

Friends book is on sale

THE Friends of Portsmouth Cathedral have published a new yearbook outlining significant developments at the cathedral.

The 40-page publication includes features on the new organ doors, choir stalls and icon.

There are also reports from the dean, administrator, organist, and architect. Rubie Richards, a former Friends' general secretary, writes about her new life in the Community of St Nicholas Hospital in Salisbury.

It outlines arrangements for the Friends' annual outing to the Isle of Wight on July 9. The coach tour is open to all. More details from Rosemary Fairfax on 023-9282 5500.

The 2003 yearbook is free to members, or is on sale at the cathedral bookshop, priced at £2.

Pompey Churches

DEADLINE FOR SEPTEMBER EDITION: Monday 11 August

AVAILABLE FOR PARISH REPRESENTATIVES TO COLLECT FROM DEANERY DEPOTS: Thursday 28 August

AVAILABLE IN YOUR PARISH CHURCH: Sunday 31 August

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PHOTOGRAPHY: Neil Pugmire The News Tim Webb

Tributes paid to diocesan stalwart

TRIBUTES have been paid to former diocesan secretary Michael Wilkinson, who died in May.

He was diocesan secretary under Bishops Ronald Gordon and Timothy Bavin, and immersed himself in parish and deanery life.

Born in 1929, he attended Blackburn Grammar School and became head chorister at Blackburn Cathedral. He read modern languages at Christ Church, Oxford, and sang with the Bach Choir.

After five years in the RAF, he joined ICI in 1955 as personnel officer and married Anne in 1959. ICI moved him to London, so they moved to Buckinghamshire and had two children, John and Teresa.

After taking early retirement in 1981, he began to lecture members of the forces on finding employment in industry.

He took his own advice and became Portsmouth's diocesan secretary, where his attention to detail

served the diocese well for 10 years.

The family had moved to Meonstoke, where he embraced village life. He helped with community care, took offerings to disadvantaged people in St Petroc's and Hackney, ran the bottle stall for the Meonstoke village fete, and spent 15 years as church choirmaster. He was lay chairman, secretary and treasurer of Bishops Waltham deanery at various times and was made a lay canon of Portsmouth Cathedral in 1997.

He struggled with illness during 1999, but, supported by prayer, made a miraculous recovery. But he remained vulnerable and died on May 9 walking his dog in Exton churchyard.

Fellow parishioner Jackie Brookfield said: "In the gentle beauty of one of his most favourite spots, his soul went to meet the God whom he had served so faithfully throughout his life. May he rest in peace and rise in glory."

Clergy posts could be cut in diocese

CLERGY posts could be cut across our diocese because of a nationwide shortage of ordained ministers.

The Archbishops' Council advised all dioceses this spring that they should employ fewer clergy from 2007 because fewer people are being ordained at the moment and more clergy are retiring.

Their official figures state that we should reduce the number of clergy we employ from 121 to 115. Although we can ignore this figure if we choose, doing so could trigger financial penalties for us as well as not being fair on other dioceses. The figure refers only to paid clergy - the number of non-stipendiary ministers would be unaffected.

Bishop Kenneth has now asked the diocese's Board of Ministry to respond to this. It will meet this month to consider the issue, taking into account the probability that parish life will be reviewed across the diocese anyway between now and 2007 as a result of the work of the diocesan strategic review group.

The board's work will be complicated by the fact that our diocese has previously chosen to keep its total number of clergy posts as high as possible over the past few years - at 133.5. We have kept the actual number of clergy employed within official limits only because of high numbers of vacancies.

Diocesan secretary Michael Jordan said: "We have kept the number of clergy posts fairly stable at 133.5 for a while, and only managed to operate within the rules because of the number of vacant posts. It would be unsustainable for us to keep 18.5 posts-vacant constantly, so there may have to be real cuts.

"However, whatever happens, there will be no redundancies. We did a similar kind of exercise 10 years

ago, and cut substantially more posts without making a single clergy person redundant."

Reducing the number of clergy posts would place additional pressure on parishes, which are already facing the prospect of paying more for clergy pay rises and increased contributions to clergy pensions.

Early indications also show that church attendance figures around the diocese dropped in 2002 after an encouraging increase in 2001.

But our diocese has already started looking at changing the way in which parishes and the central diocesan structures operate - through the work of the strategic review group. The

thrust of much of the thinking is to encourage collaborative ministry and lay leadership.

The Ven Chris Lawson, chairman of the strategic review group and the Board of Ministry, said: "I'm glad we started thinking about this in the strategic review group before these figures came out.

"They have, however, brought things sharply into focus for us: we simply won't have the luxury of having as many clergy around in the near future, so we need to make plans that take that into account."

The strategic review group was set up by Bishop Kenneth last year to think about how the Church in our

diocese might be re-shaped for the 21st century.

It worked out a process of change and nine theological principles that are now being trialled in three areas - inner-city Portsmouth, Sandown Bay and the Petersfield deanery.

In both Portsmouth and Petersfield, congregations will meet up in July to share what they have learnt by studying the theological principles and consider practical steps forward. All three trial areas will report back to the bishop in September - he will spend an evening in each area listening to congregations explaining their progress - and to diocesan synod in November.

Out to Africa

FOR 18-year-old Grace Puliye, this summer will be a big step of faith.

The Portsmouth Grammar School pupil, who goes to Holy Rood Church in Stubbington, is to head for the African country of Burkina Faso for around a month.

She'll be helping to build an additional floor for an existing Bible school in Bob-Dioulasso, teaching English and visiting local churches with a team of 10 others.

Grace will make the trip with Christian relief organisation Tearfund during July and August before heading off to university in the autumn.

"I wanted to do

something over the summer and I liked the emphasis on grass-roots participation in this project," she said.

"I don't know much about Burkina Faso, except that it's a mostly rural country where they speak a lot of French - which is good as I speak a little.

"I'm looking forward to a completely different experience. It will be good for me not to live in luxury."

Grace was originally born in India, but her family moved to Britain when she was 10. She came from a Christian family, but her faith became more real to her through a youth group in Durham when she was 12.



Grace Puliye: preparing to visit Burkina Faso with Tearfund's Transform programme