

Addicts get help in church group

A CHURCH in Portchester is hosting a support group for alcoholics – based on Christian spirituality.

Around 15 people who have issues with alcohol and addictions are meeting weekly at St Mary's Church, in Portchester Castle, for prayer and support.

The catalyst for the new group was when Tim, a recovering addict and alcoholic, began attending St Mary's. He had been part of Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) and other recovery groups, and invited a couple of friends to join him in church.

The vicar, the Rev Ian Meredith, said: "This challenged me to look again at AA's recovery programme, 'The Twelve Steps'.

"I had helped facilitate the setting up of an AA group in a former church and had been impressed back then with their approach. On reading them again I was struck by the similarity between The Steps and ideas in the Bible about living free.

"I discovered that the founders of AA, Bill Wilson and Bob Smith, were committed Christians who had known a deep 'spiritual experience' which transformed their lives. Since then, the Twelve Steps programme has developed



The group meets at St Mary's Church in Portchester Castle (Photo: Graham Tiller)

to be non-dogmatic and even non-religious, but spiritual, in order to attract as wide as possible a membership who can subscribe to simply 'God as you understand him.'

"However, this does not take away the fact that originally, this 'higher power' was believed to be God – God made known in Jesus – although those who took the programme would always have to find God in their own way.

"In the past few years many

Christians have been rediscovering the Twelve Step programme, and realising it is not just for recovering alcoholics, but for everyone who wants to 'live freely'.

"So a group of us decided to start a recovery group based on the Twelve Steps, but with a difference – a decidedly Christian approach to the spirituality of the steps. Our initial group of six has now grown to 15, with new friends coming each week. It is in fact turning into a little fellowship –

and even a 'church' for those who may not easily fit into mainstream church life."

The group meets at the church on Tuesday nights, for teaching, discussion, testimony and prayer. Last month, one of the group was baptised as part of one of the weekly sessions.

If you would like to join the group, or if you have friends who might like to join, ring the parish office on 023-9232 1380 for full details.

Help for us to say goodbye after loss

FAMILIES from Portsmouth and the Solent who have suffered the loss of a baby are invited to a special service in our cathedral next month.

The 'Saying Goodbye' service, at 11.30am on April 9, helps families to pay tribute to babies who may have been lost at any stage of pregnancy, during birth, or in infancy.

The service will feature contemporary music, poetry and readings, mixed with acts of remembrance and time for reflection. It is free of charge and open to those with or without faith.

This is the third time that a Saying Goodbye service has come to our cathedral. These services were established by Devon couple Zoe and Andy Clark-Coates, who lost five children through miscarriage.

Zoe said: "Approximately one in four pregnancies ends in miscarriage, leaving parents, grandparents, siblings and family friends in the depths of grief.

"We decided to take our experience of loss and create an organisation that could help others who have previously gone through, or are now going through the grief of losing a baby."

For more details, see the website www.sayinggoodbye.org.

Resource is available for rest of Lent

A BOOKLET is available to help you with prayers and spiritual resources during Lent.

Our spirituality adviser the Rev Ruth Tuschling has produced the booklet – entitled *Redemption Songs* – which is available for groups or individuals to study.

It includes a page a week for the whole of Lent, featuring a verse from the Psalms, a suggestion to ponder, and something to do.

The resource centres on the fears that God has delivered us from, and the love and acceptance Jesus showed us by dying for us.

Copies can be downloaded from our website at www.portsmouth.anglican.org/spirituality.

Musical tells Easter story after success

A MUSICAL telling the Easter story will be staged again in Portsmouth after a successful premiere last year.

Risen! - The Musical, which was written by Ken Shearsmith of Holy Rood Church, Stubbington, will be staged again on April 9 and 10 in the city's iconic New Theatre Royal.

It will feature the same London touring cast and the Portsmouth University Gospel Choir, who premiered the musical there last November. This time the show will be filmed for broadcast later on a Christian cable TV channel.

Ken, who has no musical training but is inspired by God to write melodies and lyrics, created the show as a synopsis



Risen - The Musical! at the New Theatre Royal last year

of all four gospel accounts. It begins with Jesus's anointing at Bethany and continues through his death and resurrection appearances to his Ascension.

He said: "Despite the fact that the Resurrection of Jesus is the foundation of the Christian faith, the focus on theatre has been less on the

resurrection and more on the Passion of Christ. *Risen!* was therefore conceived to complete the story of God's love and saving grace."

The show has been updated since last November, with a larger cast of 18, projected images and a stage set.

The performances are at 7.30pm on Saturday 9th April and 2.30pm on Sunday 10th April.

Tickets are £10 for the dress circle and stalls, and £5 for the upper circle, with concessions for families of two adults and two children. Please book via www.newtheatroyal.com or 023-9366 9000.

For more information about the show, see www.risenthemusical.com.