

# Course will help parish mission

**THE Rev Andy Norris valued the course so much that he paid for his wife to join him on the first night.**

The rector of Alverstoke was one of a handful of our clergy given the chance to attend a conference that aims to help churches to grow. Now it is being made available to others in our diocese.

Clergy and lay leaders will be invited to a Leading Your Church Into Growth (LYCIG) course from October 10-12, at the Old Thorns Hotel in Liphook.

It aims to help parishes with practical tips about mission and outreach, and encourage clergy to lead their congregations to think in a more mission-centred way. The Rev Andy Norris was one of nine clergy to pilot our involvement with LYCIG last year.

"It was good enough to prompt me to personally pay for my wife Libby to catch a train and join in from the first night," he said. "As soon as it was over, I knew it was the most significant event I'd attended for at least 10 years as a vicar.

"It blended in nicely with our Mission Action Planning, and gave us the chance to share the LYCIG thinking with the rest of our congregation, via weekly meetings, home groups and Sunday sermons.

"It gave us confidence to address our conviction of faith, our outreach and the nature and hospitality of our worship.

"LYCIG helped us put ourselves in the shoes of a newcomer and look at our church from their perspective. It has given courage both to the leadership and the congregation to change things.

"A significant LYCIG call has been to prayer, so we are now starting six sessions on the Prayers of Jesus and hosting new times to 'wait on God' in prayer through Lent, with fasting. And the appointment of a pioneer minister, Tim Watson, is part of our LYCIG teaching in action."

And the Rev Richard Saunders, vicar of Sheet Church, said: "I did find the LYCIG course stimulating. And it was good to go with a couple of others from the parish, as we could then talk to



Newcomers are welcomed with smiles at the services at St Mary's, Alverstoke

## Our welcome is now a top priority

**ONE concrete way that the LYCIG course changed things at St Mary's Church, Alverstoke, was the quality of its welcome.**

The course resulted in five new welcome and hospitality teams, who offer a smiling welcome each week and serve free real coffee to worshippers.

Four people also offered to help with children's ministry on Sundays.

Worshippers and visitors now get through 100 cups of coffee each week, as well as umpteen croissants, between its traditional service and Church Alive. It has cost the PCC only £2 a week to make

all its drinks free.

The parish has compared attendance figures from January 2014 and January 2016.

They reveal that Sunday attendance across all services at St Mary's has risen by 37 per cent among adults, and 485 per cent among the under 16s.

each other before taking the PCC through the sessions too."

The other parishes where clergy have already experienced the LYCIG course are Botley, Curridge and Durlay; Empshott and Hawkey; East Cowes and Whippingham; Gurnard and Northwood; Hook-with-Warsash; St John's, Fareham; and Bridgemary and Elson.

The October conference will be led by the Rev Tim Sledge, vicar of Romsey Abbey, and involve clergy and lay leaders from Portsmouth and Guildford dioceses.

Our diocese has 100 places and each clergy person will be invited to bring one or two others from their parish.

Mission development adviser the Rev Charlie Peer said: "It's very practical, not theoretical. They will be encouraging clergy and congregations to engage

with a missional journey, which involves looking at where they are and where they want to go. The idea is that the clergy person and lay leader lead sessions that cascades this teaching to the rest of the congregation over a period of months.

"It appeals to those across

churchmanship traditions, both to urban and rural, and larger and smaller churches. People do find it inspirational, but it is also earthed in the realities of parish ministry."

Anyone interested can contact Charlie for more details on 023-9289 9676 or [charlie.peer@portsmouth.anglican.org](mailto:charlie.peer@portsmouth.anglican.org).

## Cathedral welcomes Muslims at joint event

WORSHIPPERS from our cathedral welcomed Muslims from a community near Wickham for the 21st year in a row for a joint celebration.

The annual event involves the cathedral congregation hosting Muslims from the Wessex Jamaat Community, based at the Al Mahdi Centre just outside Wickham. The evening involved readings from the Bible and the Qu'ran, a chance to share creatively by designing lanterns together, a shared meal, and conversation.

Cathedral organ scholar Luke Fitzgerald, who attended for the first time, said: "This has been one of the highlights of my time here in Portsmouth so far.

"Several points in the evening proved powerful for me, but most moving of all was the fact that a cathedral full of believers could pray together to our God to hear our hopes and concerns for our own faith, for our local community and also for the world.

"We used individually designed coloured tiles to collectively create two beautiful lanterns, based on abstract designs from both Muslim and Christian artistic traditions. This act of common creativity and sharing food provided many opportunities to share conversations with new friends from both Christian and Muslim communities."

And Sheikh Fazle Abbas Datto, imam of the Wessex Jamaat Community, said: "Muslims, Christians, people of other faiths and no faith, and people of all backgrounds must come together and show unity and solidarity and not let our communities be divided."

## Newport church aims to develop

**WORSHIPPERS and residents will find out more about plans to develop a Newport church and church hall this month.**

Congregation members from St John's Church, hall users, community groups and those who live in the parish are being invited to a public meeting on March 3 to find out more.

The church has launched its 2020 Vision appeal to raise

the funds needed to transform its church hall into more modern community facilities. The project is also likely to include some work on the church itself.

The plans are still in their early stages, but the project could cost as much as £1m.

Local community groups, many of whom already use the existing church hall, are being asked what they would like to see in any future development.

Fundraising so far has included regular sacrificial giving by congregation members, events such as a Christmas fayre and New Year's party, a lunch club and collection boxes for Lent. The amount collected by the end of January was £8,370.

For more information about the meeting, or about the project itself, contact the appeal co-ordinators on [stjohns2020vision@gmail.com](mailto:stjohns2020vision@gmail.com).