

Aiming to be at heart of locality

AMBITIOUS plans to re-order a Southsea church aim to put it at the heart of its local community.

St Jude's, in Kent Road, is a lively evangelical church that attracts more than 300 worshippers each Sunday. But its current layout causes problems for the congregation and makes it difficult for community groups to use the current meeting rooms simultaneously.

The long, narrow worship area means worshippers can feel disconnected from the leadership of a service, and the front of the nave is a busy passageway to children's Sunday groups, vestries, toilets and kitchen on Sundays.

Plans drawn up by architect Nick Lee Evans aim to create a semi-circular worship area on the first floor, turning the congregation through 180 degrees so they face the large west window.

The whole ground floor would be freed up for meeting rooms, halls and a day chapel. The chapel – which would be where the present chancel is – could be available for shoppers, visitors, workers and residents for quiet reflection during the day. The first-floor worship area could be used for funerals, weddings and school services at the same time as the meeting rooms downstairs.

The plans would also involve creating a new modern, south-east entrance facing the top of the Palmerston Road shopping precinct. This would help to counter the



impression now given to shoppers that the church looks closed.

The entrance itself would be a place where people could meet for coffee and see displays. The garden outside would be landscaped and open to the public for functions or as a green space. Modern toilet and kitchen facilities are also planned.

The changes would also help the local community, echoing Kairos thinking. A survey of residents and businesses last year underlined the demand for the church to continue as a centre for the community. There was support for its use for concerts and exhibitions as well as the known demand for group meeting places and receptions.

The vicar, Canon John Byrne, said: "The proposed scheme addresses problems caused by the

use of old, inflexible facilities trying to minister effectively in the 21st century. It will give us a powerful tool to carry forward work and ministry in our part of the city, seven days a week."

The re-ordering is likely to cost around £1.4m, and would be paid for by applications to grant-giving bodies and giving by congregation members.

The church has also worked in partnership with students at Highbury College, who are designing a new Communion table and other items of church furniture for the re-ordered building.

The new table was made by students Michael Grist, Daniel Vincent and Wesley Draper, from the NVQ furniture level 3 course. It will be consecrated on July 17.

Left: the new entrance; right: the new worship area



Working in unity

GOSPORT deanery decided to combine its two cluster groupings and work together as a whole deanery of eight parishes. All its Kairos projects are therefore taking place across the entire deanery.

Some things have already happened: Judith Swaine has been appointed as deanery pastoral assistant to take on pastoral work across all eight parishes.

And changes to the parish structure brought Rowner and Bridgemary together as a plurality under the Rev John Draper, with Christ Church and Holy Trinity also working together under the Rev Ian Booth.

Future plans include communicating with those in new and existing housing estates, using a leaflet to explain the work of the Church in Gosport, and a feasibility study to see if a youth centre can be built around the Brodrick Hall site.

A Kairos emphasis on partnership with other agencies can be clearly seen in

Gosport

plans to work with borough councils to identify prolific young offenders. Church halls will then be made available for activities to divert those youngsters from crime.

On the spiritual side, plans include establishing a deanery pastoral skills school to build on existing ad-hoc courses, holding joint deanery services and quiet days, and employing a funeral co-ordinator to have pastoral oversight of funerals.

Chapter meetings will be extended to include Readers, preachers will be encouraged to preach in other churches around the deanery, and deanery synod will be better organised, and given a strategic and a theological role.

Lay worshippers will be given education and training, and communications across the deanery improved. Resources will be shared and consolidated to reduce expenditure, and ecumenical relationships will be built upon.

Plans for collaboration are already underway

SOME of the initiatives planned by the **inner-city Portsmouth** cluster have already started – notably the new team working across Somers Town.

The Rev Colin Towner has now become priest-in-charge of St Luke's, as well as St Peter's, with the Rev Andrew Bridgen working as curate-in-charge at St Luke's. The aim is to work with the university chaplaincy and St Luke's School to address the needs of the whole of Somers Town.

Other Kairos plans across the cluster include the future development of buildings, work with the elderly and partnership with institutions that provide care. The cluster also wants to deepen the spiritual lives of worshippers, share good practice and develop relationships with schools and the

community to enhance their ministry to youngsters.

St Mary's in Fratton has already agreed to relinquish one clergy post to provide extra administrative, pastoral and liturgical resources across the cluster.

The **Southsea and Old Portsmouth** cluster plan involves the development of the ministry to young people on the streets and in the nightclubs, which St Simon's Church is already involved with.

Other plans include developing work with the group for homeless people at St Simon's, the appointment of a youth worker and the church re-ordering at St Jude's, and the development of educational opportunities and a visitors' centre at the cathedral.

The cluster has also identified areas where churches can work

Portsmouth

together – parenting and life-skills courses, marriage preparation and support for the bereaved, and a chaplaincy to Southsea retailers.

In the **Milton and Eastney** cluster, the Kairos plans involve looking at how the three churches – St James's, St Margaret's and Church of the Holy Spirit – can share ordained ministers and employ a youth leader.

St James', Milton, also wants to improve its ministry to the elderly and lonely by training lay people and using its facilities to provide meals. Sunday School breakfast clubs, dance and drama groups and mothers and toddlers' groups could be set up at both St Margaret's and the Church of the Holy Spirit.

The former is also looking at

re-establishing links with the guides, setting up a sea scouts group, and using its hall complex to help the elderly. The latter wants to launch a Rainbow group for girls, a junior choir and an after-school homework club – as well as re-developing its building to help serve community needs.

The **North of Creek** cluster – Paulsgrove, Wymering, Cosham and Farlington – wants to prepare and deliver a parenting course across the cluster this autumn and provide a social club for the elderly each month. There will also be a feasibility study into the employment of a youth worker and plans for meaningful leisure activities for youngsters.

And the plans in the **North Portsmouth** cluster include the continued re-development of St Cuthbert's, Copnor, into a GPs'

surgery, community rooms and new worship area.

Relationships with schools in the parish of St Alban's, Copnor, are being developed. St Mark's, North End, is to become a team ministry and will investigate how best to use its buildings for worship and community use.

St Saviour's, Stamshaw, wants to re-establish links with parishioners, and is planning for a new hall at the back of church that should provide a springboard for greater community involvement.

And worshippers at Church of the Ascension, North End, hope to re-develop the west end of their church to provide an attractive, versatile venue. The project will provide better facilities for its existing users and help the church to develop the building for more community use.