



# Pompey Churches

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**I thought I might not see my ordination day**

**My Faith: page 16**

**Why we love helping schools to flourish**

**School governors: pages 8 & 13**

## Bishop is horrified by USA shootings

BISHOP Christopher has expressed his horror that members of the gay community were targeted in the Orlando shootings.

The bishop offered his prayers for those mourning the death of loved ones in the shootings at the Pulse nightclub. A total of 49 people died after a gunman opened fire in the packed nightclub last month.

Bishop Christopher said: "I am appalled by the horror of the shootings in Orlando and offer sympathy and our prayers to those mourning the death of loved ones and to those injured and maimed.

"Our first response is rightly compassion and care. But this is followed too by outrage at the horror and hate which marks this violence against LGBTI people at Pulse nightclub. There can be no justification for any action like this and the brutal targeting of this ghastly attack on LGBTI people demands our Christian solidarity and love for them."

His comments come after a joint statement from the Archbishops of Canterbury and York.

They said: "As Christians we must speak out in support of LGBTI people, who have become the latest group to be so brutally targeted by the forces of evil. We must pray, weep with those affected, support the bereaved, and love without qualification.

"Now, in this time of heartbreak and grief, is a time for solidarity. May God our Father give grace and comfort to all who mourn, and divine compassion to us all."

## Church recruiting non-churchgoers to tell Christmas story



# NATIVITY AIMS TO UNITE COMMUNITY

The Wintershall Nativity, staged each year on the Wintershall Estate near Guildford, is an example of what can be achieved

**It will be an opportunity for a community to work together to stage the timeless story of Jesus' birth.**

Worshippers in Leigh Park want to perform a community Nativity play this December, gathering together a cast of local residents who don't necessarily go to church. They are currently recruiting cast members and backstage crew by visiting schools and community groups, and will launch rehearsals in September.

Carolyn Owens, who leads children's work at St Francis Church, is writing the script, but will also devise additional material with the cast, depending on their specific skills and ideas.

The production will be staged at St Clare's Church in Warren Park on December 3 and 4. And three camels have already been booked to make an appearance.

"The vision is for a community

play, featuring as many people as possible from the communities of Leigh Park and Warren Park," said Carolyn. "We're recruiting the cast over the summer, and hope to involve people who don't go to church, and who haven't acted before.

"It's about creating community cohesion, and stretching beyond the boundaries of church. We want to do this together to test people's skills, have fun, meet new people and work together, and the church can provide that opportunity for them.

"The Nativity is a story that people know, but this will be a chance for them to own that story. They can also begin a conversation about otherness, about what the Christmas story can mean for them.

"We're looking for an all-age cast, as we need both young and old to perform, though children will need to be accompanied by a responsible adult.

"I'm writing the play, but I want to incorporate any ideas that other people have. If they can sing and want to do it, we can include it. I also hope that some of our rehearsals will be workshops, in which we can jointly come up with some new ideas.

"We will be performing indoors, but there will be an element of the play that happens outdoors, especially with the camels. I expect that three kings will process on the camels from somewhere else, but we haven't worked out those details.

"I'm confident that we'll get the people together and that we'll be able to perform something that will be worthwhile and will build relationships."

Carolyn and her husband, the Rev Jonathan Jeffery, both acted with their children in the Havant Passion Play which was staged last summer in Havant Park. The director of that play, James Burke-Dunsmore, has promised his

support, as have other members of the cast and crew.

And the project has been given funding by our diocese's Mission Opportunities Fund, which aims to kick-start new projects to help parishes engage more effectively with their local communities.

The performances have been pencilled in for 6pm on Saturday 3 December and 2pm on Sunday 4 December. Organisers also hope that they can provide a petting zoo, to give children the experience of seeing those animals that would have been there at Jesus's birth.

"We can't quite afford the petting zoo at the moment, so if anyone wants to fund that specific element of the production, we'd love to hear from them," said Carolyn.

Anyone who lives in the Leigh Park or Warren Park area and is interested in being involved can contact Carolyn on carolynowens@btinternet.com or 023 9247 5276.