnightly, and this year we have looked at several books of the Bible and followed teaching series videos and books. We have recently focused on the meaning of "discipleship" and found John McGinley's teaching in the autumn very helpful. I am praying for a growth in confidence for each person, so that everyone understands their potential in Jesus to contribute to the group and to the churches, and to share their faith. We have had some periods when members have found it hard to get to the evening meetings, and I am considering starting a daytime gathering alongside our evenings, that could draw in others too.

PRAYING TOGETHER

It has been a tremendously exciting year for us as we have gathered to pray in the Venta group of churches.

God's love has continued to support us as we have supported each other with faithful prayers and practical help. We feel very privileged to be part of such a lovely group

Viv and David's Thursday Group

We have continued 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

Another year to reflect on in our journey as a group and as individuals within the homegroup. During the past year, several members have had a rocky journey in dealing with illness or with being alongside relatives as changes happen in their lives. The homegroup family is so important in being able to give prayerful and loving support at difficult times. And we all know that is because we have Jesus at the centre.

During the year, as a group we have encouraged each other in individual outreach to others and shared many opportunities in which we have been able to pray for others in our daily lives. Such an encouragement. We have also continued to study the Bible and use these times together to see how relevant the Bible is today in encouraging us in our daily walk with Jesus. The majority of the group were able to go to New Wine, which was a time of real blessing, and which we were able to share with others on our return. Several of us went to the 'Following and Fishing' course which we were also able to share with others within the group. And we were all encouraged by John McGinley's visit to the church as a whole and have been sharing what has happened as we have tried to step out more as a result of his teaching.

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St Mary's Arminghall

In spite of being dogged by ill health, the Church in Arminghall has managed to provide its usual twice monthly services being attended by the faithful few with congregations being swelled for our special services on Mothers' Day, Easter Day, and for the Shoe Box Service, Carol Service and Christmas Day Service.

We hosted two Lent breakfasts in the village hall. These were well attended and Pat is now famous for her bacon sandwiches.

Our social events commenced with St George's Day belling ring and pie eating. This has proved a popular event in the Arminghall calendar. We hosted two coffee mornings, one in July (under a gazebo and wet weather) but the attendees didn't seem to mind. Our coffee morning in December in the village hall is always well attended by Stoke and Caistor parishioners. We would love to get more people from Arminghall to attend.

We organised a shoe box filling morning and were able to fill 100 boxes for collection. The Shoe Box service was well attended and it was great to see the contribution from the Sparklers.

The Carol Service was well attended with the added attraction of an excellent pianist.

There was a disappointing attendance on Christmas Day but there had been a lot of cold like symptoms running through the community.

This year (2018) we have hosted a Lent breakfast.

We would like to Pam Kemp for her loyalty, Gillian Martin for her organ playing and Joyce and Brian who have been cleaning the church.

Pat Howlett and Annie Leathers

STOKE WITH DUNSTON RISK MANAGEMENT REPORT

General

We face some issues and challenges as we move forward.

We are a small group of very willing and conscientious people, but many of us have been increasingly beset with ill health and/or other family related problems. We thank God for continuing to be alongside us, but please can we ask that you are vigilant in prayer for fellow Christians here and within the Venta group.

We wish to pay tribute to the work that Mr Ray Dack has done in our churchyards and halls over a number of years, but he has now felt it time to retire from this, so we will need to make other provision in the future.

Please therefore, would you carefully consider if you could help, or if you know anyone who would be prepared to go on a mowing rota.

We will, once more, be able to use the services provided by the Norfolk and Suffolk Probation Team who will undertake some grass cutting at Dunston from 23-27 July and 22-26 October. This is to cut the grass in the wildflower area. The only cost to us will be the provision of a portaloo during those two periods.

We will need to continue to fund the mowing around the current graves and to provide a walkway around the church. The Probation Team will also carry out a pre-season tidy up in Stoke Churchyard this spring over two weekends.

The “bat problem” inside Dunston continues to be a challenge and also a health risk to those cleaning and attending services.

I have emailed these concerns to a lottery funded group and have been assured by Ms Lisa Campbell-Bannerman that Dunston is part of the “Bats in Churches” project which is in its development phase, and that they are working hard to develop plans to support churches with issues such as these. She stated that she hoped to send some further advice as soon as possible.

Viv Carrington and Roy Harding - Church Wardens

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session. This fluctuates as new couples join and some unfortunately fall ill and pass away or go into full time care. When this happens we encourage their partners to keep coming for continuing support and friendship.

This year marks our 3rd anniversary and we hope to continue to build and improve our services.

Outings last year were a lovely day at Pensthorpe with a very enjoyable meal, a boat trip at Wroxham with a picnic lunch and an excellent Christmas lunch at the Old Feathers.

A grant has enabled us to purchase cinema equipment and we are looking forward to seeing some 'golden oldies'. Finances remain healthy thanks to fundraising, grants and donations enabling us to plan outings for the warmer weather.

HOME GROUPS

Viv & David's Home Group 2018

We have continued to meet on a Monday fortnightly between 4pm and 6pm.

We enjoyed reading the Psalms and have continued with that following a Life Builder Bible Study, “Praying the Psalms” by Juanita Ryan.

We have continued to pray for each other, our wider friends and family, and our church and community.

We, once more, organised a Christmas outreach party on 6th December for the elderly bereaved and others in the Benefice. We helped to make, and to distribute, Christmas cakes to the bereaved in the parish.

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

Five 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 are aware, of course, that many of our congregation are also involved in pastoral care and outreach, and we thank God for the privilege which we all share, to be alongside others in Jesus' name.

Review of the year

- Holy Communion services continued to be held on the 2nd Sunday of the month, at 9:00 am and this will continue throughout 2018, and evening services at 4th Sunday at 4pm.
- The PCC met on 4 occasions.
- Coffee mornings were held in the summer and before Christmas.
- Bell ringing event was held on St Georges Day
- Hosted 2 lent Breakfasts in the village hall and a Harvest Supper

Committed to Growth

During 2017 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 2018.

DEMENTIA CAFÉ

St. George's Dementia Support Group 2018

The group continues to function well, thanks to all our great volunteers who continue to care and support our members. Their compassion, often going 'the extra mile', is to be commended. We still average 6-7 couples per

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Financial

2017 has been a struggle for our churches from a financial point of view. We had managed to meet our parish share in 2016 but only by reducing our small reserves. So we started 2017 with not much over £5,000 which we feel is about as low a figure as is sensible to hold.

Our parish share for 2017 was supported to a degree by the diocese but nevertheless was raised to £31,900 and we ended the year managing to pay only some £29,000. This was despite our fund raising efforts through our Stewardship campaign. Our Building Fund is also exhausted as we raised only just over £2,000 which included almost £1,000 from our gift day in September. It may well be necessary to pay some of our buildings and maintenance costs out of our general funds this coming year and our current budget prediction is that we will manage to pay only £22,000 towards the parish share figure this year of £32,100, A shortfall of £10,000.

Our long established aim has been that we should raise our parish share from our tithing and that we should also seek to give away 10% of our income to local and national charities. In 2017 we managed to give away only £1,000 divided between New Nation Changers Appeal, Norwich Youth for Christ, St Martins Housing Trust and Tearfund Christmas appeal.

Clearly we have a great financial challenge to face in the months and years ahead and may need to seek help from our fellow churches as well as the Diocese. The parish share and group costs contribution from Stoke Holy Cross & Dunston members remains a high proportion of the overall group figure at 64.5%.

The bulk of this is paid by the relatively small congregation at Holy Cross. And we must give sincere thanks again to those generous members who tithe a significant portion of their income to support the church and our mission.

Henry Caswell, Treasurer, March 2018.

SECRETARIES' REPORTS

Caistor St Edmund Church

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: Graham Ford (Vice Chairman; Fabric Officer)

Churchwarden: Catherine (Jani) Wymer (Electoral Roll Officer; Deanery Synod rep)

Reverend Lyn Marsh (from July 2017)

Elected members:

Louise Collins (Secretary)

David Spurgeon (Treasurer)

Elizabeth (Liz) Humphrey (Safeguarding Officer)

Bryan Elsey

Groups and Committees

During 2017 the PCC operated with one sub-group, **the Social Committee**, which plans and co-ordinates social and fundraising events.

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Holy Communion: 11 services with an average attendance of 8*.

Evening Worship: 4 services with an average attendance of 4*.

*Rounding applied

The average attendance at regular services during 2017 was 8.

There were 9 special services with the following attendance:

-Venta Group Holy Communion (Jan 2017) **24**

-Mothering Sunday **13**

-Ash Wednesday Holy Communion **11**

-Easter Day service **29**

-Venta Group Holy Communion (July 2017) **30**

-Harvest Family Service **19**

-Shoe box Service **32**

-Carol Service **39**

-Christmas Day **8**

The total number of services held during 2017 was 24.

There were 2 funerals held in 2017 for the late Janet Cropley **49** people attended, and Derek Clarke **70** people attended

Background

Arminghall 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 Arminghall 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: Pat Howlett

Churchwarden: Annie Leathers (Deanery Synod rep)

Reverend Lyn Marsh (from July 2017)

Elected members:

Jim Howlett (Treasurer, Vice Chairman)

Pam Kemp (Electoral Officer)

Church Electoral Roll

At the end of the year there were 9 people on the electoral roll.

Church Attendance

Excluding special services, there were two different types of **regular services** held during 2017: Holy Communion and Evening Worship

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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 during 2017: Holy Communion, Praise & Worship, Family Service and Taize.

Holy Communion: 21 services with an average attendance of 16*.

In 2016 average attendance was 16, in 2015 it was 15; in 2014 it was 15; in 2013 it was 16; in 2012 it was 16; in 2011 it was 14; and in 2010 it was 13.

Praise and Worship: 11 services with an average attendance of 10*.

In 2016 average attendance was 12. Praise and Worship replaced Morning Prayer in 2016. In 2015 average attendance at Morning Prayer was 11; in 2014 it was 9; in 2013 it was 10; in 2012 it was 8; in 2011 it was 9 and in 2010 it was 9.

Family Service: 9 services with an average attendance of 17*.

In 2016, average attendance was 22; in 2015 it was 18; in 2014 it was 20; in 2013 it was 20; in 2012 it was 25; in 2011 it was 25 and in 2010 it was 13.

Taize Services: 3 services with an average attendance of 17*.

In 2016 average attendance was 11; in 2015 it was 11; in 2014 it was 9; in 2013 it was 10; in 2012 it was 9; in 2011 it was 11 and in 2010 it was 10.

*Rounding applied

The average attendance at regular services during 2017 was 14. In 2016, average attendance was 16; in 2015 it was 14; in 2014 it was 14; in 2013 it was 15; in 2012 it was 17; in 2011 it was 15 and in 2010 it was 12.

There were 9 special services with the following attendance:

- Mothering Sunday **24** (of whom, 5 under 16)
- Venta Group Holy Communion (Jan 2017) **34** (5)
- Good Friday service **19**
- Venta Group Ascension Day Service **12**
- Service of Remembrance and Hope **30**
- Harvest Family Communion **16**
- Remembrance Sunday **33** (3)
- Carol Service **85** (17)
- Christmas Eve **23**

The total number of services held during 2017 was 53.

The average attendance across all services (51) during 2017 was 17.

In 2016 average attendance was 22; in 2015 it 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.

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- In April a new-look Free For All Magazine was produced which proved very popular
- The annual fund raising Plant Sale was held with plants continuing to sell afterwards
- We made contact with a view to twinning with Holy Cross Church in Palermo
- A group attended the New Wine Conference in Shepton Mallet
- We spent several weeks studying Psalms and looking at how these linked with the Gospels
- Sparklers has continued successfully and on 18th July, they enjoyed a Teddy Bears Picnic at the Vicarage
- We held a Welcome to Newcomers to Stoke at the Church Hall
- Changes have been made to the services at Stoke. Week 1 is Informal Communion (held at the Church) and week 2 is Café Church at the hall. The other services remain as before. We ran another Alpha course commencing in September, which was well attended
- We held a benefice-wide Gift Day when the community was invited to attend the church buildings. Displays were prepared to inform the villagers what we are doing.
- On 6th October we held a big group Harvest Supper at St Georges Hall with proceeds given to charity
- The Evangelism Group organized two evangelism training evenings on 4th and 11th October
- On 29th October we held a very successful Light Party in the Church Hall
- We enjoyed a Group weekend with John McGinley on the weekend of 4th and 5th November
- The Dementia Café has continued to run successfully and on 27th November, the attendees and their carers went for a Christmas Meal at a local restaurant
- All the Christmas events and services were well attended and appreciated by the village community

Janet Harding, PCC Secretary

St Mary's Arminghall

The PCC met six 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
- Viv Carrington 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 2018
- 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
- Reports were received on the fabric of Stoke Holy Cross Church, Dunston St Remigius Church and Stoke Holy Cross Hall
- There is currently one vacancy for Deanery Synod Representatives
- There is a need for more Sunday school leaders
- Lyn Marsh continued the process of ordination providing regular reports and in July, Lyn was ordained in Norwich Cathedral. Lyn has been serving as Curate in the Venta Group since this time.
- Cafe Church is continuing to be held in Stoke Church Hall and attendance is high
- “Change a Nation” – Okunguru. Donations for this initiative have exceeded expectations. The initiative has since closed
- A Lent course took place by based on the Church of England Pilgrim Course on The Bible and also a Church Community Outreach Event at the Stoke Pavilion on Good Friday, both well attended

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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 2018.
- Family Services followed by refreshments, continued to be held monthly, usually at 9.30 am, on the 3rd Sunday and this will continue throughout 2018.
- Praise and Worship services were held monthly, at 9:30 am, on the 2nd Sunday.
- Three Taize services were held on Sunday evenings during the year.
- The PCC met on 6 occasions.
- A coffee morning (Come for Coffee) was held every Thursday during May, June and September.
- Cream Teas were held every Sunday during July and August, and Afternoon Tea was held on the last Saturday in July.
- Social events included a musical picnic at the home of Ann and Anthony Jarrold in August and a Group Harvest Supper in October.
- The church was open unmanned every day throughout the year.

Committed to Growth

During 2017 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 2018.

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 Roy Harding

Elected Members:

Mr Henry Caswell (Treasurer)

Mrs Janet Harding (Secretary)

Mrs Eostre Caswell

Mr David Carrington

Mrs Jean Foster

Mrs V Wilson

Ex-Officio Members: Mrs/Rev Lyn Marsh

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Church Attendance

The average number of attendances at church for the year 2017 was:

4.00pm	Dunston Holy Communion	1 st Sundays – 9
10.30am	Stoke – 1 st Sunday Informal Holy Communion 2 nd Sunday – Café Church 3 rd Sunday – Traditional Holy Communion	28 adults 6 children 24 adults 11 children 22 adults 1 child
6.30pm	Stoke Evening Gathering Service	12 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 317. (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 - Christmas Day

An evening Carol Service at Stoke Holy Cross Church was attended by **27** people

Throughout the year at Stoke Holy Cross there were 11 funerals, there were 3 baptisms and no weddings.

Throughout the year at Dunston there were 2 funerals, no committal of ashes and no weddings.

Review of the year

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