

Our team will listen to your problems



Ann Beazley with the team of listeners outside the Centrepeace Hub in Gosport's High Street

ANN Beazley loves to help others – and she loves to listen.

She's one of the team of listeners at the Centrepeace Hub, a Christian initiative that offers help and support in the heart of Gosport.

The ecumenical project has been running for two years on Gosport's High Street, and allows people to drop in and talk about problems, and these can include health, money, relationships or family.

Those who drop in might want a friendly face to talk to, or just to see things from a different perspective. Trained volunteers are available to hear what they are saying and find ways to move forward.

Ann, from St Mary's Church, Alverstoke, said: "I love listening to people and chatting, and I like to make a difference to people's lives.

"There are a lot of lonely and stressed people, and it's good to offer them support. Listening to them is really important because so many people these days are so busy. The chance for them to verbalise

their fears and anxieties is a way in which they can help themselves.

"We are upfront about being a Christian organisation and offer a spiritual dimension. We offer people the chance to explore faith, but we don't push it onto people."

Passers-by can drop into the Centrepeace Hub without an appointment, or can organise to visit for a series of hour-long sessions at no cost. There's also a group called Engage, to help people with similar challenges to learn from each other with the help of DVDs and so on.

The volunteers are all from local churches, and listen to their guests in a non-judgemental way. If they can't help directly, they may be able to direct people to another local agency that can help with that specific problem.

Centrepeace was founded by Peter and Elayne Halsey, who are from Logos Community Church in Gosport. They were inspired by God to create a refuge on the High Street for those who were hurting and needed restoration. Over the past two years, the Hub has helped

almost 100 people. Some have come each week for three or four weeks, some for up to six months.

Peter said: "Centrepeace is a Christian organisation, but there is no pressure on people to become a believer or join a church.

"Time and again, people become aware through the listeners, of specific powerful words from the Bible, and this helps them with their restoration including emotional healing.

"Our volunteers are trained to deal with many sorts of situations. We have helped people with issues including depression, anxiety, low-self-esteem and confidence.

"Some people will have ongoing medical issues, and we do work alongside any medical treatment they are having – if they feel better, we would still like them to consult their doctor."

To make an appointment or if you would like to explore creating a similar hub in your parish, contact them on info@centrepeace.co.uk or see www.centrepeace.co.uk.

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Join God's task force

AT February's General Synod, we had a presentation by the Archbishops' Evangelism Task Group.

Among much powerful information, I was struck by the statistic that in England today, an 81 year old is eight times more likely to be an active member of a church than an 18 year old.

This clearly shows the huge challenge and responsibility for all of us if we are to connect with the people around us, not with the aim of growing the church, but in order that we might enable people, through the church, to experience, know and respond to God's love and purpose for them.

I was struck as well by the way in which the Archbishops have deliberately not set up a 'committee' to look into this issue, but rather a 'task group' – calling together a group of active practitioners, men and women with a commitment to evangelism and direct first-hand experience of sharing the good news in a wide variety of



the last word

by the Ven Gavin Collins
Archdeacon of the Meon

contexts and settings across our nation.

All of which made me ponder the need that we have here in Portsmouth diocese for an 'evangelism task group' of our own, and my invitation and challenge to each one of us to commit to becoming an active part of it.

Our friends, neighbours, colleagues and families desperately need to hear and experience the love that God has for them, and for that to become a reality, each one of us needs to step forward and play our part in God's 'evangelism task group', as we speak of God's love, pray for God's

blessing and serve in God's name.

Or, to put it in terms of our new diocesan strategic framework – as we 'live, pray and serve' as God's people to bring his love to the individuals and the communities around us.

So, will you join me? Will you commit to being a part of God's evangelism task group in your parish, your home, your street, your workplace?

As we respond to that challenge and Christ's light shines through us, together we will begin to see the fulfilment of Jesus' promise that he will build his Church in our day, as he has done before.