

Pioneers forging ahead with new ideas



Canon Peter Hall and the Rev Connie Sherman at the new Berewood estate near Waterlooville

Reaching out to those moving into new homes

TWO of our vicars have been given pioneering responsibilities to help reach new housing developments in their areas.

The Rev Connie Sherman made the new Berewood Primary School her base as she reaches out to those who have moved into the new estate to the west of Waterlooville.

She hosts a coffee morning there each Wednesday from 8.30am, with croissants and doughnuts for parents dropping off their children at school.

There is also a playgroup at the school, run in association with Action for Children, and staffed by volunteers from various churches. Connie’s next project is a walk-to-school initiative, and she is still supporting the Messy Church initiative that meets once a month at Waterlooville Baptist Church.

Connie, who is also priest-in-charge of St John’s, Purbrook, said: “Because the school is the only public building in the Berewood estate, it makes sense for my work to be focussed there. And the headteacher is tremendously supportive. “I’m enjoying the

challenge. It’s amazing to be involved in breaking new ground.”

And the Rev Philippa Mills, vicar of Whiteley Church, is preparing for the creation of 3,000 new homes in north Whiteley to add to the estate she currently ministers in.

“We’re going to have a conversation about how we reach those new homes, although we’re still waiting for the agreement to be signed that means the houses will be built,” she said.

The congregation decided not to do door-to-door collections for Christian Aid Week last month, and to organise a cake sale in Whiteley Shopping Centre instead. Those already involved in its toddler group and Messy Church baked cakes to help.

Worshippers were encouraged to get involved with parties on their own streets to mark the Queen’s 90th birthday this month. And the church hopes to use the site earmarked for a new church building for a barbecue in August.

For details, and to see the video they’ve created called ‘Where is Whiteley Church?’, see: www.whiteleychurch.org.uk.

THEY bring new ideas to help people engage with God – and new ways of creating church communities.

Our expanded team of pioneer ministers is now working in specific parts of our diocese to find ways to reach people beyond the traditional church model. And the new ideas are starting to flow.

Four new pioneer ministers have been appointed to work in three key areas – the Rev Tim Watson, in the Leesland area of Gosport, Nicky Pybus in the Cosham and Wymering area, and the Revs Barney and Sara Barron, in the PO9 area of Havant.

They are already exploring their communities, building new relationships, and finding new ways in which the Church can be involved in those areas.

That’s on top of the Rev Connie Sherman, who is pioneering in the new Berewood development near Waterlooville, and the Rev Philippa Mills, who is doing similar things in the Whiteley area.

The Rev Andrew Goy, curate at Church of the Good Shepherd in Crookhorn, is pioneering as part of his curacy, and Susie Templeton is a pioneer ordinand based at St Luke’s, Portsmouth. We’re also still seeking a pioneer minister to work in the Milton area of Portsmouth.

The whole team is overseen by Canon Peter Hall, from Church of the Good Shepherd, Crookhorn, who has been appointed Dean of Pioneer Ministry.

He said: “We are moving into an exciting phase, as our new team is given permission to dream dreams about how the Church could work in different ways to work alongside those who have not previously been attracted by established models of church.

“The answer will be different in each place, as what works in Leesland won’t work in Leigh Park. It’s really important for our pioneer ministers to start by examining how their specific community works and what kind of ministry or mission will make a difference there.”

In Cosham, Nicky Pybus has already linked up with community groups, schools and Highbury College. One of the first things she’ll do is get to know members of the community at a fun day to mark the Queen’s 90th birthday and the Big Lunch.

Everyone will bring a picnic to share, to get to know their neighbours better. The event will include a bouncy castle, stalls, facepainting, balloon-modelling, a local DJ, singing groups and fancy dress contest from 1pm-4pm on June 12. There’ll also be an exhibition showing the history of the Highbury estate, with photographs and other memorabilia contributed by current and past Highbury residents.

Then there are plans for a weekly after-school Lego Club at Highbury Primary School from September, which will involve lots of Lego-related activities around a particular Bible story or theme.

Nicky also wants to launch a monthly Café Church at St Philip’s from September,



including multi-sensory creative prayer and worship activities, video, discussion and participation, as well as coffee and cake.

And she’s also planning a monthly pop-up cinema project, which will involve family films shown in church during Saturday afternoons and thought-provoking films for adults later in the evenings.

“The congregation are being really encouraging, because they can see that

what they are already doing isn’t working for everyone,” she said. “The community also appreciates this, as it is more difficult for those living north of Portsea Creek to engage with events that often take place in the city centre and Southsea.

“It’s a community that is bordered by the motorway and railway line, so easy to define and we want St Philip’s to act as the ‘hub’ of the Highbury community to bring

people together. Some families go all the way back to when the estate was built in the 1930s.

“One thing already helping to build community is the use of social media, which means people can share what’s going on effectively. We’ve also renamed the church’s magazine to reflect our new identity as ‘Highbury Hub’, and we’ll transform it into a community publication

Ordinand is given a brief to think differently

SUSIE Templeton was a pioneer before thinking about becoming a minister – and she’s still determined to do things differently.

She used to work with the Methodist Church, offering pastoral support to those working in HMS Sultan near Gosport. She deliberately worked outside the chaplaincy space, befriending those in the bar, joining the boxing team and developing relationships.

God then called her to be ordained in the Church of England, and she chose training that would be split 50:50 between traditional and pioneer ministry. She spends a day a week at theological college in Oxford, another day studying, and three days working in her training context at St Luke’s Church in Portsmouth.

And her non-traditional take on ministry has seen her working with

teenage girls from Somers Town who were part of a film project, and developing relationships with a local music charity.

“I felt called to ordination about three years ago, but avoided it for a while,” she said. “There was something about it that didn’t quite fit. I didn’t fancy being a Vicar of Dibley type, as that didn’t resonate. But I started to learn about pioneering and that made real sense.

“HMS Sultan was pioneer ministry, as we worked outside the chaplaincy space to develop relationships. That put us in a better position to offer pastoral care. The bar was very male-dominated, but we made friends with the people running it which gave us permission to be there. I also studied the mission-shaped ministry course while I was there, which gave me a theological

framework.”

She started her theological training and placement at St Luke’s last September as our diocese’s first pioneer ordinand. She is working with the new vicar, the Rev Annie McCabe, thinking about how to reach students, Somers Town residents and those working in the city centre.

She met a city council team who were finishing a 12-week project to create a film with teenage girls from Somers Town. The teenagers wanted to continue meeting, so Susie offered a fortnightly drop-in at St Luke’s. It involves lunch, craft activities and space just to ‘be’. It may lead to workshops about health, money or other issues.

Susie has offered St Luke’s as a base for the Urban Vocal Group, which uses music to build the confidence of teenagers and



Our newest pioneer ministers: (left) Nicky Pybus in Cosham High Street; (centre) the Rev Tim Watson outside Leesland Infant School; and (above) the Revs Sara and Barney Barron

which will be delivered to all 2,000 homes.”

Meanwhile, the Rev Tim Watson has been prayer-walking, building relationships and exploring the community around Leesland. His licensing service, which included a procession through Leesland Park, led directly to an invitation to join a group planning a street party for the Queen’s 90th birthday.

He also organised some prayer events as part of the Thy Kingdom Come initiative, and is looking into the possibility of launching some detached youth work in the parks in Leesland.

He is now a governor at Leesland Infant and Junior Schools and will be at the weekly after-school drop-in for parents. He is exploring the idea of creating prayer

spaces in school.

“It is important to spend time thinking about the demographics of the area, where community is happening now, and where there is potential for it to happen in future,” he said. “The schools are definitely an important part of that, and I’m very happy to be seen as ‘their’ priest.

“I also

want to have conversations with church people who have a heart for this area, and we may host a meal to gather together a core group who want to explore what mission would look like for Leesland. A group committed to praying for this area could be the basis for a different worshipping community.

“My credo is ‘Go: Create: Risk’, so my wife Clare and I feel that we have been sent to create things from scratch, not to import ideas that happen to have worked elsewhere. That’s a risk, as not all of those things will work, but that’s part of the role of being a pioneer.”

And Barney and Sara Barron started by undertaking a mission audit of churches in the PO9 area of Havant to discover what community engagement is already happening and what’s needed.

They’re also planning a Picnic in the Park on June 5, which will include facepainting, inflatables, and entertainment from local talent. It’s from 12noon-3pm in Park Community School.

“We were licensed in the school, which was good, and we are exploring with the school how they can be involved in the pioneer work further,” said Barney.

And Andrew Goy has helped to create a safe spiritual place for people in Crookhorn called ‘Wilderness’. It uses images, music and prayer installations to encourage people to engage with God. After a pilot event with the congregation, it will be available over two days on September 11-12 and November 27-28.

The initiative to create a new team of pioneer ministers is part of our £2.4m strategy to create new worshipping communities across the diocese. It includes the creation of the new Harbour Church in Portsmouth, a church plant from St Peter’s, Brighton. Our diocese has applied for £900,000 of that strategy to be funded by money set aside by the Church Commissioners to fund church growth.

For more details, see www.portsmouth.anglican.org/pioneer.

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Who is like you, O Lord,
among the gods? Who
is like you, majestic in
holiness, awesome in
glorious deeds, doing
wonders?

Ex 15:11