

Help give homeless a happier Christmas

A PROJECT that provides Christmas gifts for homeless people and asylum seekers will be run again this year.

Christians and others buy gift vouchers from shops such as Asda, Tesco, Sainsbury's and Argos. They are handed over to those who are unlikely to get Christmas presents, so they can buy what they need at the festive season.

Recipients this year include those who use Fareham Night Shelter, Haslar Visitors' Group, Havant Women's Aid, Mill House, Portsmouth Area Refugee Support, Portsmouth Foyer, Portsmouth Women's Refuge, The Roberts Centre, St Simon's Church and Central Point.

The scheme is run by Churches' Homeless Action, an inter-denominational group working with agencies to tackle homelessness issues.

Organiser Graham Brombley from Portsmouth Housing Association, said: "Last year we raised over £8,000, and those generous gifts meant so much to many individuals who would otherwise have received no gift at Christmas."

For more details, contact Jan Bennett on 023-9229 3020. The vouchers will be handed over to agencies at a carol service at 12noon on December 15 at St Mary's Church, Fratton.

Plans altered to allay local fears

PLANS to extend a Purbrook church have been modified after concern from local residents.

Worshippers at St John's Church originally proposed plans for an extension that would create more room in the Victorian building for worshippers – and a new meeting room to be built in part of the current graveyard.

This would help the church offer its facilities to community groups for concerts, plays and events, helping its drive to remain at the heart of the Purbrook community. The meeting room could also be used for 'Kidzone' during Sunday services, for refreshments after monthly parent-and-toddler services, or by study groups.

Replacing the church's fixed pews with new chairs would also make the main building more flexible for café-style 'Fresh Expressions' worship, smaller more reflective services, and Morning and Evening Prayer.

There were complaints that the extension would be close to plots in the cemetery where ashes had been interred more recently. Now the plans have been altered so any meeting room would be built further away from those plots. Concerned residents were invited to a meeting to discuss the new plans, and were broadly satisfied with what was being proposed.



An artist's impression of the new extension at St John's Church, Purbrook

The vicar, the Rev Karen Schmidt, said: "When we originally drew up these proposals, we stressed that we wouldn't want to build on any areas where ashes had been spread. We also made it clear that the builders should be incredibly careful about not standing on such plots as they work on any extension.

"However, local residents expressed their concerns that those plots may still be affected by this work, however careful the builders are. We've listened to those concerns and altered our plans accord-

ingly. That's why we consulted with residents very carefully before taking this any further.

"These plans will help us make the church the focal point of the community. We already have a newly-refurbished parish hall that is in regular use during the week by a pre-school group, nursery and uniformed organisations. This will help us offer another meeting room and the church itself as a place where other groups can meet."

The church was originally built in 1858, when Purbrook was a vil-

lage of 150 people. Not only is it now much larger, but there are plans to build around 2,000 new homes nearby. The extension plans will help cater for the increased population as well as more flexible usage.

Moving the north wall and its stained glass windows six feet to the north will make the nave symmetrical. The plan is also to create a nave altar, with chairs placed in a semi-circle around it, to install a new floor, new lighting and a new PA system, to move the font and to create proper disabled access.

Worshippers would reach the new meeting room via a corridor from the north door. It would have enough space for 20 people and would include a kitchen and toilets.

The work may cost around £600,000, but it hasn't been fully costed yet. Most of the money is already available, but the congregation will be asked to raise £80,000. If approved by Havant Borough Council, the parish would hope to start work in late autumn and complete it by next July.

The church then plans to hold a week of celebratory activities in the church, including a jazz evening, a mandolin concert, an exhibition of Purbrook history, a workshop for schoolchildren and a service at which the new worship area would be consecrated.

Pompey Chimes

The *Pompey Chimes* is the official newspaper of the Anglican Diocese of Portsmouth, which covers 142 parishes in south-east Hampshire and the Isle of Wight. Its total circulation is 9,000, and it is produced monthly except for January and August. Each of our parishes pays 15p for each copy, which allows our readers to pick it up for free on the final Sunday of each month. Adverts are dealt with by our publishers, Cornerstone Vision.

DEADLINE FOR DECEMBER/JANUARY EDITION: Monday 6 November

AVAILABLE FOR PARISHES TO COLLECT FROM DEANERY DEPOTS: Thursday 23 November

AVAILABLE IN YOUR CHURCH: Sunday 26 November

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NB: There is no separate edition of the Pompey Chimes in January

Links needed for Ghanaians

DOES your church have a link with a parish in Ghana? What's stopping you creating a new one? Churches in Ghana would love to hear from you.

That's the message from the chairman of our Inter-Diocesan West African Link (IDWAL) group, who spent three weeks in Ghana in September.

Canon Terry Loudon covered more than 2,000 miles, was welcomed in seven of the nine Anglican dioceses there, and visited 34 churches, schools and other organisations. He now has a list of churches there eager to link with parishes in our diocese.

"I was able to see for myself how much our existing parish and

school links are valued," he said. "About 40 parishes in Portsmouth diocese have links with West Africa. However, many Anglican churches in Ghana which have no overseas links would really welcome the friendship, prayer and mutual support which grow through such contacts.

"One of those is the church of St Aidan's, Wa, with its two outstations, in the remote north-west of Ghana, 170 miles away from its closest Anglican congregation.

"Will any of the 70 benefices in this diocese without a link take up this request?"

Parish-to-parish links work best through personal contact and exchange visits. Nearly 40 wor-

shippers will travel to Ghana this year, and around 10 visitors from West Africa will come here.

"IDWAL encourages visitors from West Africa and is committed to helping with air fares and travel costs," said Terry.

"This is a significant expense for our central diocesan IDWAL funds. With Christmas approaching, parishes are invited to remember the diocesan IDWAL fund in their charitable giving."

Please send donations to Alan Hoad, 105 St Mary's Road, Hayling Island, PO11 9DD. For more details about creating new links, contact Terry on 01730-823221 or terrylouden@btinternet.com