

Play cafe is a godsend

FOR parents with small children, Havant's newest café is literally a godsend.

The Pallant House Play Café combines great coffee, tasty food and enough toys to keep toddlers happy for hours. There's a soft play area, plus wooden dolls houses, play shops and train tracks.

The café was created inside Pallant House, which is owned by St Faith's Church in Havant. It invested around £25,000 into refurbishing the building, working in partnership with two former teachers whose dream it was to create a play café.

Paula Skeggs and Karen Lonergan only opened their new café a month ago, but word spread quickly. Now it is regularly full of families enjoying the chance to chat, play and make friends.

Mum Sarah Le Feuvre, who brings two-year-old Isla to the café, said: "It means we can have a nice chat and drink our coffee while it's actually hot! It's nice to come here and for the children to have a chance to play, rather than having to just sit still."

Michelle Parker, mum to one-year-old Esme and baby Louie, said: "It's brilliant. It's



Above: Karen Lonergan and Paula Skeggs; right: Esme Parker and Poppy Alford

somewhere where the kids can be occupied. I live in Cosham and there's nowhere there like this either."

And Amy Tarrant, who brought 18-month-old Theadora for the first time, said: "It looks fantastic, even down to the menu. For parents, this ticks all the boxes. Your child can be playing while you wait for food, and because it's all parents, they'll all be very understanding."

The creation of the play café is one of the ways in which St Faith's Church aims to both care for its

buildings and nurture children and young people in the area. These are two of the church's current priorities. It was created in a space that was formerly a nursery, but which needed structural changes to accommodate a new kitchen and toilets.

The rector, Canon Tom Kennar, said: "We provided the shell of the building, and Paula and Karen then created the café inside. But it was a real partnership to design it, and we worked together for a year to create this. It's only just opened, but is already so popular that every seat will be taken by lunchtime.

"There's nothing else like this in Havant and word has spread via things like Facebook. There's also

a space outside for tables and chairs, which will be used in the summer.

"This is a way for us to connect with younger families. Our two curates and I can be a presence in the café and people can chat to us in a relaxed way they might not have done elsewhere. We aim to walk alongside people and find God in them."

The property owned by St Faith's Church includes a thriving charity shop and church hall as well as Pallant House. Between them, they host a theatre group, Pentecostal church, two orchestras and a male voice choir, a military



charity, Brownies and Rainbows, and groups for addicts.

The church itself is also in the process of being improved, with new lighting to illuminate the building, a refurbished weather vane, new clockfaces on its tower, and the refurbishment of the historic organ.

The Pallant House Play Café is open from 8.45am-4pm from Mondays to Saturdays. There's a special kids' menu. For more details, see www.facebook.com/pallanthouseplaycafe.

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God's last word to us

THE title of this regular column is The Last Word. At this time of year we often think about Jesus as the Word of God, and of the timeless and glorious truth of his coming to dwell among us. In reflecting on this, I found myself struck by 3 of God's 'Last Words' in the Bible:

God's Last Word in creation – in Genesis 1 – was to declare that: "It is very good".

And in our world today, with its bewildering and at times overwhelming mix of man-made and natural disasters, threats to the environment and the damage caused by warfare, we need to pause, look up and recapture a glimpse of the beauty and wonder of the world as God created it, and to remind ourselves that, yes indeed, "It is very good".

God's Last Word in salvation – John 19:30 – as Jesus hung on the cross and



the last
word

by the Ven Gavin Collins
Archdeacon of the Meon

declared: "It is finished". That on the cross, as Jesus gave up his life for the world and for each one of us, that however far from God we feel we may have wandered, we can hear today Jesus' affirmation that "It is finished", and that he has accomplished everything necessary to open up the way for us to be restored in our relationship with God.

God's Last Word in Scripture – Revelation 22:20 – "Behold, I am coming soon". That however dark at times our world may appear to be, and

whatever challenges, doubts or fears we face, we can know the sure and certain Biblical hope of God's enduring presence and his final return.

So this Adventide, and as we move on into Christmas and the New Year with all that lies ahead, may we know the joy, the confidence and the security of the truth that: "The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us".

And may we join with the Evangelist and echo in response to God's Last Words to us: "Amen! Come, Lord Jesus!"