

# So who are these diocesan staff?

**Q: I HAVEN'T, and we haven't as a church, had many personal interactions with some of the people in the central office teams.**

As a lay person, I don't really understand what help is available from which person. It feels like the clergy are more aware, but they don't always have time to be in contact with any issues the parish has.

A: Most of the central team in our diocese are called 'advisers'. That means their prime function is to advise parishes (and church schools) and be available to support them.

So, for instance, we have a mission development adviser – the Rev Charlie Peer – who is there to help parishes to think more strategically about how to reach out to the wider community with the gospel, and a spirituality adviser – the Rev Ruth Tuschling – who can help your congregation go deeper as they engage with God.

There is a stewardship adviser – Victoria James – who can help you with issues to do with

## frequently asked questions

Our Archdeaconry consultations gave you a chance to ask staff from our four central diocesan sections questions about their work. Those questions were noted down and are the basis of this new Pompey Chimes feature – in which we try to answer questions you're asking.

Christian stewardship and church finances. And there is a youth and children's work adviser – Ben Mizzen – who is on hand to help you engage more effectively with children and young people in your church and community.

Our diocese actually has quite a small team, so there may be just one person, rather than a whole team, dealing with each area of parish life.

Even those people who are not technically 'advisers' can help you with advice and support. For instance, Catherine Gray and David Cain share the job of being secretary to our Diocesan Advisory Committee (DAC) for the Care of Churches. If you want advice about improving

your church building, they are available to talk it through.

Some of our advisers are paid members of staff, though not all of them are full-time. And some are actually clergy who take on an advisory role as well.

So we've just appointed a new disability adviser, the Rev Robert Sanday, who is also chaplain to the deaf and a parish priest in Winchester diocese. Canon Bob White combines life in a busy city parish with chairing our urban ministry group, while the Rev John Owen is our rural affairs adviser.

What unites all these people – and several others – is their willingness to help. Each has a particular area of expertise and

can share good practice from elsewhere in the diocese and beyond.

Some of them will run courses that can help you to understand more about Christian spirituality or the principles of youthwork. All of them can point you to online resources, or send you the information that might answer your queries.

If you've never had an opportunity to find out how these people can help, why not browse the relevant pages of our website ([www.portsmouth.anglican.org/contactus](http://www.portsmouth.anglican.org/contactus)) and discover who does what. Their advice is free of charge, and often they will travel to your parish to see exactly what your church and your local community are like.

If you can't go online, why not ring us on 023-9289 9650 and outline your concern. The chances are that there is someone in the diocese – in our central team or beyond – who has faced that situation before and knows a possible way forward.

**Q: Please cut down on emails to read. It's too much admin! Being part-time means less time**

**for thinking and action.**

A: New technology gives us all sorts of opportunities we didn't have before. Now we can email all clergy at the press of a button, notify people via social media, and download large files from websites.

With that technology comes a responsibility to ensure that we don't abuse those privileges. It is clearly counter-productive to bombard clergy or laity with hundreds of emails a day. That's why diocesan staff think carefully about what to send out to parishes.

Too little information can sometimes elicit the cry "But you never told us about this!" and can be just as frustrating as too much information.

We actually have little choice about much of the material we send to parishes – we are required to let parishes know about changes to regulations, fees, safeguarding procedures, synod elections and a myriad of other things. Other information reflects our priorities – effective mission, discipleship, and community engagement.

If we sometimes get it wrong, please forgive us. The intention is to inform and not to overwhelm.



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Recent surveys show that knowledge of the Christmas story is fading.\* Among 5-7 year olds, 36% don't know whose birthday we celebrate at Christmas. Among adults, less than 12% know the full nativity story.

\*Survey findings from ComRes 2007, 2010, 2012.

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