



David Brindley and Taki Jaffer light a candle to start the vigil

Silence speaks volumes

BELIEVERS and non-believers joined forces for a silent vigil for peace at our cathedral.

Around 130 people, including Christians, Muslims, Jews, Buddhists, agnostics and atheists spent an hour in silence at the interfaith event.

They showed their commitment to peace – and their solidarity with each other – in the light of the recent conflict in Lebanon and the alleged terrorist plan to bomb transatlantic

flights.

People prayed, read Scriptures and lit candles during the vigil, which also attracted support from police officers and those involved in politics, education and health.

The idea came after discussions between the cathedral dean, the Very Rev David Brindley, and representatives of the Muslim community.

“Each of us interpreted the silence in our own way,” said the dean.

“For some of us it was a time of prayer, for others a time of penitence, but the important thing was that we sat side-by-side, recognising our solidarity with each other as humans made in God’s image.”

And the co-ordinator of the Portsmouth Interfaith Forum, Taki Jaffer, said: “My experience is that this is a tolerant, peaceful city, but our prayer is that it stays that way.”

● *Photo courtesy of The News, Portsmouth.*

Window links art with practicality

IT was a fascinating challenge for stained glass designer Mel Howse.

Sunlight used to stream through a south-facing triangular window above the altar at St Wilfrid’s Church in Cowplain, blinding the congregation and distracting them from worship.

Mel, who works from studios near Chichester, was asked to produce a design that would control that light and also complement an existing set of stained glass windows behind the altar.

Her abstract design, entitled ‘Oneness’, is a mix of deep blues with ribbons of paler shapes that convey movement. The shape and design of the window reflects the Trinity with the lighter shades representing humanity moving steadily towards eternal life.

She visited Germany to find the right colour of glass and made the panels by hand. They were installed last month and the parish hopes Bishop Kenneth can dedicate them at some future date.

It’s one of the finishing touches to the transformation of St Wilfrid’s that involved building an extension and turning the church through 90 degrees in order to fit in more worshippers.

“The design was a combination of the practical and artistic,” said Mel. “There was a need for a strong piece of work to pull the south side of the church together and to address the issue of sun-



Stained glass designer Mel Howse at St Wilfrid’s Church after her window was installed

light. We talked with the PCC about what kind of spirituality they would like to evoke, and came up with the idea of an abstract theme of Oneness.

“It was a wonderful opportunity to use some really bold colours. The blue evokes heaven, while the paler shapes convey a rising, flowing sensation moving towards the apex of the window. I presented the PCC with three designs and this was the one they wanted.

“It was an enjoyable project to work on, as the group I worked

with were very cohesive and positive. They even came to my studio to see the work in progress.”

The parish paid for the windows thanks to a legacy several years ago by worshippers George and Doris Farncombe. George had been a choir member for 50 years, a scout leader and a Sunday School teacher. Doris was active in the Mothers’ Union and continued as a loyal worshipper after George’s death.

When Doris died in 1998, she left a six-figure sum to the

church’s rebuilding project. That helped the parish to pay its remaining bills, and there was enough left over to pay for this window.

Churchwarden Derek Baker said: “Our biggest problem was the light coming through the window on a Sunday morning, as it meant some people couldn’t see what was happening at the front of church.

“We’re very pleased with what Mel has come up with, and very thankful to the Farncombes whose generosity allowed us to do this.”

Decade of work is celebrated at weekend

VISITORS and churchgoers have marked the 10th anniversary of a trust created to restore a historic church.

The Friends of St Edmund’s Church, Wootton held an open weekend when more than 200 people saw the difference that the creation of the St Edmund’s Church Building Trust had made.

They saw displays about the history of the church and trust, old photographs, news cuttings and parish registers.

Visitors were told that the trust had raised more than £15,000 to repair, restore and improve St Edmund’s Church over its first 10 years.

Those projects include the restoration of the perimeter wall, a restored bell, improvements to the main path, new plaster and paint on the walls, a new wooden staircase and trap-door leading to the organ loft. Traditional materials were used to fit in with the historic nature of the church.

The chairman of the trust, David Simmonds, said: “All these things have been made possible through volunteer labour, anonymous donations, and through funds from the Friends of St Edmund’s and fundraising activities. This has enabled us to assist the PCC to maintain St Edmund’s beautiful church to a high standard.”

The open weekend itself raised another £520, some of which came from the sale of homemade cakes. Among the appreciative visitors was the dean of Portsmouth Cathedral.