

Twenty-five years of police work that aims to restore sense of community

CARRIE celebrates 25 years in the police this year – all of which she's spent in Hampshire.

She worked in Ringwood and Andover before she was promoted to sergeant in Basingstoke. She was a patrol sergeant and custody sergeant, and then started training new recruits at the force's college in Netley.

In 1999, she came to Portsmouth as a custody sergeant, then became an inspector at Havant for six years. As her family had grown up there, she found it fascinating to be involved in community policing in the area.

During her time, she helped to set up the Pride of Place project in Leigh Park, which aimed to reduce crime rates and promote community cohesion.

She was promoted to chief inspector in Portsmouth last year, and given the brief of community safety and partner-

ship work. This means a lot of meetings with other agencies – including the Church – to fulfil the government's requirement that the police work together with other organisations to make the city a safer place to live.

"Portsmouth is already very partnership-oriented, so my role involves working with lots of other agencies to create a community safety strategy," she said.

"I like the diversity of the people I meet and engage with, and I enjoy pulling teams together to make a difference to people. When you can look at an end result and realise you've had an impact, that's very satisfying.

"The reality is that crime rates are reducing, and the likelihood of being a victim of crime hasn't changed for 20 years. But people don't feel as safe, so a lot of my work is reassuring people about the reality of crime statistics."

Among the groups she is involved with are the Portsmouth Interfaith Forum – which is chaired by our social responsibility adviser Canon Nick Ralph – and the Street Pastors steering group.

The latter is a national project that is coming to Portsmouth this summer. Christians will be trained to patrol the streets outside pubs and clubs to offer practical help to late-night revellers. In other areas, it has helped cut street crime dramatically.

"For the churches organising the Street Pastors project, they think it's great to have found a police officer who is a Christian who is their official link to the police," she said.

"I have to find the right balance between being a professional police officer and being a Christian at work, but I do think God has enabled those kind of links to happen."



Chief inspector Carrie Pither at her base – Kingston Crescent police station

Africa taught me to truly depend on God

IT was a trip to Africa that pushed Carrie Pither's faith to a new level.

As a senior police officer, she was used to the idea of her job being a vocation. She wanted to prevent and tackle crime to make our streets safer. And she was already a churchgoer with a genuine faith.

But it wasn't until she went to Tanzania with an overseas mission team that she really learned about the power of prayer, depending on God every day.

Now Carrie, who is a chief inspector in the police force and goes to St Peter's Church, Bishop's Waltham, is learning how to apply those principles in everyday life.

"I think it's fair to say that the trip was life-changing, which is exciting and scary at the same time," she said. "It was great to be surrounded and immersed in Christian life and work. It was a wonderful experience to dedicate every waking moment to God and working in his name. There was plenty of prayer and every day was blessed and prayers answered.

"Before I went, I was a Christian and a police officer, and I felt that my job was a vocation. But I realised how cynical I'd



Carrie Pither in Tanzania with MAF in 2003

become. Since going to Africa, I've been more open at work about my faith, I've prayed over reports I have to submit and seen those prayers answered."

Carrie, who is now 43, went to St Faith's Church, Havant, each month as a member of Brownies and Girl Guides. She loved the church and the fellowship, and carried on going to church in her late teens. After she joined the police at 18, she carried on believ-

ing but not going to church.

"I convinced myself that I could be a Christian without going to church," she said. "It was only when I was pregnant with Molly in 1994 that I started to think about whether I might bring her up as a Christian.

"I was living in Hedge End, and St Luke's Church had just been built. It was a vibrant family church and perfect for my new family and me. By the time Molly

was born, I was very much part of the church and Jesus was back in my life."

She went on an Alpha course there and became involved in the children's groups. When she moved to Bishop's Waltham in 1998, she joined St Peter's and her faith developed and strengthened.

It was in 2003 that she went to Tanzania for three weeks with Mission Aviation Fellowship (MAF), which helps to link

airstrip.

"The journey that took us six hours on rough terrain in a Landrover was completed in 35 minutes by MAF plane," she said. "This was one of the strongest messages of this whole experience. It was clear how essential MAF was to these remote and vulnerable communities."

Carrie is now a MAF local representative, doing presentations to churches in the Hampshire area

my faith

She's a senior police officer with a desire to keep communities safe. Carrie Pither's faith developed over many years, but was given added impetus by a life-changing trip to Tanzania

remote communities using aeroplanes. The challenge to her faith started when she was asked to raise £1,500 to pay for the trip – the kindness and generosity of others in providing the money amazed her.

Her MAF team found themselves dancing and singing during a three-hour church service in Swahili, running a children's holiday club, working in the MAF vehicle maintenance depot and travelling to a remote village in central Tanzania to repair an

about the organisation's work, raising money and awareness. She carried on being involved with children's work and now leads a Pathfinder group for 11 to 13-year-olds. She's also on the church's overseas team.

"I've had a sense that maybe God is calling me to serve overseas, but the timing is wrong at the moment," she said. "It may be that Molly and I take a gap year together in about five years' time when I've retired from the police force."

Having trouble tuning into God?

WE talk about 'listening to God' in our prayer time – but what does that mean?

We may find space to give God some time and attention. We may try to still our bodies, and settle the whirling of our minds by paying attention to our breathing, or just repeating a prayer-word, perhaps in time with our breathing. Then we may ask for the help of the Holy Spirit to 'listen'. But what do we actually listen to?

A famous Celtic Christian used to say that God's word was written in "God's big book, and God's little book".

The 'big book' is God's creation – the world all around us, the people in it, what's going on. As the Bible says: "The heavens are telling the glory of God, and the firmament proclaims his handiwork" (Psalm 19:1).

This can be an opportunity to be attentive to God – to slow down and take careful, appreciative note of creation around us, to

the big issue



We spend much of our prayer times talking God. But how can we listen out for his still, small voice? Diocesan spirituality adviser the Rev Peter Lippiett gives us some valuable tips

see what God might be saying to us through that. Does creation tell us something about the glory of God, or about his eye for fine detail, for instance?

But, more specifically, the 'little book' is the scriptures. If we believe that they contain God's word, that they are inspired by God's Spirit, then we may believe that God will, above all, speak to us through them.

Benedict, that great sixth century Christian, taught his monks to use scripture in prayer. He called it 'sacred reading' - taking a short passage to "read, mark, learn and inwardly digest".

I think of that as the four Rs of

prayer: *reading, repeating* a word or phrase that stands out for you, *responding* in your heart to God about what that phrase has given you, and then *resting* before God with that phrase on your heart. How might that phrase or thought affect what you do in the rest of the day?

A thousand years after Benedict, the converted soldier Ignatius of Loyola encouraged his followers to use the scriptures in prayer.

Taking a gospel story, you can use your God-given imagination to think yourself into the story – to feel the setting, see the people, hear the words. Where are you,

who are you, in this story? If Jesus is speaking, what do his words say to you, now?

And Ignatius encouraged them to spend time at the end of every day reviewing it: asking God to show what has been positive; what to give thanks for; what may have been negative, and why; and what to take forward to tomorrow. Another way of listening to God.

It may not be easy on our own to hear the way in which God speaks to us. Christians across the ages have used other Christians as companions on their spiritual journey – a relationship of total confidence, where anything can be discussed, but always with the underlying questions: "Where is God in all this? What is God saying to me?"

Celtic Christians called such companions 'soul friends'; the Western Church has tended to call them 'spiritual directors'.

Over the past four years we've been introducing people in our diocese to some of the traditions of Christian spirituality and

prayer such as those of Benedict and Ignatius – and many others. Around 50 people have gained experience accompanying others in their journey of listening for God. They are available to help you, if you'd like this sort of help.

And if you'd like to explore more about prayer and the spiritual traditions, are open to thinking wider than you might have been used to, or find that people talk to you about meaning, purpose and God, then maybe our next year-long Spirituality Course (October 2007 to July 2008) could be for you? Applications need to reach me by May 21 for interviews in June. Perhaps we might then together be finding out more about listening to God?

● For more information about spiritual direction, please contact Peter Lippiett on 023 9282 6120 or peter.lippiett@portsmouth.anglican.org; application forms for the spirituality course are available from Kay Lancaster (023 9289 9656 or kay.lancaster@portsmouth.anglican.org) and need to be returned by May 21.

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the ROYAL MARINES MUSEUM

So much to do in the springtime sun

What a start we've had to the spring, if things continue in the same way there will be lots of good weather ahead! Residents and visitors to the region will find it a wonderful opportunity to get out and about visiting the many attractions in the region and a little further afield.

NOSTALGIA AND DAYS GONE BY

Nostalgia is always a big attraction whether it is a visit to a favourite cathedral or abbey, or travelling back in time on a vintage train or coach ride. Glastonbury Abbey has a 'centenary exhibition' running throughout May to be followed by a Flower Festival in June. For those with a livelier frame of mind, the Good News Crusade Family Camp returns to Taunton in August. It's worth booking in before July to get an early booking discount.

The Falklands War is to be remembered in a special evening at the Royal Marines Museum in

Portsmouth. The talk, which is a part of the Royal Marines Museum Lecture Series, takes place on 9th May from 7 to 9pm. The evening will offer the opportunity to hear first hand the story of the conflict from the people who were involved.

If you like drama with an edge to it, David Suchet, possibly best known for his television appearances at Poirot, takes on a very different role as Cardinal Benelli in a new play by Roger Crane, looking at the death of Pope John Paul I. 'The Last Confession' runs until 19th May at the Chichester Festival Theatre.

SO MUCH TO DO

There really is so much to do the time should simply fly by, and when the evening arrives there is always the opportunity to relax at the cinema or theatre.

Cathedrals and many other Christian organisations run cafés and restaurants offering a respite from the activities of the day as well as a much-needed supplement to the income of the church.



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Sponsored Feature

Shrouded in mystery and conspiracy theories

The Vatican 1978

A little known Cardinal, a man of God who loved to walk amongst his parish and was loved in return, is elected to succeed Pope Paul VI. Quickly showing himself to be the liberal the reactionaries within the Catholic Church most feared, Pope John Paul I is set to revolutionise the Church.

Just thirty-three days later, he is dead. The evening before his death, John Paul had warned his most influential but hostile Cardinals that they would be replaced. With no investigation nor autopsy performed and the Vatican's explanation of death proved to be, in large part, false - the death of 'the smiling pope' is still shrouded in mystery and sinister conspiracy theories.

This incisive thriller marks fifteen years of controversy and machinations within the Church; schisms threaten its unity and the shadow of the mafia hovers over its financial affairs. **David Suchet** (*Amadeus*, *Oleanna*, *Poirot*) plays Cardinal Benelli, who alone has the power to challenge the dead Pope's enemies.

Brimming with dramatic tensions, crisis of faith and political manoeuvrings, *The Last*

Confession tracks the links between papal power, corruption and the death of a Pope.

The Last Confession

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Tuesday 1 May

PORTSMOUTH, Third Floor, Central Library (8pm): *Election hustings*. Organised by Portsmouth Climate Action Network. See page 16 for details.

Wednesday 2 May

HAVANT, Havant United Reformed Church (7.30pm-9.30pm): *Images of Mary Magdalene*. Presentation of images and talk by Carole Wynn in aid of Havant UR Church building fund. Minimum donation: £2.50. Contact: 023-9242 1448 or carole.wynn@ntlworld.com

Friday 4 May -

Monday 7 May

SHANKLIN, St Blasius Church, Church Road (10am-4pm): *Spring flower festival*. Theme: 'Gifts From God'. Includes display of flowers and crafts, plus refreshments and tombola. Proceeds towards church's organ fund. (Saturday, 7.30pm): *Concert*. With the Ventnor Voices. Tickets, £3, available on 01983-862407.

Saturday 5 May

BLACKGANG, Blackgang Viewpoint (9am): *Walk from the Wild Side*. Sponsored walk to West Cowes for Christian Aid, via Whitwell, Godshill, Merstone and Newport. Ring 01983-526574 for details.
PORTSMOUTH, Portsmouth Cathedral, High Street (10am-1pm): *Prayer workshop*. Diocesan spirituality adviser the Rev Peter Lippiett introduces some 'hands-on' explorations in prayer. Cost: £4.50. Contact: the Rev Peter Lippiett (023-9282 6120 or peter.lippiett@portsmouth.anglican.org).
PURBROOK, St John's church hall, London Road (10am): *Tabletop sale*. To book a table (£5), contact Eve Mountain (023-9226 3540).

Saturday 5 May -

Friday 18 May

PORTSMOUTH, Portsmouth Cathedral, High Street (9am-6pm): *Christian Aid tsunami exhibition*.

Monday 7 May

GOSPORT, St Mary the Virgin, Rowner Lane, Rowner (11am-2pm): *May fayre*.
HAWKLEY, St Peter and St Paul's Church (2pm): *Circular walk and cream tea*. Chance to see cowslips in full bloom. Cost: £5, including tea. All proceeds to Hawkley and Priors Dean Church Repair Fund. Contact: 01730-827502.

Tuesday 8 May

GOSPORT, St Mary the Virgin, Rowner Lane, Rowner (7.15pm-9.15pm): *Taster spirituality course*. A chance to explore some new ways to listen to God as a taster of a year-long course starting in September. Continues on May 15 & 22. Cost: £15 for all three evenings. Contact: the Rev Peter Lippiett (023-9282 6120).

Wednesday 9 May

GOSPORT, St Mary the Virgin, Rowner Lane, Rowner (7.30pm): *Julian Meeting*. Ecumenical group of contemplative prayer. Details: 023-9258 1834.
DENMEAD, All Saints' Church, Hambledon Road (7.15pm-9.15pm): *Taster spirituality course*. A chance to explore some new ways to listen to God as a taster of a year-long course starting in September. Continues on May 16 & 23. Cost: £15 for all three evenings. Contact: the Rev Peter Lippiett (023-9282 6120).

Thursday 10 May -

Saturday 12 May

PETERSFIELD, The Petersfield School, Cranford Road (7.30pm): *Pageant*. See panel above for details.

Pageant to highlight Petersfield's dramatic history



Jill Hancock

SIX hundred years of Petersfield's history will be re-enacted on stage this month.

A Pageant for Petersfield will be performed at 7.30pm on May 9, 10 and 11 at The Petersfield School. It was written by Jill Hancock, PCC secretary for St Peter's Church, who also chairs the town's Lion and Unicorn Players.

The play was first performed last summer as part of the Petersfield Artists in Town

(PAINT) Week, with support from local historians Mary Ray and Judy Stephens.

Now, with help from David Jeffrey's book on the town, it's been extended into a full-length presentation detailing Petersfield life from 1396 to the present day.

It includes scenes from the Elizabethan era and the English Civil War, which explains how Petersfield hosted the earliest court martial on record in 1644.

We also meet the Jolliffe fami-

ly who came to prominence in the 18th century and local cricketer John Small.

There's drama from the 20th century in the form of the suffragette movement, and from the present day too.

Tickets, priced at £7 (£6 concessions) are now on sale at One Tree Books, Lavant Road, Petersfield, and can also be reserved by contacting Vivienne Coleshill on 01730-821491 or vivienne.coleshill@btinternet.com

Thursday 10 May

SOUTHSEA, House of Bethany, 7 Nelson Road (10am): *Julian meeting*. Meditation in chapel from 10.15am-11.15am, followed by coffee. Also on May 24.

RYDE, Old Post Office, Union Road (7.15pm-9.15pm): *Taster spirituality course*. A chance to explore some new ways to listen to God as a taster of a year-long course starting in September. Continues on May 17 & 24. Cost: £15 for all three evenings. Contact: the Rev Peter Lippiett (023-9282 6120).

Friday 11 May

PORTSMOUTH, Portsmouth Cathedral, High Street (7pm): *Trade justice wine-tasting*. Tickets: £6 from the cathedral shop.
DENMEAD, All Saints Church, Hambledon Road (7.30pm): *Portsmouth Citadel Band in concert*. Tickets: £7, including wine and finger buffet, available on 023-9224 1161 or 023-9226 6159.

Saturday 12 May

PORTSMOUTH, Portsmouth Cathedral, High Street (10.20am-2.45pm): *Celebration of Healing and Wholeness*. Led by Prebendary Peter Speck. See page 5 for details.
GOSPORT, St Mary the Virgin, Rowner Lane, Rowner (7.30pm): *Recital of opera and popular song*. By Jennifer Parker-Lummis. Tickets on the door.
PURBROOK, St John's church hall, London Road (7.30pm): *African evening*. Music, entertainment and hot supper. Tickets: £3. Contact: Eve Mountain (023-9226 3540).
YARMOUTH, St James' Church (7.30pm): *Concert by the Ytinerant Singers*. Includes music by Brahms, Fauré and Victoria and French horn solo. Admission free, retiring collection for the Mission to Seafarers.

Sunday 13 May

RYDE, Easthill Home for the Deaf (11am): *Regular signed service for the deaf*. Contact the chaplain, the Rev Robert Sanday on 023-8026 5897 (phone and minicom).
WICKHAM, St Nicholas' Church (2pm): *Deanery sponsored walk for Christian Aid*. Join the 10-mile circular walk or a shorter walk of 4-5 miles. Contact: Hugh Spendlove (01489-893574).
PORTSMOUTH, Portsmouth Cathedral, High Street (3pm): *United Service*. Celebrate the work we do together to help social justice across denominational boundaries. Preacher: Matthew Reed, director of church and community, Christian Aid. Organised by Churches Together in Hampshire and the Islands; (6pm): *Evensong with Britain-Australia Society*.

Monday 14 May -

Friday 1 June

PORTSMOUTH, Portsmouth Cathedral, High Street (9am-6pm):

Sculpture exhibition. 'Odyssey' by Robert Koenig of Monumental Carved Wooden Figures.

Monday 14 May

PORTSMOUTH, Portsmouth Cathedral, High Street (10.30am): *Service for the legal profession*.
WARSASH, St Mary's church hall lounge (7.15pm): *Alpha course*. Chance to explore questions of faith after a simple meal together. Continues on Monday evenings until July 16 and away-day on June 9. Details: 01489-572324.

Wednesday 16 May

WOOTTON, St Mark's Church (7pm): *Open door retreat*. Nine-week spiritual journey to give you chance to recharge your spiritual batteries. Contact: the Rev Kath Abbott (01983-882213).
PETERSFIELD, St Peter's Church (7.30pm): *The Petersfield School showcase*. Students will showcase an evening of music for all tastes. Admission free, retiring collection.

Thursday 17 May

PORTSMOUTH, Spinnaker Tower, Gunwharf Quays (8.30am): *Ascension Day service*. With Portsmouth Cathedral Choir.
PORTSMOUTH, Portsmouth Cathedral, High Street (6pm): *Sung Eucharist for Ascension Day*. Sung by Cantate, Portsmouth Cathedral's youth choir.

Friday 18 May -

Sunday 20 May

BORDON, Acorn Christian Healing Foundation, Whitehill Chase: *Silent retreat with individual guidance*. An Ignatian approach to listening to God. Cost: £135. Details on www.acornchristian.org

Friday 18 May

PORTSMOUTH, Portsmouth Cathedral, High Street (7pm): *Pilgrimage from Granada to Santiago*. Talk, with tapas and refreshments. Tickets: £7.50, from cathedral shop. In aid of cathedral redevelopment appeal.
WARSASH, St Mary's Church (7.30pm): *Trumpet and organ recital*. With Paul Hart and Elizabeth LeGrove. Cheese and Fairtrade wine and juice. Proceeds to church organ fund.

Saturday 19 May

PORTSMOUTH, Portsmouth Cathedral, High Street (10am-4pm): *Diocesan spirituality day*. 'The Dark Night of the Soul' led by assistant spirituality adviser the Rev Barbara Mosse. Includes poetry, music and shared silent prayer. Cost: £7.50. Contact: Peter Lippiett (023-9282 6120).
SOUTHSEA, House of Bethany, 7 Nelson Road (10am-4pm): *Quiet day*. Led by the Rev Bruce Carpenter. Cost: £5. Please let the Sisters know if you want to attend on 023-9283 3498 or sss@sistersofbethany.org.uk.

PORTSMOUTH, St George's Church, St George's Square, Portsea (5pm-6.30pm): *Sharing the Journey*. Last in series of informal sessions for spiritual seekers. 'Nothing is quite what you expect - the personal journey of a Roman Catholic priest' by Derek Reeve. See www.sharingthejourney.info for details.

LEE-ON-SOLENT, St Faith's Church, Victoria Square (7.30pm): *The Armed Man: A Mass For Peace*. Lee Singers present Karl Jenkins' work. Tickets: £6/£5, available on 023-9235 8974 or tickets@leesingers.co.uk.

PRIVETT, Holy Trinity Church (7.30pm): *Concert by the Froxfield Choir and Stanford Ensemble*. Includes Mozart's *Great Mass in C Minor*. Proceeds to the Treloar Trust which works with physically disabled young people. Tickets: £12/£15, available from One Tree Books in Petersfield.

FAREHAM, Ferneham Hall (7.30pm): *Concert by Havant Chamber Orchestra*. Includes music by Mozart, Beethoven and Schubert. Pre-concert talk at 6.30pm. Tickets (£6-£16) available on 01329-231942.

Sunday 20 May

PORTSMOUTH, Portsmouth Cathedral, High Street (11.15am): *City service*; (6pm): *Evensong with Wesley Tercentenary Celebration*.

Monday 21 May

PETERSFIELD, St Peter's Church (1pm): *Churche's College lunchtime recital*. Bring your own lunch, coffee on sale. Admission free, retiring collection.

Tuesday 22 May

TOTLAND BAY, Christ Church (7.30pm): *Carlo Curley in concert*. Organ extravaganza by the world-famous virtuoso, with video screens. Tickets: £8 (nave) and £6 (chancel and side-chapel), available on 01983-755721
SOUTHSEA, Katarin's, 17 Albert Road (8pm): *Discussion*. 'Climate Change: Who's Responsible?'. Organised by Portsmouth Climate Action Network. See page 16 for details.

Wednesday 23 May

WATERLOOVILLE, 3 Angelica Court, Jasmine Grove (8pm-9pm): *Prayer meeting for the persecuted church*. Now meets regularly on the fourth Wednesday of each month. Contact: Christine Pylee

(023-9236 2086).

Friday 25 May

COWES, Royal Yacht Squadron Pavilion (7pm for 7.30pm): *Fundraising dinner*. Tickets: £30 (£25 each for tables of eight or 10). Applications to: Mrs Tineke Rock, 14 Battery Road, Cowes, PO31 8DP. Cheques payable to 'Holy Trinity Church'.
PORTSMOUTH, Portsmouth Cathedral, High Street (7.30pm): *Music in the Round - Cropper/Welsh/Rosco trio*.

Saturday 26 May

WATERLOOVILLE, Wecock Church, Kite Close (7.30pm): *Larry Norman in concert*. The veteran Christian rocker's only UK date as part of a spring tour that also takes in USA, Switzerland and Germany. Tickets: Matt Simmons on msbltd@aol.com or 07810-200319.

Sunday 27 May

PORTSMOUTH, Portsmouth Cathedral, High Street (8pm): *Taizé-style night prayer*.

Friday 1 June

PORTSMOUTH, Portsmouth RC Cathedral, Edinburgh Road (7.30pm-10pm): *Prayer vigil for G8 meeting*.

Saturday 9 June

PORTSMOUTH, Cathedral Green, Portsmouth Cathedral, High Street (12noon-4.30pm): *Summer fete*. Activities and refreshments. Entrance free.
CURDRIDGE, Whitehouse Cottage (7.30pm-midnight): *Pimms and Posh Frocks party on the patio*. Dance the night away to a live function band. A repeat of last year's successful event, in aid of Friends of All Saints Church, Botley. Tickets: £15/£20, available on 01489-786185 or 01489-782445.
SOUTHSEA, St Simon's Church, Waverley Road (7.45pm): *Concert in aid of Street Pastors*. Featuring the Hampshire Guitar Orchestra. Tickets: £6, including wine/refreshments.

● *Would you like your church's events for June listed here and on our website? Send details to: Pompey Chimes, Diocese of Portsmouth, First Floor, Peninsular House, Wharf Road, Portsmouth, PO2 8HB or to neil.pugmire@portsmouth.anglican.org by May 7.*

letter to the editor

Dear Sir,

I would like to raise people's awareness of the animal testing policy of one of the largest companies on the planet - Procter and Gamble. Famous brands such as Fairy, Ariel, Bold, Olay, Head & Shoulders, Gillette, Pringle's crisps and IAMS/Eukanuba pet food are made by a company that conducts cruel and utterly unnecessary experiments on defenceless

animals for the sake of 'whiter white' and 'younger-looking skin.'

Please visit the anti-vivisection organisation Uncaged's website for a comprehensive list of their products, and details of their 11th annual Global Boycott Procter and Gamble Day - www.boycottpandg.co.uk.

Helena Youle, Blenheim Gardens, Havant



Safa Amin, 5, from St Jude's C of E Primary School, enjoys face-painting at the PCAN day

Green issues put at top of city's agenda

It's a new network that aims to put climate change at the top of Portsmouth's agenda.

Christians are among those involved in Portsmouth Climate Action Network (PCAN) - a group that draws together those in the city committed to environmental campaigning.

They want local and national politicians to act now to prevent catastrophic climate change that will threaten millions of people with drought, floods, starvation and disease.

The group has already lobbied local councillors about measuring the city's overall carbon footprint and then reducing Portsmouth's carbon emissions by three per cent each year.

And last month they held an awareness day at

the Havana Bar in Southsea to help people understand the urgent need for action. The day included face-painting, a drawing competition and stories for children, stalls run by the World Development Movement, Friends of the Earth and specialist publishers, a barbecue and a DJ-led music night.

Visitors were given the chance to measure their own carbon footprint, hear about converting their car from petrol to vegetable oil and try locally-produced organic food. Helena Youle, from St Faith's Church, Havant, was among those manning a stall there on behalf of the Green Party.

"We've been given the care of God's creation," she said. "We need to be good stewards of that creation rather than wasting the earth's resources."

PCAN are also calling for Portsmouth City Council to lead a public information campaign on carbon and establish a climate strategy in line with other cities. It is working with schools and community groups to heighten

awareness, and collating research material on climate change and green technology.

On May 1, it will be holding a hustings evening at which local council candidates will be quizzed on their party's environmental strategies. It will be on the Third Floor of the city's Central Library at 8pm.

And at 8pm on May 22, there is an open discussion on 'Climate Change: Who's Responsible?' at Katarin's, on Albert Road in Southsea.

The group also has a website - www.portsmouthcan.co.uk - which includes helpful facts, energy-saving tips and the latest news on climate change. Among the affiliates to PCAN are Christian Aid, People and Planet at Portsmouth University, Oxfam and Portsmouth World Development Group.

Our social responsibility adviser Canon Nick Ralph said: "It's great that this network exists. As Christians, it's right that we are involved in this vital issue for the future of our planet."



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Are you sitting comfortably?

THE phrase 'comfort zone' is often used to describe an area of life, like a hobby, or a group of like-minded people, where we are more at ease than anywhere else.

But it often has a sting in the tail, suggesting that we may run there fast in order to escape some of the more challenging, less comfortable realities of daily life. Some of my comfort zones include music and having a meal with friends.

Over the last two years, I have been deprived of these cherished routines because of my illness. I've had to create new comfort zones. When I've been in hospital it was the daily arrival of Sarah, my wife, always with a smile on her face. At home, it's walking the dog.

But comfort zones aren't enough. The word 'comfort' has developed a limited meaning for me in recent months -



the last word

by Bishop Kenneth

because I've spent so much time feeling anything but comfortable!

I've been in pain, uncertainty, waiting for the result of some test, and at one stage, last summer, suffering from severe nausea. To put it bluntly, I have known, I continue to know, what it is like not to be 'sitting comfortably.'

All this has made me allergic to people who want Christianity to be 'comfortable.' There are even churches that want a new priest to be

"comfortable with a whole range of different forms of worship" - as if the gospel were about employing someone to manage a running buffet, offering all sorts of different foods that are waiting to be selected by consumers, always on their own terms.

We're not consumers of religious goods. We're disciples of Christ. And if that means the pain and discomfort of life turned upside down, then the God who has called us will give us the strength to follow Him.