

Families treated to chocolate haul

HUNDREDS of disadvantaged families were given a chocolate egg for Easter – thanks to your amazing generosity.

Churchgoers across Portsmouth collected Easter eggs during Lent for children and young people supported by the Roberts Centre and Southern Domestic Abuse Service (SDAS). More than 800 Easter eggs were handed over to the two charities.

The Roberts Centre in Landport supports families facing homelessness, family breakdown or difficult times. SDAS supports women and children affected by domestic violence through its refuge and outreach services.

The appeal was spearheaded by St Mary's Church in Fratton Road.

Canon Bob White, vicar of St Mary's, said: "It has been an amazing response to the appeal for eggs. Each week I have watched with wonder as more and more people of every age donate Easter eggs."

"We have been overwhelmed to see the generosity expressed and delighted to share them with others as a reminder of the overwhelming and generous love of God shown to us in Jesus."

Churchgoer Sarah Merrick, whose three foster children donated Easter eggs, said: "The children wanted to do something to help, and they chose to save up their pocket money to buy eggs for the appeal."

"They have been through what a lot of the children who are going to receive these eggs have been through, and they know the joy of someone else caring about them."

"These children might be in really difficult circumstances through no fault of their own. The love people have shown through giving an Easter egg means that these children get something that lots of people and most children accept as the norm."

"We are sharing God's love with other people who potentially might not have anything."

Nadine and her three-year-old daughter receive support from the Roberts Centre. The family



Staff from the Roberts Centre (l to r) Lin Kitchener, Sonja Barrand and Zena Johnston receive donations of eggs from Canon Bob White, vicar of St Mary's Church, Fratton.

are on a low income and without the appeal, Nadine would have struggled to afford a chocolate egg for her daughter this year.

"I think it is a brilliant idea," she said. "There are so many families on such a low income base and they can't afford to buy Easter eggs. This appeal meant that each child had one egg and one smile on Easter morning when

they opened them.

"It warms my heart. It gives me hope. I can put that money on electric or contribute it to another bill rather than have to worry about my daughter and Easter egg hunts and things."

Jo Eamey, SDAS's business support and development manager, said: "A lot of our families are very short of money and receiving

an egg in this way means that they have one less thing to worry about when they are struggling to support their children.

"They are always really appreciative of collections like these."

"When they are at their lowest ebb it helps them to know that there is a whole community of people who care about them."

Bishop says plans to cut benefits are indefensible

BISHOP Christopher has identified government plans to cut disability benefits as "morally indefensible".

Speaking in the House of Lords debate in response to the Budget, he urged ministers to govern "with a stronger moral compass".

He criticised Chancellor George Osborne for being willing to cut benefits for the vulnerable and the disabled by £4.4bn, even though he subsequently withdrew the plans and admitted it was a mistake. The saga led to the resignation of the Work and Pensions Secretary Iain Duncan Smith.

He said: "Members of the government have frequently echoed the words of the present Chancellor in his first Budget that those with the broadest shoulders would bear the greatest burden of austerity cuts."

"Given our circumstances and our age, I doubt if there are many members of this House who will be worse off through the government's proposals."

"The tortuous saga of the last week finally led yesterday to a clarification from the Chancellor that the government had intended that the losers would not be those with the broadest shoulders, but the vulnerable or disabled."

"That decision was morally indefensible. Having accepted the error, I trust that all of us will be willing to set our course, and the government its economic course, with a stronger moral compass."

Photos reveal different sides of the city



Pompey Saturdays: father and son share the frustration as they walk away from Fratton Park (photo by Andrew Malbon)

AN exhibition of photography is designed to showcase all sides of Portsmouth.

Andrew Malbon, from St Jude's Church, Southsea, is exhibiting two sets of his contemporary photos featuring some of the defining experiences of living in the city.

His black-and-white photos showing 'Pompey Saturdays' get to the heart of what it feels like to roll up at Fratton Park full of expectation on a match-day – and the emotions generated by the result.

And his colour photos uncovering 'Southsea Sundays' showcase the beauty and vitality of the seafront.

They are on display – and

for sale – at St Jude's Church, Kent Road, Southsea, from 9am-5pm from April 16-30.

It's designed to raise funds for a group of 18 adults and teenagers who are giving up 10 days of their summer holiday to help decorate a school in Ghana. The group, who called themselves 'Project G' are from churches across the city.

They'll be heading off for a life-changing trip to Ghana in July, decorating a classroom for children who have special needs. They've already raised £17,000 for their trip to St George's Anglican School via cake sales, sponsored events and a stall at the Love Southsea market.