

## City vicar resigns after two complaints

THE following statement was released to the media last month:

"The Rev Michael John Smithson resigned from his post as vicar of St Luke's, Southsea, with effect from 31 January. He has subsequently voluntarily agreed to be disqualified from future ministry in the Church of England.

"This follows complaints by two women about inappropriate behaviour by Mr Smithson on separate occasions. These allegations were submitted to the bishop. Bishop Kenneth has accepted Mr Smithson's resignation. There are no other proceedings relating to this matter."

The Archdeacon of Portsdown has now met the churchwardens of St Luke's to discuss the vacancy.

## Pompey Churches

DEADLINE FOR APRIL EDITION: Monday 8 March

AVAILABLE FOR PARISH REPRESENTATIVES TO COLLECT FROM DEANERY DEPOTS: Thursday 25 March

AVAILABLE IN YOUR PARISH CHURCH: Sunday 28 March

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PHOTOGRAPHY: David Lawrence Neil Pugmire Isle of Man Church Leader

## Christians in Fratton unite to pray for streets

A NEW group devoted to praying for the Fratton area of Portsmouth throughout the year will be launched on April 1.

Christians in Fratton is an inter-denominational group which includes worshippers from St Mary's

Church, Wesley Methodist Church, Brookfield Hall, the International Pentecostal Church and others.

They will divide the roads in Fratton into 12 groups, one for each month of the year, and

will pray for a different group of roads each month.

People living in the roads selected each month will receive a leaflet, letting them know that the prayer sessions are happening and asking them

whether they have any specific needs. If they do, they can use the leaflet to forward their prayer request to any of the participating churches.

Some may discover that they are not the only Christian living on their

street. Anyone who would like to take part in the project should contact either Manuela Campbell (023-9283 0482 or manuela@fish.co.uk) or Wilf Richardson (023-9282 8757 or wilf2509@ntlworld.com) for details.

# New hall will help us serve village

**IT was the culmination of 10 years of hard work – and a vision to expand the church's role in its local community.**

Bishop Kenneth formally opened the new church hall at All Saints' Church, Denmead, with a service of thanksgiving. Its superb facilities can now be used by a plethora of community groups – from karate enthusiasts to toddler groups.

The original vision came from former vicar the Rev John Herklots, who wanted to raise £700,000 to expand both the church building and the hall. His prediction was virtually spot-on – both projects together cost £702,000.

The church extension was completed in 1997, and fundraising to extend the hall and create a link between it and the church began in 1998.

The new facilities now include extra meeting rooms, a parish office, landscaped gardens and storage facilities.

The current vicar, the Rev Andrew Ashdown, said: "The old church hall was a 1960s building that didn't meet current health and safety criteria. The new facilities include the Heath room, which has a patio leading out onto the garden. It has allowed us to start regular open coffee mornings twice a week.

"All sorts of groups and organisations for all ages can now use it, in addition to those that do already, and it's getting booked up for wedding receptions. I'm sure others in the village will come up with ideas as they see new opportunities.

"The whole 10-year project has involved a phenomenal amount of people, incredible generosity, teamwork in design, finance, publicity and fund-raising. We've also been helped by Winchester City, Hampshire County and Denmead Parish Councils. In a way, the even harder work starts now of working out how we can best serve the community with our new



*Bishop Kenneth (centre) blesses the new hall with (left to right) the Rev Sandra Edwards, curate at All Saints'; the Rev Robin Coutts, Havant rural dean; the Rt Rev Francis Quashie, Bishop of Koforidua in Ghana; architect Ralf Ball; Andrew Wilson of construction firm Wilson House Developments; and the Rev Andrew Ashdown, vicar of All Saints' Church*

facilities."

Around 250 people came to the service of blessing and dedication, including a visiting bishop from Ghana, the Rt Rev Francis Quashie; the Mayor of Winchester Mrs Jean Hammerton; district, county and parish councillors,

the police, sea cadets and the MEP Roy Perry.

• The Bishop of Koforidua was also able to attend a meeting of the Havant deanery Inter-Diocesan West Africa Link (IDWAL) group during his stay in the country.

The Rt Rev Francis Quashie had been in Britain for a course at Canterbury. He met the Havant IDWAL group with Elizabeth Sidwell, the USPG missionary in Ho.

She used to work in Kororidua, but moved to the neighbouring diocese.

## Marilyn, David and Mary - simultaneously!



*Marilyn Baker: visiting St Wilfrid's, Cowplain*

THREE of the biggest names in the Christian world visit our diocese this month - but you may not get to see all three!

Popular Christian singer-songwriter Marilyn Baker will lead a conference in Cowplain on March 6-7 - unfortunately, the same weekend that David and Mary Pytches, the founders of New Wine, visit Crookhorn.

Marilyn Baker is a talented pianist and vocalist who is also blind. She and her personal assistant Tracey Williamson will lead a conference and workshop of Christian music, teaching and prayer at St Wilfrid's Church on March 6. Entitled 'The Father

Heart of God', it will run from 10am-3.30pm and is open to anyone.

The climax of the day will be an evening concert of song and praise at 7.30pm. Tickets are £10 for the conference and £5 for the concert only. Details are available on 023-9226 8762.

Marilyn Baker will also be taking part in worship at Westbrook Church, at 10am on March 7.

Meanwhile, also on March 6, author Mary Pytches will be leading a conference for women entitled 'Called By God'.

It will run from 9.30am-12noon at the Church of the Good Shepherd, Crookhorn. It aims to be

a morning of encouragement, challenge and ministry for women. It costs £2, and more details are available on 023-9225 5527.

Mary will be joined by her husband, Bishop David Pytches, for an evening celebration at the church at 7pm on March 7.

David had been a missionary bishop in Chile before becoming vicar of St Andrew's Church, Chorleywood. It began to flourish and many Christians visited to see what was happening there.

The couple decided to start up the New Wine conference to help share some of what God had been saying to them, and that has now become an annual event.