

Play area is start of community project

BISHOP Kenneth has opened a children's play area that marks the first step in a £500,000 project to redevelop a Havant church.

The play area outside St Alban's Church in West Leigh is now being used by the 32 children who are part of its pre-school group.

They are playing outside regularly for the first time, using toys, scooters, sports equipment and lines painted on its new surface.

The former chairman of governors at St Alban's Pre-School, John Sawtell, said: "Childhood is a precious thing, and some of these children will remember their pre-school days, their teachers, and this play area. This is very important work that is going on."

The pre-school leader, Marina Bendon, said: "It makes such a difference to be able to go out-

side, as it's difficult for them to ride their tricycles in the church hall. Some of these children live in places where they have no garden, so this is a huge advantage for them."

And Bishop Kenneth added: "It makes me proud to have a parish like St Alban's in my diocese that is really involved with the community."

The project took more than three years to develop, and was funded by private and local business donations and a grant from Hampshire's early years unit. Although the play area was vandalised within days of being opened, it has now been repaired and is in use again.

The new play area is the first phase of a project to transform the church complex itself over the next two years.

The proposals include developing the existing hall, and creating new toilets, a kitchen, a small meeting room and an entrance



lobby by building extensions to the existing building.

The church complex is the only community facility in West Leigh, and is used by many non-church groups, including a self-defence class, theatre group, sports groups, youth groups and mothers and toddlers' group.

Bishop Kenneth opens the new play area at St Alban's Pre-School with the help of four-year-old Billy Murch and Kyra Bravington, aged two

Taize-style services at cathedral

SOME will know Taizé as a small French village. Others will recognise it as a reflective, meditative way of singing.

In fact, it is a home to a Christian community launched in 1940 which hosts thousands of visitors each week.

Eighty brothers, some living in Asia, Africa and the Americas, practice their simple, distinctive worship style which has become synonymous with the name. It includes psalmody, scripture, intercession and deep silence.

Portsmouth Cathedral is now starting a monthly Taizé-style service. It will be at 8pm on September 21, October 19 and November 16. The 40-minute service will be simple, with lots of music, some readings and plenty of silence.

For more information, contact the diocesan spirituality adviser, the Rev Peter Lippiett, on 023-9282 6120.

Our happy holiday

TWELVE families enjoyed everything from a picnic by the beach to sessions of archery and go-karting on the latest AFIA holiday.

Volunteers from the Mothers' Union and the board of education took the disadvantaged families to the Lodge Hill Centre in West Sussex for a week in August.

It was the annual AFIA - Away From It All - holiday designed to give families with financial or social pressures a real break.

Team leader Valerie Edmonds said: "It was a hot week, which included



Children try face-painting on the AFIA holiday in West Sussex

a picnic and a swim in the sea at Littlehampton, face-painting, crafts, a quiz evening, archery and go-karting for the older children.

"It was the first time for each of the families who came

this year, and some of the parents were amazed that we take the children for activities during the day and babysit at night to give them a break."

The holiday was subsidised by

parishes and by the Portsmouth Council for Community Service. Parishes that know of families who would like to go next year should contact the board of education on 023-9282 2053.

Memorial for former diocesan man

A MEMORIAL service is to be held for former diocesan secretary Michael Wilkinson, who died earlier this year.

The service has been planned for Sunday 23 November at 3pm

in Portsmouth Cathedral.

Michael, who was a Lay Canon of the cathedral, was diocesan secretary for 10 years from 1984, and more recently was involved with village, parish

and deanery life in Meonstoke. Among other things he was lay chairman of the deanery synod.

The service will be followed by refreshments, and all are welcome to attend.



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Closing date 19th September