

Key workers on Church's frontline

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CHRISTMAS INVITES HIT THE AIRWAVES



The E-vn in recording their video with pupils from Swanmore School

Bands to battle for top prize

IT'S going to be a battle between the finest bands in the Bishop's Waltham area.

Youngsters will be urged to hit the high notes at a *Pop Idol*-style event in February. The prize for the best band will be the chance to record in a professional studio.

And it's being organised by our youth co-ordinator in the Bishop's Waltham area, the Rev Stuart Holt. The event is part of his long-term strategy to get unchurched teenagers more interested in Christianity.

Fifteen bands have already signed up for the Battle of the Bands contest, which is only open to bands from the Bishop's Waltham area.

The best will appear in the

final, at the Jubilee Hall, Bishop's Waltham, at 7pm on February 5 next year. Among the celebrity judges will be the producer behind acts from Sting to Right Said Fred.

Virtually all the tickets for the 300-seater hall have been snapped up by local pupils and youth groups. Because it has already proved so popular, organisers are thinking of making it a regular event.

The February gig will also feature up and coming boy band The E-vn as the headline act. They play retro 1960s-style pop songs, and confirmed their local popularity by filming the video for their next single at Swanmore School recently.

Two hundred pupils dressed in

1960s clothes to dance in the background.

Stuart, the vicar of Newtown and Soberton, said: "We wanted to do something that was a cross between *Pop Idol* and *Fame Academy*, to try to get young people in this rural area excited about cultural, creative and spiritual issues.

"It will be part of our strategy to encourage youngsters to look at our faith as being counter-cultural – we may urge bands to write anti-consumerism songs or investigate spirituality on our youth camps."

More information about the event and next summer's youth camps can be found on www.bwdyouth.org.uk.

INNOVATIVE radio adverts will be used to attract non-churchgoers to Christmas services this year.

Christians from around Portsmouth will pay for adverts to be broadcast on Power FM in the week or so before Christmas. It's thought to be the first time the Church in this area has paid for its message to be broadcast on commercial radio.

Some of the thought-provoking adverts give well-known Christmas songs some new words, satirising the shortcomings of modern-day, secular Christmas celebrations. A spoof of *We Wish You a Merry Christmas* reminds listeners about post-Christmas credit card bills, while new words to *Deck the Halls* addresses the cost of buying designer labels in response to peer pressure. You can hear them for yourself at www.churchads.org.uk.

Each of the adverts to be played on Power FM also encourages listeners to log onto the ecumenical website for Portsmouth churches – www.portsmouthchurches.co.uk – to find details of local Christmas worship.

The adverts were created by the Churches' Advertising Network (CAN), a network of Christians who also create memorable Christmas billboard adverts on behalf of the Church. CAN hires professionals to record the adverts, then offers them for free to Christian groups around the UK. Local churches pay only for airtime.

One member of CAN, Farlington parish magazine editor Yvonne Scarborough, was behind the drive to get the adverts played to the target 18-35 year old age group



who listen to Power FM.

"CAN have actually been producing radio adverts like these for free for 10 years, and they have been played thousands of times on 36 commercial stations around the UK – but never in this area," said Yvonne. "I thought it was about time we had them too!"

"They appeal to young people who may wonder if there is more to Christmas than family tension, expensive presents and huge amounts of food and drink. It's the time of year when many people feel lonely or spiritually dissatisfied and may want to try out church.

"We've been able to customise the ending to mention our ecumenical website, which is ideal for Portsmouth churches. All they need to do is make sure their Christmas services are listed on the website for people to discover."

The ecumenical website, which was launched in 2002, includes service times, events and news from 73 Portsmouth churches from all denominations. Businesses run by Christians are also listed, and web users can post messages for other Christians or ask spiritual questions.

Churches of all denominations within Portsmouth are helping to fund the cost of the airtime. Any church that would like to contribute should contact Neil Pugmire on 023-9282 5731 or communications @portsmouth.anglican.org