



Sam Nicholls: deanery funeral co-ordinator

# Hassle eased over funerals

**IT'S a Kairos solution to the problem of organising funeral services.**

Funeral directors in Gosport used to spend days ringing round clergy to find a minister who could take a funeral. Now they all contact one person – Sam Nicholls – who knows which clergy are available when, and can respond to their queries within minutes.

The mother-of-two has been working as the Gosport deanery funeral co-ordinator since November. She knows when clergy are on holiday and when they take their days off. So she can sort out who might take a funeral quickly – even texting clergy on their mobiles to discover if they are free.

The successful project is one of the Kairos plans drawn up by the Gosport deanery to help the Church to respond better to the needs of bereaved families. Working



together as a whole deanery meant they could create a more efficient, centralised system.

Sam, 36, who goes to St John's Church, Forton, said: "A bereaved family will go to the funeral directors, and if the family are C of E and from Gosport, they'll get in touch with me. I'll get hold of the relevant parish priest from where the deceased lived. If that priest can't do it, I'll ring round to find someone who can.

"I'll also take down details of the bereaved family's wishes, as well as the next-of-kin. If the relevant parish priest can't actually take the funeral, he'll get an e-mail that day with those details, so that he can organise a pastoral visit.

"The priests are really pleased with the system. A lot of them have said

they've ended up doing more funerals than ever before and the centralised system means that they are more aware of funerals that involve someone from their parish. And it's a better service for the family involved."

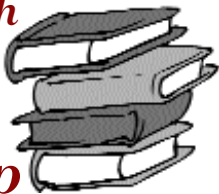
And Jo Leadbetter, funeral co-ordinator for the Co-operative Funeral Directors in Gosport, said: "We're really pleased with it.

"Often we ring Sam up when the bereaved family come to see us, and she'll get back to us while the family are still here. The sooner that things like that get sorted out, the more peace of mind the family have.

"Before, we might have left messages for clergy, then had to try to find someone else if we got no response. The worst thing for the families was the uncertainty of not knowing either way."

Sam, who also works part-time as a school classroom assistant, is paid a minimal fee to cover her phone and computer costs.

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## E-mail: bane or blessing?

MOVING house often involves looking through the attic to see what we've gathered over the years. With the upcoming move to new diocesan offices, we have been reviewing some of the Board of Education's archives before deciding how much we should now store electronically. Some fascinating stories emerge about our diocesan forebears.

A notable predecessor of mine as Director of Education, Canon T. Grigg-Smith, writing in the 1950s from the diocesan office in Portsmouth to the Isle of Wight, was accustomed to post his letters to catch the morning collection, receive a reply by tea-time and to have penned his reply in time to catch the last post that day.

Admittedly, he did have to walk a few yards to the postbox and then file his carbon copies, but I suspect that his brief, considered words may stand the test of time longer than the many, many e-mails we send each day.

Bane or blessing?

Convenience or curse? How is e-mail for you? If your life is neither delicately enhanced nor deeply disturbed by this mod-



## the last word

by Canon David Isaac  
Diocesan director of education

ern equivalent of the bush telegraph, then for the rest of this article you may envy or pity those whose lives are daily punctuated by the demanding bleep of "you've got mail!"

The forces of e-mail are swift and strong – easy, instant, clear contact with one or more co-respondents worldwide – and without even having to spend time saying "how are you?", "what's the weather like?" or "is that a new hair-do?"

The failings of e-mail are spoken of in hushed whispers by those who have endured the embarrassment of having their errors of grammar, spelling or lack of commonsense broadcast nationwide or the horrific consequence of having unwisely

activated the 'reply-all' button that can precipitate inter-galactic war out of a simple office memo. Worst of all is the sheer terror of the 'onosecond' – that cataclysmic instant of despair when you know you have pushed the 'send' button on the wrong message, the wrong person and your prospects and pension disappear.

There is also, of course, the fantasy of e-mail that, just because I have sent it, someone is actually going to read it, hopefully soon, or possibly today, or even before the end of next week.

Less, in the case of e-mail, may definitely be more. What shall it profit a man to clear his Inbox, at the risk of getting four times as many back tomorrow?

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