

Funding to develop island congregations

CHURCH of England parishes in the Isle of Wight have been given extra funding in a broad initiative to support and develop their congregations.

A five-year, £2.7m project aims to plant a new congregation in Ryde, while equipping existing ones to have more engagement with schools and explore new ways to serve the local community.

The national Church of England has announced it will invest more than £1.2m of its strategic funds in the project. The other £1.5m would come from our diocese to fund clergy positions. This is the first part of a larger drive to encourage churches across the whole diocese, with significant investment in lay and ordained ministry in 2024, which we hope will be supported by further national Church funding.

This initial project aims for All Saints, Ryde, to grow from its current faithful congregations to include up to 300 new worshippers attending different styles of church service. This would include a new family worship service planted with the help of Harbour Church, Portsmouth, plus a Café Church, traditional Eucharistic worship, and an intern scheme for young people.

The five C of E churches in Ryde – All Saints, St John’s and St Michael’s in Ryde itself, plus St Peter’s, Havenstreet and Holy Cross, Binstead – would work together to engage with the seven schools across the town. They’d also work with community partners and churches of other denominations



Photo: Steve Gascoigne

Ryde is the gateway to the island and the location for a new church plant

to serve the local area better. This would be the first stage of plans to revitalise C of E churches across the Isle of Wight. Within the five years of this project, it is hoped that All Saints, Ryde, would be able to transfer worshippers to other C of E congregations on the island, to complement worship and mission initiatives happening elsewhere.

The Archdeacon of the Isle of Wight, the Ven Steve Daughtery, said: “Ryde has the island’s largest population, and church attendance there represents less than one per cent of its residents. It’s also the gateway to the island, so it seems a good place to examine fresh ways of doing church, alongside what already exists.

“There are about 30 island Christians who meet in each other’s homes, some of whom travel to the mainland to Harbour Church. So there is already a group able and committed to starting something new. All Saints is a landmark and

is in good repair, so we’d like our new family congregation and Café Church to be based there.

“Within two or three years, we’d expect the All Saints congregations would have grown into a younger, more diverse group, including families, younger adults and children. We’d invite some of them to move from Ryde to join in what is already happening in Newport.”

Some of the £2.7m funding will be spent on providing the four clergy for the five Ryde churches – a team rector, two team vicars and one curate. The team vicar who will take charge of traditional, inherited worship, the Rev David Morgan, was appointed in September.

The national Church’s funding also allows other staff to be recruited – a chief operational officer, worship/ youth leader, children/families leader, part-time administrator and four interns. Some of the funding will also be spent on church buildings.