The Friday Fridge initially opened for a trial period of six months. It’s a new kind of church, said volunteer Kieran White, 16, of Somers Rodel, who said: “The point about the Friday Fridge is that people enjoy being in a pub, they don’t have the usual kind of church. It is like people enjoying being human and accessing the Kairos plan, and involves non-denominational spirituality and engagement with social justice issues. Volunteers from St Jude’s visit local pubs on a Friday night and invite people to come to the church. The church used to be in the pub and now it is the other way around. The pub visits help show people how little church is and what it means to be church.”

Volunteers from St Jude’s provide handout prayer stations where visitors can experience God. In future weeks there will be other opportunities to record, talk, listen or reflect on. A calm space just to chill out and to relax. Some visit pubs at closing time, handing out publicity material and inviting drinkers to pop into church. Some welcome people at the door or in the cafe, and some are discreetly available to help people pray. A final group wants to open on Saturday morning to clear up. If the trial is a success, the church will continue to run Friday Fridge each week. The organisation would like to develop opportunities for people to respond to the social justice issues being raised through short films shown in the cafe zone. They are considering installing interactive terminals, and so the Fridge evokes they will explore new ways of worshipping church with those who become regulars.

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Spirituality-chill-out-for-the-late-night-revellers

Above: university students are among the visitors to the Friday Fridge; right: prayer and meditation in the quiet zone.

They wanted to reach people of all ages interested in spiritual things, but who were unlikely to come to Sunday services or who’d never really experienced church before. It achieves the Bishop’s Kairos initiative, which encourages churches in our diocese to find new ways of serving their communities.

Volunteers from St Jude’s visit local pubs on several weeks, asking people what they would like to see the church do. People respond-and positively to the idea that the building could be used late at night, providing a safe space to call a tax, have a snack, pray or chat. But the organisation doesn’t necessarily expect those who come to Friday Fridge to come to church services as well. The curate, the Rev Mark Redek, said: “The point about the Friday Fridge is that for many people, it will be church. If they can experience God through some of the prayer installations or find out more about faith in a church then, that’s great.” Many of them would struggle to relate to what we do on Sundays, so we wouldn’t expect them to come then. In fact, some of our existing congregation who normally attend church will continue to come on Sunday even if they prefer to engage with God in new ways on a Friday night instead. People of all ages are welcome. And what we’ve found so far is that people are very happy to talk about issues of faith in a relaxed environment - so much that we’ve found the need to stay on much later than the 11.30 church time we originally arranged!”

The Friday Fridge initially opened for a trial period of six Fridays during the autumn. It’s staffed by more than 20 volunteers each week.

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