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Students give us new design ideas

THEY were full of ideas to help our churches make the most of their locations and opportunities.

These Brazilian architecture students spent six weeks analysing what three churches in our diocese had to offer – and came up with innovative ways to redesign their buildings and publicity material.

The 26 students were part of an interns programme at the University of Portsmouth. This was their final project as part of a year in the UK. They examined Christ Church, Portsdown, St Michael's, Paulsgrove, and St James, Milton, before presenting their findings to the vicars and our bishop.

One group recommended a new 'Divine Café' could be built onto the side of Christ Church, Portsdown, to help it become the centre of its local community. They investigated the demographics of the parish as well as what facilities were already offered locally.

Jessica Souza, 21, said: "The church is actually quite hidden behind trees and far from the road. People don't know it is there. We wanted to create a pavilion-style café to create a connection between the church and the community. It would look like a conservatory and be made out of modern materials, to feel more comfortable."

"There would be steps leading to the café from the church hall, an outside playground and prominent signs. People would get to know the church via the

café, which we'd advertise on signs at bus stops. We would even design the coffee cups with the logo on!"

Another group decided that they could link together the green space to the north and south of St Michael's, Paulsgrove, via a series of footpaths, placing the church at the centre of a network of outdoor activities.

"That might include barbecue and picnic areas, concerts, playgrounds and skate area on the green in front of the church, and community gardens and vegetable patches, football pitches, and giant board games to the north of the church.

Student Ana Isis said: "We wanted to sew the church into the fabric of the community, linking the green space to the church building. We wanted to remove barriers to the church, such as the current railings, but still to have a boundary between religious and community space."

The experience of working on real-life projects in a different country, with a different religious culture, was an eye-opener for many of the students.

Giovanni Chastalo, 22, said: "It is a new experience for us to have the client here, to listen to the church and work with what they want. That's what we'll have to do after university!"

The project was organised by the university's School of Architecture and our diocese's Council for Social Responsibility.

Bishop Christopher said: "Meeting the architectural students was hugely enjoyable and stimulating. Their striking



The Rev Ian Newton from St Michael's at Paulsgrove Carnival Campaign aims to help Paulsgrove feel proud

WORSHIPPERS and community groups joined forces to launch a campaign to help Paulsgrove residents feel proud of their community.

St Michael's Church is working with local schools, businesses and groups on a 'Proud to be Paulsgrove' campaign, using t-shirts, badges, postcards and events to celebrate their community.

The launch happened as part of the Paulsgrove Carnival over the summer. Future plans include

and imaginative insights will be both an encouragement and also a challenge to the parishes in which they worked recently. They have inspired us to think more about the impact of our buildings and the way they engage the local community."

Social responsibility adviser Canon Nick Ralph said: "These

discussions hosted by St Michael's on how to promote the area, and social events such as a fish and chip supper and a community fayre.

The vicar, The Rev Ian Newton, said: "It's important to celebrate that this is a great place to live and show how much the Church is part of this community."

Similar 'proud to be' campaigns will be launched by our diocesan Council for Social Responsibility in Leigh Park and West Leigh this autumn.

young, aspiring architects gained experience working with a real client that is sometimes tricky to understand and interpret, and they did it to a very high standard."

The finished projects will be used by each of the churches to inform future thinking about the purpose of their buildings and how to promote themselves better.

Have your say on our budget for 2016

THE total amount that parishes will pay towards our diocesan budget will increase by 1.5 per cent, if current plans are approved.

Our Bishop's Council has recommended a £7.3m budget for 2016, of which £4.8m is due to be raised via voluntary payments from our parishes.

This increase of 1.5 per cent was calculated by looking at the contexts of church attendance, parish finances, giving levels and economic forecasts.

It also looked at the costs of our contributions to the national Church and clergy pensions, which will rise in 2016 by 2.9 per cent and 3.1 per cent respectively.

Our diocese would like to maintain the same number of clergy posts, as clergy are the key drivers of mission in our parishes. We are experiencing higher vacancy rates, along with the rest of the Church of England.

Our diocesan budget for 2016 therefore assumes one extra clergy vacancy more than last year.

It also involves spending £200,000 from our reserves on clergy housing, part of our five-year investment to bring our properties up to the standard of neighbouring dioceses.

Increases in parish share payments have been kept below inflation over the past six years, especially in 2015 when the increase was zero. This has meant reductions in resources in real terms.

The way in which payments of parish share is calculated for each parish is also changing over the next three years. It means some parishes may see increases of more than 1.5 per cent or even decreases in parish share payments in 2016 as our new formula kicks in.

You can have your say about our 2016 budget. Each PCC has been asked for a response by September 22. Our diocesan finance committee will look at those responses on September 28, and recommend a final budget.

That will be considered by our Bishop's Council on October 5, before formal approval at our Diocesan Synod on November 14.

For more details about our 2016 budget and how to respond, see: www.portsmouth.anglican.org/budget2016.