

# Breakthru changes lives

**SID was a substance abuser before he joined Breakthru. Now he writes poetry there each week.**

The 61-year-old started coming to the self-help group at St Simon's Church in Southsea in September 2014. Creative writing helped improve his confidence so much that he now does voluntary work in a café.

Breakthru is a unique group in our diocese. It offers vulnerable adults – including some with addictions, mental health problems or homeless issues – a chance to learn some new skills, which may help them get employment. It also offers them lunch and some spiritual support.

Each Friday morning from 10.30am, members can learn about cooking, art and craft, painting, computers, DIY or creative writing. Volunteers from the church run activities in different parts of the church hall. Members do the shopping, and prepare and cook lunch as a way of learning about food, nutrition and budgeting.

At about 12noon, there's an optional Growth Group, which



Sid writes his poetry in the Breakthru self-help group; preparing food in the kitchen for the group

involves learning about life from Biblical principles. Those who don't take part set up tables and chairs for lunch. Then at 12.30pm, everyone sits down to eat the food prepared by the cooking group.

"I was in a bad place when I joined Breakthru," said Sid. "Joining the creative writing group meant things began to change. I felt welcome and this lifted my spirits greatly. It's not

as difficult as you may think, it's not about spelling and grammar, but about using your imagination.

"It's about sharing and listening to stories, having a positive attitude and having fun. Breakthru has been an inspiration to me, and I believe it can help me to overcome my issues."

Marie McCarthy-Weir, who leads the creative writing group, said: "Sid had never written poetry before, and neither had anyone else.

"We start off with a theme and some ideas and prompts. Then they can read out their poems at the end if they like. Some of the poems they've produced have been incredible. One read out her poem at her grandfather's funeral."

Volunteer Dianna Carruthers said: "One of the things I like is that there are a variety of things on offer. And as we make something, we can talk together. I get so much out of it myself, coming alongside people and helping them."

Breakthru was launched in 2013 as one of the first projects to be supported by our diocese's Mission Opportunities Fund. Lorna Sandland was appointed last year to be community development worker, overseeing Breakthru and the church's Sunday Suppers for the homeless.

"The way that Jesus worked was to come alongside people, wherever they were at," she said. "We want our volunteers and

members to develop relationships with each other so that they can all be transformed. It doesn't just mean meeting up on Fridays – there is also some mentoring of individuals between sessions."

Last month, Breakthru hosted a celebration meal on a Friday evening to welcome their new priest-in-charge, the Rev Susikaran James. They created a menu, bought and prepared the food and decorated the church.

"It was their idea, and they did all the work to prepare for it," said Lorna. "I was proud that they managed to organise and host the evening so well."

For more details, see [www.stsimons-southsea.org.uk](http://www.stsimons-southsea.org.uk).

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## Faith and politics do mix

### the last word

by Bishop Christopher



RECENTLY I took half a dozen A-level students from schools and colleges in the diocese on a visit to the Houses of Parliament.

We went to the Commons chamber where elected representatives debate and shape policy, and into the Lords chamber where those same policies are checked, discussed and revised.

I've heard people say that faith and politics should be kept separate but I profoundly disagree.

Faith teaches us to love people. The political process is one vital way in which we put that love into practice, making sure that money is allocated in the fairest way possible, challenging and changing unjust systems of tax and benefits and employment.

In fact I'd go so far as to say

that faith draws us deeper into the political process, because it compels us to look after the interests of those whose energy is so used up in surviving day to day that they cannot speak out for themselves.

Those of us with a voice are called to use it. We can do more than vote, as you may have done last month.

You can write to your MP, join a campaign group, sign a petition. You can get involved

in local government and help to shape the provision of services that directly affect you and your neighbours.

It's easy to become cynical about the political process. It can't do everything, but we can make a real difference when we actively and patiently engage with the political process on behalf of those who are most vulnerable. Ask yourselves what you might do to make things just a little better.