

Learning to eat, pray and study together

Our small groups of clergy and lay leaders - called Cairns - are enhancing our wellbeing and prompting missional ideas

IT is in his Cairn that the Rev Clive Gardner feels that he can really be 'Clive' - rather than 'the vicar'.

He is part of a small group of church leaders from a specific part of Portsmouth who meet regularly to pray, eat and study together. They've been working through the book *Divine Renovation* by Roman Catholic priest Father James Mallon, which has been recommended to all of our Cairns.

Clive meets with other ministers who serve at **St Cuthbert's Church, Copnor**, plus others from neighbouring churches in **Copnor, Paulsgrove** and **Farlington**, once every few weeks.

Typically, someone will bring food to share, they'll talk about how things are going, discuss a chapter of the book they are reading - and pray for each other.

It's all part of our diocesan vision, which aims to give clergy and lay leaders across the diocese a chance to love and support each other as they share the good news of the Kingdom. They have grown out of a long tradition of spiritual discipleship drawn from ancient monastic communities.

Clive said: "It is a place where you can metaphorically throw the dog collar away and I can just be 'Clive',



Above: the Rev Carol Gully talks to the Rev Richard Shurmer about *Divine Renovation* in a Cairn hosted in the vicarage of St Cuthbert's, Copnor; right: the Rev Clive Gardner and the Rev Deb Henning-Vears in the same group

rather than the vicar - a non-judgemental safe space. There are some meetings you go to as clergy that are competitive, but this feels more nurturing and positive."

The Rev Deb Henning-Vears, curate in Farlington parish, said: "You can say if you are feeling low, and collaborate on things that are happening locally."

The Rev Richard Shurmer, curate at St Cuthbert's, said: "It is wonderful to get insights from each other, different perspectives from

studying the Bible or *Divine Renovation* together."

And the Rev Julie Jackson, associate priest at St Cuthbert's, said: "It is a safe space where you can be real with each other. It's great to be able to share what you're learning from the Bible and elsewhere - not just like preparing a sermon, more about what God is saying directly to you."



Various Cairns of lay and clergy leaders have been created across our diocese, many of which have involved individuals choosing

Parishes agree on family priorities

THESE four parishes have been working together for 20 years. So it's not surprising that they found common ground on how to jointly enhance their outreach.

The Pilot Cairn covering the Western Wards of Fareham - Sarisbury Green, Locks Heath, Hook-with-Warsash, and Titchfield - brings together clergy, churchwardens and other lay leaders from each parish. Typically they have met for breakfast, study and prayer.

Theirs was one of the nine 'Pilot Cairns' each allocated £50,000 of strategic funding to work jointly on mission projects.

And their group decided to use these funds to pay for three children and families workers to minister in Sarisbury Green, Hook-with-Warsash and Titchfield, as well as a co-ordinator of interns who are based at Locks Heath as part of a diocesan-wide scheme. Financial and other support will come from each parish too.

The four parishes see these roles as fitting into the visions of the national Church, of our diocese and of the Fareham deanery. Each will last initially for three years.

The proposal came not just out of meeting together, but



Prayer over breakfast in the Western Wards Cairn

also from the *Divine Renovation* study material available over the past 12 months.

The Rev Penny Thatcher, vicar of Titchfield, said: "I found the resources helpful, bringing together in one simple-to-follow guide a range of missional practices and planning tools, with accompanying insights from Fr James Mallon's own experience."

"I have found it useful in casting our own St Peter's vision with the PCC, and it has been interesting studying it with my Western Wards colleagues as we have been reminded of our different contexts and that one size doesn't necessarily fit all!"

In St Mary's, Hook-with-Warsash, a small parish group is also examining the *Divine Renovation* resources. It has already appointed its families worker from within the congregation - Antonia Osbourne-Stewart.

Meanwhile, St John's Locks Heath is part of the New Wine/Ministry Experience Scheme project that sees interns placed in some of our churches for a year. It has already welcomed four interns over the past two years, and expects to welcome three more this autumn.

Its parish-based internship co-ordinator can help to disciple and empower these young adults for ministry.

to meet together because of shared geography or shared interests.

In some cases, this has involved church leaders from very different traditions choosing to work together.

When our diocese first launched Cairns as a concept, there were nine specific groups that were designated as 'Pilot Cairns'.

They also meet regularly to eat, study and pray together. Members worked through the *Divine Renovation* resource and also

worked together towards a shared mission outcome. Each was offered £50,000 of strategic funding to turn that aspiration into reality.

The group covering **central Portsmouth** - including leaders from our cathedral, Harbour Church, St Mary's Fratton, Holy Spirit Southsea, St Luke's Southsea, and Church of the Ascension North End - is looking at the option of allocating its funding to a project supporting Charter Academy.

They would like their strategic funding to go towards a project based at St Luke's Church, which would aim to help parents and pupils at Charter, which is the only CofE secondary school on the mainland in our diocese.