Year of events marks centenary

IT will be the start of a year of celebration - including faces from the past and visitors from Africa.

Worshippers at St Mary’s Church, Alverstoke, in Gosport, will mark 100 years since their church building was completed with 12 months of special activities - starting this month.

Sixteen priests who have served in the parish will be invited back to take part. There will also be special services for young people, a pet service in October, fun activity days, organ recitals, a Songs of Praise-style service, a flower festival and parish lunches.

At Candlemas, the church’s patronal festival, the Bishop of Wusasa in Nigeria - with whose diocese the parish has strong links - will be the guest preacher. He hopes to bring others from his diocese with him.

Former parishioners Dr John Dickenson and his wife Angela, who are working in Nepal with Interserve, will also visit later in the year.

The first event will be a Choral Evensong on July 20 at which Bishop Kenneth will preach. Civic and church leaders from the area will be invited to help cement links with the local community.

Other clergy are invited to robe for the service, and all are invited for refreshments in the Crescent Regency Gardens after the service.

The vicar, the Rev Ted Goodyer, said: “It’s 100 years ago that our present church building was completed, and we are having a year of building, which I hope will blend in with all we shall be doing under the Kairos umbrella.

“Throughout the next 12 months, we will have a varied programme.

“The main idea is that we should have some time to savour the richness and variety of our parish life, and to re-kindle our links with various organisations in the borough, which is itself celebrating the 800th anniversary of its foundation.

“We are also full of expectation that there is more to our life in the parish than we now know. This will lead us back to God and hopefully make us more alert and responsive to his working in our community.”

The parish’s close links with Nigeria were illustrated recently when a new computer centre was opened in the town of Zaria.

Members of the St Mary’s congregation have been donating cash to the town for years. The most recent contribution was spent on a suite of seven computers, so villagers expressed their thanks to the parish by naming it the ‘Alverstoke Computer Centre’.

The Rev Ted Goodyer recently visited Zaria for himself.

He said: “A computer centre is unique in that part of the world. It’s beyond their belief.”

Latest African visit on now

EVEN more new links between our parishes and communities in Africa will be created during a visit to Ghana this month.

A group of 24 people have just flown out on the latest trip organised by the Inter-Diocesan West Africa Link (IDWAL).

Most of the travellers are from the Isle of Wight and many will be establishing new parish links - bringing the total number to 40. They are visiting communities in the Sunyani and Tamale dioceses.

Among the parishes represented on the trip are Calbourne, Newtown and Shalfleet; St Helens and Seaview; St Catherine’s, Ventnor; St Faith’s, Cowes; Church of the Good Shepherd, Lake; and Christ Church and St John’s Church in Shanklin. Others from the cathedral and from St John’s, Locks Heath, have also joined them.

Gwen Bevington, from Calbourne, Newtown and Shalfleet, will be part of a team creating a link between her parish and St John’s Church in Yelwoko, in the northern part of Ghana.

“Yelwoko is a remote village, pretty poor and pretty basic - for example, there’s no electricity,” she said. “We want to understand what life is like for them and the challenges of their Christian discipleship, and to see how the parish link might develop.”

Those from Sandown and Ventnor will go to the Sunyani parish and St John’s Church in Yelwoko, in the northern part of Ghana.

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