

Pupils learn via cluster project

TEN-YEAR-OLD Bridie Stanley had just made an Easter garden – complete with three crosses and a resurrection tomb.

She'd heard the story of Jesus being crucified and rising again, and could use her garden to explain it to others. She was just one of 227 pupils from inner-city Portsmouth who took part in a schools workshop day at St Mary's Church in Fratton.

The five inner-city parishes – which form one Kairos cluster – invited children from six different primary schools to learn more about the faith. Year 5 pupils made their own stained-glass windows, painted Easter candles, made banners on the theme of new life and experienced Godly play.

Other workshops included storytelling from BRF schools worker Lucy Moore, music with Michael Stoddart, and learning about signs and symbols with the Sisters of Bethany. The day also included a final assembly in which some of the children were able to show what they had learned.

Darcy Thorn, 10, from St George's C of E Primary School, said: "We split into different groups and I painted a candle, heard stories and designed a priest's outfit. It was good to make new friends."

Her teacher, Cheryl Jones, said: "It's very calm in the church and we've seen a different side to some of the children: it's amazing to see the concentration on some of their faces. It's good that they've been mixed with children from other schools, and that they can work with other adults."

The day was partly funded by Portsmouth City Council, but the 58 volunteer leaders included worshippers and clergy from the five parishes – St Mary's with St Wilfrid's and St Faith's, St Peter's, St Luke's, St George's and All Saints' Churches. The children came from Arundel Court Junior, Charles Dickens Junior, Somers Park Primary, Cottage Grove Primary, St



Pupils paint angels as part of the schools workshop day at St Mary's church in Fratton



George's Primary and Newbridge Junior Schools.

Kairos projects, which aim to help meet community needs in our parishes, are also ongoing across the rest of our diocese. A new chapel has been built next to Liphook Church Centre, as a place of quiet worship and reflection while the centre itself

is being used. It also links the centre with 'The Ark', which houses the church office and many children's activities.

The 18-month project included creating a new kitchen, toilet and disabled access – as well as a large stainless steel cross outside, which is floodlit at night. It's designed to emphasise the fact that the centre, which is used for a range of community activities, is a Christian place of worship.

And Kairos plans in the Bishop's Waltham deanery have included a parish reorganisation. The idea is for St Nicholas, Wickham, and St John the Baptist, Shedfield, to become a united benefice, and for the two parishes to join with St Barnabas, Swanmore, to create a new group ministry.

The first stage in that was to appoint the Rev Shirley Henderson as priest-in-charge of Wickham, while remaining priest-in-charge of Shedfield. And the Rev Elizabeth Groves has been appointed to the house for duty post at Wickham. Their licensing will take place on May 8 at Wickham. Later this year, Shirley will be inducted as vicar of Wickham and Shedfield, with the Rev Peter Kelly becoming vicar of Swanmore.

The Archdeacon of the Meon, the Ven Peter Hancock, said: "These new pastoral arrangements are both challenging and exciting. They open up new possibilities for mission and new ways to develop existing friendship."

Filling the coffee shop gap

THEY'VE met a real need in their community - the lack of somewhere to have a decent cup of coffee.

Worshippers at Blendworth, Chalton and Idsworth opened their new coffee shop for business on Maundy Thursday.

They'd discovered during the research phase for the bishop's Kairos process that there was a need for somewhere for parents to go after dropping children off at school, or where older people could find some company.

Such people missed the previous coffee mornings the church used to run.

The new coffee shop, in the Blendworth Church Centre also sells Traidcraft products. It will be open initially each Thursday between 9.30am and 11.30am.

Organiser Richard Bradshaw said: "The aim is



Worshippers Jo Lougher, Glynnis and Richard Bradshaw and Barry Johnson toast the opening of their new coffee shop

not to raise funds, but to boost the image of the church. It will also give us a good opportunity to advertise our services, something else which the locals said was lacking.

"In the future, we may also expand things to include a wider range of refreshments on sale, and also a few more tables selling items, depending

on how things go. We hope we might also be able to provide lunches for people who work in Horndean, and even have people sitting outside in the summer.

"There aren't many places to have a coffee in Horndean, apart from Morrisons and the local pubs, so hopefully we're plugging a gap."

Sponsored events to aid leprosy sufferers

DOZENS of walkers are expected to stroll along Southsea seafront to raise cash for children suffering with leprosy in India.

Up to 120 people are expected to walk from Eastney Baths to Clarence Pier and back on May 1, as the first in a series of events to raise money for projects supported by the Leprosy Mission.

The proceeds of the sponsored stroll will help provide scholarships for 100 children affected by leprosy to continue their education at schools around Ramachandrapuram.

Leprosy Mission regional coordinator Ray Burnish said: "The smooth pavement of Eastney and Clarence Esplanades is half a world away from the potholed road that connects Ramachandrapuram to the main highway. That 24 miles was one of the worst road surfaces I've ever traversed."

Other forthcoming events include a steam day on the Watercress Line on the Isle of Wight on May 6. For a flat fare of £10 each, passengers can enjoy unlimited travel on the steam train between 10.50am and 4.30pm - and £3.50 of the cost will be donated to the Care after Cure Project at Ramachandrapuram.

And there will also be a cruise along the Solent on June 23, which leaves Gunwharf Quays at 6.30pm. Tickets are £10 each. For more details about all these events, contact Ray on 023-9225 1119 or rayb@tlmew.org.uk

Have a 'big sing' with Iona group

EVER fancied learning how to sing Iona-style?

Portsmouth's Iona Worship Group is planning a 'Big Sing' this month - a session where anyone can join in, regardless of ability.

The group, which was started by our former diocesan spirituality adviser Philip Newell and his wife Ali, help churches that want to hold services in a Celtic or Iona style. This often involves a capella singing in harmony.

The Big Sing is at St Mark's Church, Derby Road, from 3pm to 5pm on May 13. You don't need to be able to read music to take part.

It's free, but any donations will go to the worldwide Iona community to support its work and mission.