

Ride or stride to raise funds

WALKERS and cyclists will be out in force again this month, raising money for our churches.

The annual Ride and Stride event happens this year on September 9, and is a chance for you to discover your local heritage, explore the area and raise vital funds for church buildings.

You can be sponsored to walk, cycle, run, or travel any other way between as many churches as possible that day – at your own speed.

Churches around our diocese often remain open during the day, with volunteers offering hot drinks and refreshments to walkers and cyclists as they call in.

The event is organised by Hampshire and the Islands Historic Churches' Trust (HIHCT), and involves you donating half of the sponsorship money you raise to the trust and keeping the other half for a church of your choice. HIHCT then allocates its funds to



church buildings in need of grants. Last year, churchgoers in our diocese raised more than £17,000 through the Ride and Stride day, out of the £50,000 total raised throughout Hampshire and the Islands. The top fundraising churches included Holy Trinity, Fareham; St Peter's, Petersfield; St Mary's, Buriton; St Peter's, Froxfield; St Cuthbert's, Copnor; St Hubert's, Idsworth;

St Faith's, Havant, and Holy Trinity, Bembridge.

And some of the top individual fundraisers were presented with certificates at the annual meeting of HIHCT in Winchester Cathedral by Christine Atkinson, wife of the Lord Lieutenant of Hampshire.

Among those people were Alan Philips, from St Cuthbert's,



Left: HIHCT members visit All Saints Church, Newchurch, on their annual summer outing; above: Christine Atkinson presents John and Jackie Butt with a certificate from HIHCT

Copnor; John and Jackie Butt, from St Hubert's, Idsworth; and David Ellis, from St Wilfrid's Church, Fratton.

And John Butt said: "We appreciated

being recognised for our efforts stretching over two decades, especially in the 2016 Ride and Stride, which was marked by continuous torrential rain which soaked every participant."

Since 2010, more than 30 churches in our diocese have received grants from HIHCT for

repairs and re-ordering – some more than once.

Meanwhile, members of the HIHCT enjoyed a visit to the Isle of Wight over the summer as part of their annual summer outing.

They visited the grade I listed All Saints, Newchurch, which was begun in the 12th century, and developed in the 13th and 14th.

And they also called in at Bonchurch Old Church – one of the island's smallest churches – and St Boniface, Bonchurch, which was created in the 1840s as the local population grew.

For more details, including how to take part in Ride and Stride yourself, see www.hihct.org.uk.

Why clergy are heroes the last word

I WONDER what people in your parish think when they see your vicar walking around your neighbourhood?

The immediate reaction of many is to be on their best behaviour and to try not to swear. Or if they do, they immediately apologise. That's kind, but rest assured that swearing isn't the biggest thing that bothers us.

Many people's stereotypes of clergy are the English country vicar from period TV dramas or perhaps a fun-loving Vicar of Dibley. Knowing clergy as I do, I see them differently.

For me, they are heroes on the frontline of our society. They live among the people they seek to serve. They deal with some of the most vulnerable in our communities, people who others may have given up on. They are there still when others have left their office, surgery or station and gone home.

They feed the homeless, visit the housebound, empathise with the bereaved, deal with complex family issues, care for those who are ill, and much more. Like teachers, social workers and NHS staff, they deal with



the last word

by Bishop Christopher

stressful situations every day because they have chosen to serve their local community.

It's noticeable that on the night of the Grenfell Tower fire, it was clergy and imams who opened up their churches and mosques to help immediately. They gave people tea, shelter and comfort because it was in their DNA to do so.

Clergy don't do these things because they are 'good'. They are flawed, a mixture of good and bad, just like us all. Like us, they have to pray for forgiveness every day for the things they've done wrong.

But what marks them out is their determination to put others first. If I see a clergy person facing burnout, it's

always because they've been doing too much for others and not enough to care for themselves.

In some places, the vicar and congregation are the only people left to serve their community. The police don't have the resources to patrol regularly, the post office and pub have closed, and the community group has disbanded. Yet the church is still there with its doors open, trying to make a difference.

Why not encourage your neighbours to shake the vicar's hand next time they see him or her, and say hello. They could add "Thank you for being there." I know our clergy men and women will appreciate it.

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