

Sale gives church a chance to redevelop

AMBITIOUS plans to rebuild a community centre and extend the neighbouring church will transform the Landport skyline.

St Faith's Church will gain a striking new entrance at its west end, a new meeting room with kitchen facilities and a re-designed worship space as part of the plans.

This has been made possible by the sale of the neighbouring community centre, which was built alongside the church in 1956 and was run by St Faith's. But it needed a securer financial future and the building has been sold to Portsmouth Housing Association (PHA) and the newly-formed Landport Community Centre Association (LCCA).

They plan to demolish and rebuild the complex to create a ground-floor community centre with three storeys of flats above it. The centre will be run by the LCCA and the flats managed by PHA.

The Rev Charlotte Hetherington, associate vicar at St Mary's with the care of St Faith's, said: "The community centre needed to have a more sustainable source of funding, rather than being run by the church. Keeping the cen-

tre going took up a disproportionate amount of clergy time, and that of a small group of dedicated but over-worked people.

"After discussions with the LCCA and PHA, we decided to sell the building to them so they could re-develop it. The income from the tenants of the flats will help pay for the maintenance of the centre, and the church will withdraw from the direct running of it.

"What that also meant was that the church would lose facilities such as a meeting room, a place to have coffee after services, toilets and a kitchen, so we have developed plans to alter St Faith's in parallel. It's actually a wonderful opportunity.

"The first thing will be the demolition of the single-storey rooms linking the church with the centre. Then the east end of the church will be altered, the organ loft simplified and the nave moved closer to the east end.

"The final phase will be the creation of a meeting room, toilets, storage rooms and a kitchen at the west end. We hope the meeting room will be a resource for a variety of different groups, for example young parents and children, uniformed groups and others.

"We'll create a new entrance



Plans for the new community centre and flats complex

foyer under the tower. That will be made out of glass, so will look quite striking, especially as you approach along Crasswell Street. There will also be an office and sacristy near the entrance.

"We've been visiting people who live close to the church to tell them about the plans. We've discovered there is a lot of affection for the church and appreciation for all that the community centre has provided, and people are pleased to hear what we're hoping to do."

Bishop Kenneth came to St Faith's on the Tuesday of Holy Week to help worshippers say



The Rev Charlotte Hetherington at St Faith's

farewell to the St Barnabas chapel, which was then closed, and will be part of the demolition.

Work on the church re-development is expected to start this month, while the community centre project will begin in 2006. The new community centre will be managed by local residents who consulted Landport people about activities they would like to see there.

As a result, it will have space for an IT 'tele-cottage', a large hall with kitchen for dance classes, community hire, youth and uniformed groups, a lunch club, and two other activity/training rooms.

Lutherans visit to talk about confirming

LUTHERAN Christians from Finland are to hold formal discussions in our diocese about training youngsters for confirmation.

It's thought their three-day visit to the Isle of Wight this month will mark the first such discussions between the Lutheran church and the Church of England.

The group from the Helsinki diocese of the Evangelical Lutheran Church will be staying in Cowes between September 22-25. Their visit will include a meal at our cathedral, a tour of the Isle of Wight and the chance to experience both worship led by young people and an Anglican service of baptism and confirmation.

Formal sessions will include presentations by the Helsinki diocese about confirmation training in Finland, and presentations by about the picture here. The group will also head out to parishes around the diocese on the morning of September 25.

Our diocesan director of education, Canon David Isaac, said: "This is possibly the first such formal discussion on the theme between our churches and is certainly seen as a significant development by our Finnish guests."

Bookshop to close after half-century

BOOK-LOVERS will say their final farewells to a Christian bookshop this month as it closes down with a special sale.

The Portsmouth Christian Book Centre, on New Road, will close its doors for the final time on October 1 after 55 years of trading. Manager Terry Cawte, who has run the shop for the past 15 years, is to retire. After three years of trying to find new owners without success, the only option is to close down the shop.

Most of its books, CDs and gifts will be on offer during September at 50 per cent off. The shop will be open on Tuesdays and Thursdays (9.30am-5pm) and Saturdays (9.30am-1pm).

The shop was started in 1950 by Iris Morgan, who ran it out of a cupboard in her parents' home. It moved to Arundel Street and Lake Road before New Road.

In the past 15 years, it has donated more than £5,500-worth of books to local school libraries with the help of church members.

REVIEW

Judas Iscariot

Judas Iscariot's torment and anguish as he tries to escape from the consequences of his actions were dramatically told in the premiere of new church cantata performed at St Mary's, Alverstoke.

The work depicts his imagined afterlife journey towards repentance and reconciliation and is based on a poem by Robert Buchanan as adapted by the Rev Prof Philip Barker.

Singing the role of Judas from the back of the church, Stewart Armstrong (tenor) achieved maximum dramatic effect. His powerful and expressive voice soared through St Mary's. His despair and agony at what he had done to Christ were totally convincing.

Although short, it is a complex work. The cantata successfully combined many resources to illustrate the beauty of the music and words. The complexity of the staging using three points within the church (choir stalls, south aisle and west end) was risky but unquestionably

was the right decision, producing a well-balanced presentation throughout.

The dramatic emotional intensity of the choir and soloists was balanced by the excellent use of the children's chorus who presented a simple and emotionally detached view.

The conclusion was serenely and sensitively staged. The body of the church was used to great effect, with the tortured Judas Iscariot moving slowly towards release at the altar. The musical language becomes more gentle as Judas finds forgiveness when he comes face to face with

Christ.

In contrast to the deeply troubled singing of Judas Iscariot, Jane Sherriff (soprano) sang the role of the narrator with great dignity and beauty. David Riley's fine bass voice was exactly right to convey the stature and authority of Christ.

The innovative use of Gareth Morgan (piano), Helen Lancaster (violin) with Roger Bluff (organ) worked extremely well. Under the experienced and persuasive hands of the composer Paul Pilott, St Mary's choir excelled throughout.

GRAHAM HEWITT