

Explorations in mission

IT'S a winter evening and a dozen Christians arrive at a Fareham coffee shop to learn about new ways to be 'church'.

They relax on comfy chairs sipping lattes and cappuccinos, and start chatting surrounded by appetising cakes and biscuits.

And the smell of freshly-brewed coffee is still in the air as the presentation starts. There's input, discussion and meditation as they discuss different models of mission. There are flipcharts and chunky markers on the tables, as participants work out the non-geographical networks they are part of - and how they could reach out to them.

This is the Mission-Shaped Introduction course, which takes place over six evenings at Cafe Imbizo, in West Street, which is run by Fareham Community Church.

Clergy and laity learn about the differences between traditional models of church and Fresh Expressions. They hear about the traditional model of attracting people to church activities, and the missional style of going to where



Participants enjoying the Mission-Shaped Introduction course at Cafe Imbizo in Fareham

people already are and engaging with them there.

The course is run by our mission development officer the Rev Charlie Peer and youth and children's adviser Ben Mizen. This is the second series of sessions they have run.

Among the participants is the Rev Ruth Schofield, from St Columba Church in Fareham. It is now running the Highlands Hub, which offers a range of community activities.

"It's really encouraging us to

think about Church in new ways," she said. "They may be ways we already know about, but we can explore them more deeply. We're trying to make the Highlands Hub a Fresh Expression, but it is still a work in progress.

"The course has been stimulating, and it's also allowed space for us to reflect on our personal journey, and it has been powerful to have time for spiritual reflection during the sessions too."

Rachel Abbey, a Reader at



Holy Trinity and St Columba, Fareham, said: "Doing church in a church building feels very secure, but going out into the mission field, where there isn't a building, feels a bit more scary. This helps to make it less scary.

"It's also good to network with people from other churches and compare notes."

The Rev Amy Webb, curate at Botley, Curdridge and Durley, said: "We've encountered this before, but now I'm thinking it

through in the context of being a curate. For instance, we've started a new 4pm service each month at Curdridge, which is trying to be different to what already exists.

"Part of this will involve engaging other people to do it, not just doing it myself."

Anyone interested in being part of a future Mission-Shaped Introduction course can contact the Rev Charlie Peer on 023-9289 9676 or charlie.peer@portsmouth.anglican.org.

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Learning more is vital

THIS year's Lent Appeal is all about learning and education.

We're supporting the theological college in Ghana, and local charities working to overcome a range of obstacles to learning in this area.

Learning is important for all sorts of practical reasons: it enables all of us to read the labels on food we're buying, to catch trains and buses, to participate to the full in the workplace. And in Ghana it ensures that those who are ordained know their Scripture and their church tradition and have all the skills required to exercise an effective ministry.

But for me, it goes deeper even than that. Learning and spirituality are very closely allied. When we learn and when we pray, we reach out to something greater than ourselves. In learning and in prayer, we open ourselves to the possibility of new direction in life, and of serving God and others in fresh ways. Trust and commitment are needed.

There's a line in Milton's poem *Paradise Regained* – the shorter sister poem to the more famous *Paradise Lost* – that



the last word

by Bishop Christopher

illustrates this beautifully. Jesus, wandering in the wilderness, reflects on how he comes to understand God's will. Milton has him say: "And now by some strong motion I am led into this wilderness. To what intent I learn not yet, perhaps I need not know. For what concerns my knowledge God reveals."

It's a controversial line, because instead of presenting Jesus as all-knowing, sharing the power of omniscience with God the Father, Milton instead portrays Jesus as sharing the limited knowledge of all other people. Like us, Milton's Jesus must listen and learn.

We could argue long into the night as to whether we believe Jesus is all knowing like

God, or whether in sharing our humanity he also shares our intellectual limitations. But I personally like the idea that Jesus didn't know everything. He goes into the wilderness to learn how to pray from the depths of his soul, and discovers his meaning and his purpose in life as he does so.

Please support the Lent Appeal generously, as you always do. But as we focus this year on learning, please pick up a book, or join a Bible study group, or reflect with a friend on what you read or hear on the news. Prayer and learning go hand in hand; they are both at the core of our faith.

I wish you a holy and blessed Lent, and a Happy Easter when it comes.