

School chooses its core values

BISHOP Christopher has blessed Alverstoke C of E Junior School's three new core values of love, grace and hope at a special service at St Mary's, Alverstoke.

During the service, the school's chamber choir sang *Love is Patient*, Year 6 pupils performed the story of the apostle Paul and members of the school community shared their hopes for the future.

The bishop blessed the school's prayer trees and pebbles before explaining the significance of his clothing in relation to the Trinity. After the service, he spent time with pupils in their classes and toured the school.

The values were chosen by staff and governors in September after the appointment of new head-



Bishop Christopher with pupils and the banner showing their school's values teacher Graham Cutter.

He said: "Staff and governors spent the morning of the first day of term in September considering which values, based in Christian tradition and illustrated through

Christian stories, they wished to instil with their pupils – values which they as a school believed in deeply and wished to shape their pupils' attitudes to life, the world around them and other people.

"The three core values of love, grace and hope were selected as those they wished their pupils to display in life and fall back on when times were difficult or when there were tricky choices to be made."

Bishop's praise at final service

BISHOP Christopher helped worshippers give thanks for more than 100 years of faithful worship – after they voted for their church to close.

He led the final service at St Margaret's, Eastney, in the church hall in December – the church building had already been temporarily closed for safety reasons.

The PCC voted unanimously to ask the bishop to close their church building permanently, because it has structural problems that would involve spending £1m to put right, and to bring their parish to an end. They also agreed to close their church hall from January 1.

Service had been held in the church hall since October after structural and electrical problems were found in the church. It had also been without a vicar since the retirement of the Rev Richard Smith.

The bishop thanked them for their faithful worship in the church for many years and prayed for members of the congregation. They are now



Bishop Christopher with the congregation at the final service at St Margaret's Church attending services elsewhere.

He said: "We give thanks for the years of witness and of fellowship, for the dedication of lay people and clergy, for the dignity and courage you have shown as you have faced this difficult decision to stop worshipping here. Even as we face the loss this day brings, we ask God's blessing on us as we move forward from this day and this place, and find fresh places and fresh ways to continue our Christian witness."

Worshippers shared their memories of the church and

what it had meant to them in the final edition of the St Margaret's parish magazine.

Doreen Bath said: "Peter and I, with our three children, joined St Margaret's over 50 years ago when we moved into the parish. We found it a friendly, lively church which gave us a warm welcome. We will all miss it a great deal."

And Liz Bradbury said: "I first came to St Margaret's over 20 years ago and I can truly say that parish and people have played such a big part in my life during these years. I

remember with great fondness all those people who have supported me and my family during times of great sadness and also helped us to celebrate in happy times. The community at St Margaret's has truly been a second family for me."

Our diocese will now apply to the Church Commissioners for permission to close the church, which will involve a process of consultation. No decision will be taken about the future of the buildings or their contents until the end of that process.

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