



Pompey Churches

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Parish news from north of Petersfield to the Isle of Wight

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Royal guest praises 40 years of caring

Good Neighbours network: pages 8-9

Eye-opening African trip for our teenagers

Project G in Ghana: page 10



Our strategy will aim for numerical and spiritual growth in five years

THE ONLY WAY IS UP!



Leaders of the new Harbour Church outside their new building: (l to r) Martha and Ben Bryant, Sam Parker, Ryan Forey, Hannah Barraclough and vicar the Rev Alex Wood

WE are aiming for a new era of church growth in this diocese – to share the gospel more widely.

That's the target behind our diocese's new strategy, which involves creating brand new congregations, and investing in leadership to increase church attendance within five years.

It also includes strongly supporting existing congregations to help them deepen discipleship and serve our communities.

We have already secured a £929,000 grant from the national Church towards our £2.4m strategy. Our 2017 diocesan budget also includes plans to invest in creating the church of the future.

The specific targets in our diocese's 'live, pray, serve' strategy have now been unveiled. They include moving the diocese from numerical decline to numerical and spiritual growth by 2021. This is not for its own sake, but so that we help build the kingdom of God.

This can partly be achieved by developing 12 new expressions of church – each with between 50 and 100 worshippers. These may not be based in church buildings or depend on geographical parishes.

They could be based around shared interests or creative styles of worship. The idea is that the total number of worshippers at these fresh expressions of Church would rise from 1,200 to 2,200 – equating to around 15 per cent of total attendance in our diocese.

We have already recruited pioneer ministers, both lay and ordained, to work in the Leesland area of Gosport, in the PO9 area of Havant, and in Cosham and Wymering. We aim to recruit another three paid pioneer ministers to inspire us to engage in new ways with harder-to-reach groups.

That's on top of pioneering opportunities being embraced by a number of existing clergy. And we want to train a cohort of at least 20 voluntary lay pioneers too, as well as training and encouraging all our parishes to experiment with pioneering methods.

Our diocese was already preparing to launch a new church plant in the heart of Portsmouth, aimed specifically at students and

younger people. Harbour Church, which will meet in a converted department store in Commercial Road, will hold its first Sunday service on September 4. Around 30 worshippers have relocated from St Peter's, Brighton, to form the core of a congregation which we expect to have grown to at least 200 within five years.

Bishop Christopher will be at the launch, where worshippers will share bacon sandwiches and bucks fizz to celebrate.

He said: "I am a fervent believer in the importance of traditional parish ministry and chaplaincy. There are some fantastic examples in our diocese of congregations that are vibrant and often growing because they are sharing God's love effectively with others.

"But I also know that we have to find new ways to create disciples among those we have often found hardest to reach, such as inner-city estates, new areas of housing and with younger people.

"A key part of our strategy

is pioneering ministry and fresh expressions of worship – finding ways of reaching out to those who simply aren't interested in our traditional models of church. That involves committing ourselves to appointing those with vision for new ways to engage with the communities they serve.

"I am delighted that the Church Commissioners have recognised our commitment by awarding us £929,000 towards our £2.4m project over the next five years. Our 2017 diocesan budget recognises that we also need to invest more of our historic reserves in creating and sustaining these new forms of church."

Our diocese is also looking to strengthen the sustainability of individual parishes, in terms of both mission and finances. Parishes struggling to resource outreach and mission will be provided with targeted support to develop mission plans. We have offered formal viability reviews to some parishes to help them find a path towards recovery.

We're looking to give parishes practical advice in how to achieve numerical and spiritual growth. Clergy and lay leaders from across the diocese will attend a Leading Your Church Into Growth residential conference in Liphook from October 10-12, funded from our diocesan reserves.

Our diocese's 2017 budget also aims to help the strategy by funding a full-time Director of Vocations and Ordinands, by increasing the number of curates across the diocese, by raising the allowance for Isle of Wight ministers and by continuing the investment in our properties – as well as helping to fund the £2.4m project.

You can find out more about these plans at a meeting to discuss our 2017 budget on September 12. This happens from 7.30pm in our cathedral. You can read more about our strategy on www.portsmouth.anglican.org/liveprayserve, and more about our budget plans on www.portsmouth.anglican.org/budget2017.