

In the media spotlight at cathedral

AN ordinand from our diocese found himself in the front-line during the controversy over the appointment of a new Bishop of Reading.

James Tabor, from St Mary's Church, Liss, was on placement at Southwark Cathedral for 30 days in the summer - at the height of the controversy over whether the cathedral's Canon Jeffrey John should be appointed a bishop.

In fact James, who is now studying to be a priest at Ripon College, Cuddesdon, was preaching in the cathedral on

the day Jeffrey John decided not to take up the post because of the controversy over his homosexual lifestyle. A media posse turned up to Evensong, where they heard James's assessed sermon.

He had been placed at Southwark partly because it combined both parish church and cathedral functions.

"My concerns about how one might address a bishop designate became rather academic as Jeffrey John was forced into hiding by a frenzied press," he said. "Vergers would

routinely advise those presiding at services about who had turned up from the press hoping to gain a glimpse of the elusive Dr John. As the debate became more personal and more vicious, it became necessary to protect Canon John from those trying to contact him - for good or ill.

"It became apparent to all of us at staff meetings that he was fast becoming the point around which a vast and fundamental debate was turning, and his appointment was not about whether Canon Jeffrey

John would be a good bishop (undoubtedly he would) but whether the Church of England was ready to face potentially catastrophic internal division.

"Whilst all this was going on, the cathedral clergy and staff worked hard to maintain 'business as usual', and from what I saw, this was achieved admirably. I was astonished at the pace in a cathedral, both at the vast variation in services, concerts and activities, and the length of the working day to bring this about."



James Tabor

Blessed be the alt worship generation



A NEW, regular alternative worship service is to be launched this month.

The Church of the Holy Spirit in Southsea will host "Blesséd" at 7pm on November 22 - a multi-media mass with a live band, images projected onto screens and innovative liturgy.

The experiment is the idea of the church's young people, assisted by their curate, the Rev Simon Rundell. It aims to explore the Eucharist using modern ways of engaging with God in music, prayer and worship.

The theme of the evening will be God's transcendence, and the live band - Shortfall - are from Brighton. Their music also featured in the Carnival of Prayer event organised at Portsmouth Cathedral in February and during a similar service at St Peter's Church, Petersfield, in September.

Mission week sets hearts afire

ALTERNATIVE worship also featured during a week-long mission at St Peter's Church, Petersfield.

A multi-media youth Eucharist - also called Blesséd - took place at the start of the Hearts Afire! mission week, employing back projection, modern music and lighting.

The week also involved events led by a team of visiting Franciscans together with guests from St Peter's twin parish in Sweden.

The team led three services during the week, exploring the themes

If this service is successful, similar alternative worship events may be held at the Church of the Holy Spirit, in Fawcett Road, every couple of months.

"Alternative worship has been a vibrant, yet partially hidden undercurrent in modern worship for a while,"

of "Where do we come from?", "Why are we here?" and "Where are we going" through drama, role play, readings and music.

There was also a *Songs of Praise*-style service, in which people selected their favourite hymns and explained their selections.

A market stall on the Wednesday allowed the visiting team to chat to shoppers, and a "Stations of the Cross" through Petersfield helped people re-live Christ's last journey through Jerusalem.

Friday evening saw the church

said Simon.

"It is neither established church nor free church, neither high church nor charismatic. Yet it uses symbols and influences from all strands of Christian tradition to explore the heart of worship.

"The idea behind the event is to

again transformed into a 'chill-out zone', with soft music, subdued lighting and a calm atmosphere to encourage people to reflect and be quiet. Among those who did so were many of the youngsters who normally spend their Friday evenings being noisy in the centre of the town.

The week ended with a parish Eucharist in which the chairs were arranged in a circle around the altar. Music was provided by an ad hoc music group and Sister Winsome, one of the visiting missionaries, preached.

take the sacramental journey of the Eucharist and re-explore it in a modern way. The use of multi-media and live, loud music may appeal primarily to young people, but this is not an exclusive journey for the young, and all are welcome.

"Alternative worship is an experimental form of liturgy, in which everyone is a participant rather than a spectator, and yet you are free to engage with it as you wish."

Alternative worship - more often known as 'alt worship' - is best-known through groups such as Grace in London or the Late Late Service in Glasgow.

The term also embraces more visual worship experiences such as the Labyrinth, which visited our cathedral in early 2002.

This event is free, and more information about the service can be found on www.blessed.org.uk, and about alternative worship on www.alternativeworship.org

Pompey Churches

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Pets fill pews

THERE was a noisy congregation at one church last month when creatures of all sizes joined worshippers for a pet service.

It was part of an animal-themed weekend at St Francis' Church in Hilsea, Portsmouth, to mark its patronal festival.

On the Saturday, local schoolchildren took part in a fun day at the church with craft, singing and games. They made animal

masks for the closing service.

At the festival Eucharist that night, diocesan spirituality adviser the Rev Peter Lippiett reminded worshippers of the life of St Francis in Assisi.

Sunday morning's pet service was the first of a monthly service for families. The week also saw the launch of a new, church-run mother and toddler group.



Members of the congregation at St Francis, Hilsea, with their pets