



Christian pupils spread the gospel in schools

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LET'S SEE POTENTIAL OF OUR BUILDINGS



Worshippers cram into our cathedral for one of the three identical carol services

Church attendance is rising

THE number of worshippers in our churches is going up, the latest figures show.

Average weekly attendance in Anglican churches in our diocese was 15,200 in 2006 – up by three per cent on the previous year. Much of the rise was down to the growth in the number of children and young people attending, which was 19 per cent higher than in 2005.

The statistics were compiled from a survey of attendance at our churches during October 2006. The fig-

ures have now been collated and released by the national Church of England.

Churches also recorded how many came to services at Christmas and Easter. In 2006, attendance at our Christmas services was 11 per cent higher than in 2005. More than 50,000 people now worship in our churches over the festive season.

The pattern was similar at Easter 2006, where attendance was 23,100 – six per cent up on 2005. Electoral roll figures were also up.

This pattern was reflected in attendances at our 2007 Christmas services.

Our cathedral laid on three identical carol services to cope with the demand. Its figures showed that Christmas congregations there have increased five-fold since 1997.

And the Rev Nick Wallace, from Binstead and Havenstreet, said: "We had a very high number of people at our services over Christmas, and in particular the number of children was up on last year."

IT will mark the launch of the next cycle of our diocese's Kairos initiative.

Bishop Kenneth is inviting clergy, churchwardens and all those involved with church buildings to a day-long conference on the issue. The bishop's training days will take place in Portsmouth Cathedral on April 25 – for mainland churches – and in St Thomas's Church, Newport, on May 17 – for those on the Isle of Wight.

It marks the start of the 'Kairos: Buildings' process, the bishop's initiative to help us think strategically and creatively about how to use our buildings more effectively.

The diocesan chancellor, Christopher Clark QC (*pictured below*) – the man who ultimately decides whether to allow alterations to our church buildings – will outline his vision. He will explain how our Diocesan Advisory Committee for the Care of Churches (DAC) will help parishes develop their buildings to improve their mission and ministry.

Other speakers will address the three key elements of Kairos as they relate to buildings. One will address how to make our buildings 'broader' – how they can be used to serve the local community more effectively.

Former parish priest the Rev Andrew Mottram, who runs Ecclesiastical Property Solutions, will talk about making our buildings 'leaner' – how to find solutions to the problems of maintenance and ownership. And diocesan spirituality adviser the Rev Peter Lippiett will tackle how to make our buildings 'deeper' – using them to deepen the spiritual



lives of worshippers and visitors.

There will be a question-and-answer session, then a series of workshops in the afternoon. Diocesan social responsibility adviser Canon Nick Ralph will tackle 'Finance and Partnerships', and the Head of Mission and Discipleship Canon David Isaac will outline the support offered by central diocesan staff.

Parish priests Canon Stephen Palmer, from St Thomas's, Newport, and the Rev David Power, from St Cuthbert's, Copnor, will give advice about major building projects. And Andrew Mottram will share ways in which parishes can plan the future of their buildings over the next 25 years.

Bishop Kenneth said: "These should be incredibly valuable days for all those involved in church buildings. The style and tenor of both occasions will be a careful mixture of what is often called theological reflection, and good, practical examples."

The 'Kairos: Buildings' process will then continue with the chance for worshippers to think about the issues with those from neighbouring parishes. They will consider the theology of church buildings, do some research in their local area and decide how to respond to the initiative. Central diocesan staff will help each deanery to think through the options.

The first three deaneries to start the process will be Gosport, East Wight and West Wight. Other deaneries will then follow at their own pace.

