

## Church is open for DIY prayer and quiet

A NEW project aims to reach those who describe themselves as spiritual, but wouldn't want to come to a church service.

Open Church now happens on the first Wednesday of each month at St John's Church, Forton, in Gosport.

The church is open from 7pm until 9pm, giving people a chance to come in, light a candle, have a chat or just take some time to be still and reflect.

The next Open Church is on February 1. It's based around the theme of light, so there will be candles to light, plus other creative activities to do. People can pop in for five minutes or the whole two hours.

The vicar of St John's, the Rev Carrie Thompson, said: "In the nine years I've been here, I've met hundreds of people who've told me that they wouldn't want to come to church on a Sunday, but would love a chance to come into the church and reflect. So we've started this project.

"Anyone who wants to come in can do whatever they want. There are no sermons or services, and nobody will ask them to sign a membership form, make a donation or join the flower rota. It's simply a chance to think, reflect or just be."

Open Church is part of the pioneering work being done to create new worshipping communities by our Leesland pioneer minister the Rev Tim Watson.

## Children's sleepout in church raises funds



(l to r) Meggie Dolton, Abigail Fawcett, Harriet Henty, Megan Fawcett and Lily Hammal, at the Sleepout Challenge in Botley

WHEN the curate gave children the chance to sleep inside the church for a night, she had no idea how many would want to do it!

The Rev Amy Webb was inspired to organise an Advent Sleepout Challenge in All Saints Church, Botley. The initiative is run by the Church Urban Fund (CUF), which encourages young people to be sponsored to sleep overnight in churches, halls, community centres or sheds.

The idea is to help young people understand more about homelessness by giving them a glimpse of what it might be like. And the cash raised helps those dealing with debt, homelessness, addiction, abuse or violence.

Amy said: "We asked children in Years 5 and 6 in our local primary schools, and the response was overwhelming. We had 46 young people, plus leaders and helpers sleeping overnight in All Saints.

"We filmed a mannequin challenge, built cardboard shelters, toasted marshmallows around a campfire, created a 'graffiti wall' about homelessness, decorated our Christmas tree and ate pizza.

"We raised more than £1,000 to help the valuable work that CUF does with those who are marginalised. And our young people had a positive experience that will help them think about these issues in future."

# Bake-off battle for all ages

**It was a bake-off battle between two of the thriving groups based at St Andrew's Church on Hayling Island.**

The 2nd Hayling Island Girls Brigade challenged the Cinema Ladies to a cookery challenge before Christmas to see who

would be crowned the best bakers in the church.

From scratch and without recipes, all the contestants were asked to make 12 cupcakes and 16 biscuits and decorate them all. The Girls Brigade made a theme of flying marshmallow pigs, multi-coloured sheep and the ring of love and peace. The Cinema Ladies made Santa faces for their cupcakes and included them on a Christmas tree.

Both groups then presented their showstoppers to the judges. Each had been decorated on the evening to incorporate a fantasy theme, with the Girls Brigade producing a stunning pink and blue unicorn rainbow cake. The Cinema Ladies produced an amazing mermaid cake with lovely long red liquorice hair.

The evening was judged by the Rev Tim Wood, acting as Paul Hollywood, and worshipper Joan Gibson as Mary Berry. They concluded that the Girls Brigade were the eventual winners. Both

**Right: Girls Brigade members with their cake; below: the Rev Tim Wood as Paul Hollywood**



"St Andrew's Church is called to mission and outreach in the local community and a hugely committed team of volunteers run a range of sessions and events to support local families and older people."

The Girls Brigade runs on a Thursday evening in term time at St Andrew's church hall, and it provides camps, sleepovers and lots of fun for girls aged from 10 to 18 years.

And the Cinema Ladies come from the monthly cinema afternoon run by St Andrew's Church for OAPs, showing musicals and films, with tea and sandwiches in the interval. Lifts can be provided to and from the film.

For more details of either activity, see: [www.haylinganglicans.moonfruit.com](http://www.haylinganglicans.moonfruit.com)

## Pompey Chimes

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