



Pompey Churches

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Diocese of Portsmouth

POMPEY CHURCH AND

FINAL EDITION

Parish news from north of Petersfield to the Isle of Wight

DECEMBER 2017/JANUARY 2018



Royal visitor helps us to mark anniversary

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The 91-year-old who skydived from 8,000ft

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Christians club together to buy home for Syrian refugees

YOU'RE WELCOME!



Mandy and Terry Monahan, Chris Churchley and Jane Ainscow from St John's, with furniture for the new house

CHURCHGOERS from Rowlands Castle joined forces to buy a house to help the vulnerable, including refugees.

Twelve worshippers clubbed together to pay for a three-bedroomed house, which will initially be rented out to a family who have escaped from the conflict in Syria.

The Mission Possible project, run by St John's Church, Rowlands Castle, aims to welcome the Syrian refugees by providing the house, furniture, English lessons and friendship.

They were inspired after a series of sermons looking at what the Bible says about Christian mission, helping those in need, including refugees. Worshippers have been decorating the house, donating furniture and organising befrienders ahead of the family's arrival in the New Year.

Project lead Terry Monahan, who is also a Reader at the church, said: "Our vicar and

ministry team were inspired by the Diocesan Conference in 2015 to do something practical to assist with the refugee crisis in response to the call we felt to mission.

"Soon after, my wife Mandy went to a session at Spring Harvest led by Hope Into Action, which encourages churches to provide houses for the homeless, supporting them to reintegrate them back into society.

"We felt that the economic model could work here, in that we're not asking people to donate money, but simply to transfer their savings into property. They would own an asset, and also receive a rental income.

"Although we are a generous church in terms of giving money to other charities, which we still maintain, we thought it would be good to encourage face-to-face interaction with those in need. We had a series of sermons on what the Bible says about refugees, and about 30 people came forward offering money, friendship, prayer and skills.

"Twelve individuals invested in the house, offering anything between £5,000 and £70,000. The money came from their personal redundancy payments, retirement lump sums or savings – none of it came from the church itself.

"We found a suitable house, bought it, and received the keys in October. It needed some structural work by professionals, but volunteers have done the DIY.

"We offered the house to be part of the government's Syrian Vulnerable Persons' Resettlement Scheme, and quickly heard about a potential family – mum, dad and three children. We hope they'll be moving in in the New Year.

"Jesus taught that it was better to help the poor than to store up riches, and there is also a general Biblical impetus to help the poor.

"We were confident that people at St John's would respond to this, and in some cases their attitudes towards refugees has changed by 180 degrees. We also think other churches could do something similar."

Mission Possible is supported by the PCC, the Rural Refugee Network based in Petersfield, and Hope Into Action. They hold weekly prayer meetings, and members of the group have specific responsibilities – for the legal side, the finances, decorating, furnishing and befriending.

The group have committed themselves to the project for five years, after which they will review the arrangement. They'll support this particular refugee family for two years, until they can become independent. The house will then be made available for another needy family.

The government's Syrian Vulnerable Persons' Resettlement Scheme aims to rehouse 20,000 refugees by 2020. But it requires private landlords to offer their homes, as local authority and social housing cannot be used.

For more details, contact Terry Monahan on terry.monahan1@gmail.com.

● Rural Refugee Network helps 30 refugees: see pages 8-9.

Sandown CE school could be enlarged

YOU can have your say on plans to enlarge a C of E primary school on the Isle of Wight.

Island residents are being consulted on plans to allow The Bay C of E Primary School in Sandown to teach children up to the age of 16.

The move comes after academy sponsor AET decided to relinquish control of Sandown Bay Academy from the end of this academic year, after Ofsted deemed it to be in "special measures".

The government has already indicated its willingness for The Bay C of E Primary School to expand to teach children at secondary level as well as primary.

The sixth-form at Sandown Bay Academy is not large enough to continue under the new proposals – but existing A-level students will be allowed to complete their studies.

Isle of Wight cabinet member for children's services, Cllr Paul Brading, said: "We know from the consultation carried out in the summer that residents are behind this move. Now they need to make their feelings known through this statutory process so we can move a step closer to our goal."

The enlarged school would operate from the existing sites of Sandown Bay Academy and The Bay C of E Primary from September 2018.

Full copies of the plans are available on strategicplanningunit@hants.gov.uk. The consultation period will run until midnight on December 7, and comments can be made via email to the same address.