

Helping faith groups to work side-by-side

HE'S been doing it voluntarily for 15 years. Now he can devote himself to this work full-time.

Southsea man Taki Jaffer has been appointed as interfaith co-ordinator for the Portsmouth area, with a brief to help those in our faith communities work together.

The 47-year-old father-of-three had been working in this field voluntarily anyway – providing training in cultural diversity to city council, health, education, police and court officials.

He is also part of the Portsmouth Interfaith Forum that brings together local representatives from all faiths.

Now, thanks to a government grant, he will be employed to work full-time in this field. He started work on April 26, and aims to help faith communities understand one another and work together on issues of common concern.

He is a Muslim worshipper at the Wessex Jamaat community in Wickham, which has strong links with our cathedral. He and others from that community visited our cathedral after the 9/11 bombings in 2001, the outbreak of war in Iraq and the London bombings last summer. He has also celebrated Jesus' birth with cathedral worshippers at Christmas.

"The Wessex Jamaat is a very forward-thinking organisation, and it put me forward 15 years ago to get involved in the community," he said. "The idea was to dispel myths about Muslims, and to establish links with the wider community.

"I've been involved with the Portsmouth Interfaith Forum since it started, and also with the city council's



Taki Jaffer

Community Cohesion Response Group, which was set up after the 7/7 bombings.

"Having done this kind of thing voluntarily for 15 years, it's great to be able to do it full-time. I pray I can do it justice.

"The job will involve bringing together those of faith, including those from some of the smaller faith groups who have often not been represented before.

"By working together, we can present a united front to service providers on issues that we have in common, approach organisations such as the council on behalf of faith communities, and learn about each other's faiths."

The government funding for the job only lasts for a year, but Taki hopes funding will be available for subsequent years. He will work alongside our diocese's interfaith adviser, Canon Peter Jones.

Taki has lived for 35 years in Portsmouth, working as a manager at a kitchen firm, and then owning his own retail business in Southsea. He has been a magistrate for 10 years and will continue with that role in his new job.

Our social responsibility adviser, the Rev Nick Ralph, said: "Faith issues have rocketed to the top of the government's agenda recently, which is in part why this money has been made available. Portsmouth was given the highest grant in the south-east region. I'm delighted that Taki has taken on this role which is increasingly important."

Our diocese has been approached by the city council to recruit a youth interfaith co-ordinator. Interviews for this half-time post will take place early in May.



Tina Lowe tucks into her roast lunch as others make do with a bowl of rice

Our reminder of world hunger

WHEN cathedral worshippers sit down to Sunday lunch on May 14, only one in every 10 will get a full roast.

The rest will have to make do with a bowl of rice and lentils - a reminder that many in our world do go hungry.

The 'Rich World, Poor World' lunch is being organised by Maggie Lippiett, from the cathedral's trade justice group, at the start of Christian Aid Week.

"We're hoping to sell 80 tickets at £8 each, and as people arrive, they'll drop their tickets into a hat," she said. "The eight

'winners' will sit down to a sumptuous lunch - the rest will queue for rice and lentils. We're hoping to raise awareness of the facts, social responsibility and what we as Christians can do about it."

The lunch in Cathedral House will follow sermons by Simeon Greene at both morning services in the cathedral.

Other events have also been organised for Christian Aid Week, from May 14-20. As well as door-to-door collections in many parishes, sponsored walkers will be raising money for the charity.

A 17-mile hike from

Niton to West Cowes happens on May 6, as part of the Isle of Wight Walking Festival. Catch a bus in Newport at 8am, or start the walk from the Blackgang view carpark at 9am. Contact Jim Curtis (01983-526574) for details.

A five or 10-mile walk from All Saints' Church, Botley, happens from 2pm on May 14. Contact Hugh Spendlove (01489-893574). And a circular walk from St John's Church, Sandown, takes place on May 20 from 9.30am onwards. Contact John Cooper (01983-403410).



Jesus (Paul Davies) stumbles as he carries the cross through the streets of Brighstone in the village's passion drama

Crowds flock to passion play

THE crowd of 600 people were absolutely silent as the soldiers lifted up the three crosses that Jesus and the two thieves had been nailed to.

Many of the audience were moved to tears by seeing the last week of Jesus's life re-enacted in the Brighstone passion drama on Good Friday.

A cast of 50 local worshippers, plus musicians and singers, portrayed everything from Palm Sunday to Jesus's resurrection around the village of Brighstone. The Last Supper happened in the Methodist chapel, and Pilate's trial

in St Mary's Church.

Director the Rev Derick Stevenson, who had also staged the play on the Isle of Wight 25 years ago, said: "I was absolutely thrilled with it. It was a real 'event', and everything was incredibly moving.

"The crucifixion scene was especially powerful. Paul Davies gave a very convincing performance as Christ, and it was enhanced by the music – the drums beating as we walked behind him in a funeral procession made a real difference. I certainly felt we experienced the emotions that Jesus and his disciples

must have gone through themselves.

"It was actually quite cold by the time of the crucifixion, and Jesus and the two thieves were shivering on the crosses. "And the audience became part of the drama as they moved along with it, as the crowd. Some of them couldn't see everything that was happening, but then that was probably exactly what it felt like if you were a part of the crowd in Jerusalem in Jesus' time.

"People have talked about it happening again, but if it did, I think I would need a younger director to take over the reins!"