

Parish will hold photo contest

A CHURCH will hold a photography competition to find out what residents love about their local community.

St Michael's in Paulsgrove is throwing down the gauntlet to budding photographers to discover what the area means to them. It's part of its 'Proud to be Paulsgrove' campaign.

The photos entered can be taken anytime in Paulsgrove between December 2016 and November 2017. They will be judged by a panel including Pompey FC chairman Ian McInnes, Aspex Gallery director Jo Bushell and London photography agent Daisy Parker.

The three winning entries will be displayed at the Aspex Gallery in Gunwharf Quays and each receive £100 in cash. The overall winner will also receive a work experience opportunity with a professional photographer in a London location.

And a selection of all the photos submitted will also be exhibited in St Michael's Church as it celebrates its 60th year.

Entrants can submit a maximum of four photos, and can supply an explanatory caption. The deadline for entries is December 1, 2017. Do include your name, age and contact details, as one of the categories is for photographers under 18.

Digital entries can be sent to photos.stmichaels@gmail.com, and hard copies posted to: Photos, St Michael's Vicarage, 2 Hempsted Road, Paulsgrove, PO6 4AS.



Left: Jessica Meale and the Rev Mike Todd from the Children's Society; above: Sergeant Tony Jeacock from Hampshire Police speaks to Diocesan Synod

We heard how to help most needy

SYNOD members were given a chance to consider what they could do to help asylum seekers and refugees.

Our Diocesan Synod heard from a range of speakers about the plight of those who are driven from their homeland by conflict or political oppression. Those who come to the UK can end up without a home or any income.

And members were challenged about what more their parishes could do to help asylum seekers and refugees living in their communities.

Michael Woolley, chairman of the charity Friends Without Borders explained how those seeking asylum may be helped

with basic accommodation and a small payment while they apply for asylum.

But if their application fails, they aren't allowed to work or claim benefits, they lose their accommodation and they can't even drive. Yet many can't return to their homeland. They often end up destitute and sleeping on the floors of friends.

Friends Without Borders runs a twice-weekly drop-in at All Saints Church, Commercial Road, where refugees and asylum seekers are given food, vouchers for clothing and legal advice. The charity also now gives those who are making fresh asylum claims £15 a week, and pay for coach tickets to Liverpool, as they are required to hand in their new claim in person.

"You can let your congregations know about the very real challenges faced by asylum seekers," said Michael. "They are the poorest people in Britain today, with no access to the welfare state and not allowed to work. They don't have the right to drive, even if they have a licence. They need people to lobby officials, MPs and councillors on their behalf."

The Rev Alice Wood explained how the Rural Refugee Network had been set up only a year ago, but has 80 active volunteers, and has raised more than £30,000 to help resettle Syrian refugees in private homes in East Hampshire.

So far three families – 17 people – have been rehoused, with a fourth house imminent. Syrian families have been welcomed with

HOW YOU CAN HELP THEM

CHILDREN'S SOCIETY: Invite them to speak at Sunday services, or to meet deanery chapters or synods. Use the resources on their website to talk about their work, especially the 'Paddington' stories regarding unaccompanied child asylum seekers. Details: www.childrenssociety.org.uk

FRIENDS WITHOUT BORDERS: Help to educate congregations and communities about the reality of life for asylum seekers, volunteer to help at the drop-ins at All Saints, Portsmouth, or

donate food or clothes, become a Homestay Host and invite an asylum seeker to live with you temporarily, and recruit supporters. Details: www.friendswithoutborders.org.uk

RURAL REFUGEE NETWORK: Educate our congregations and lobby politicians about giving sanctuary to Syrian refugee children, promote the work of the Rural Refugee Network in churches, keep the plight of Syrian refugees in our prayers. Details: www.ruralrefugeenetwork.org

flowers, meals, furniture, TV, internet, and guides to the local area. Twenty teachers have joined forces to offer English language teaching, including a two-week summer school.

Sergeant Tony Jeacock, from Central Southsea and St Jude's neighbourhood team, talked about hate crime and how police respond to it. There had been a 34 per cent increase in hate crimes in Hampshire after the EU referendum, but the figures had declined again.

Hate crime could include physical or verbal abuse, damage, bullying and graffiti against people based on ethnicity, religion, sexuality or disability, and it is taken very seriously.

And Shamila Dhana, a Red Cross case worker, also explained how the organisation helped victims of trafficking, collected Syrian families from the airport and took them to their new homes, helped to train volunteers for

the Rural Refugee Network, and advocated on behalf of refugees.

Diocesan Synod members split into groups to consider what is happening in their localities to help asylum seekers and refugees, and how their parishes could do more.

The synod also welcomed the Rev Mike Todd and Jessica Meale from the Children's Society, who thanked parishes in our diocese for their financial support and spoke about its role. It focuses on those aged 10-18, especially those who are young carers, who run away from home, have drug or alcohol issues or mental health issues.

Although they appreciate the typical link with our Christingle services, they would like to broaden their appeal throughout the year, and help parishes to take Christingle services out of their church.

For more details, see www.portsmouth.anglican.org/synod-march-2017.

Pompey Chimes

The *Pompey Chimes* is the official newspaper of the Church of England's Diocese of Portsmouth, which covers 142 parishes in south-east Hampshire and the Isle of Wight. Its circulation is 8,000, and it is produced monthly except for January and August. Each parish pays 15p for each copy, which allows our readers to pick it up for free on the final Sunday of the previous month. Paid-for adverts are dealt with by our publishers, Cornerstone Vision. For a list of editorial deadlines, see: www.portsmouth.anglican.org/pompeychimes

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