



Justin banged the drum for the gospel

Photos: Neil Turner

The Archbishop of Canterbury spent three days in our diocese, joining our outreach in churches, schools and chaplaincies

IT was the craziest church that Archbishop Justin had been to for some time. That was his verdict on 'The Four', the innovative family service at Christ Church, Gosport, which mixes energetic worship with craft and a sit-down meal.

It was one of three very different congregations Archbishop Justin worshipped with as part of his three-day visit to our diocese. He helped St Wilfrid's in Cowplain celebrate its centenary on the Sunday morning, and was interviewed during Evensong at St Peter's, Petersfield that evening.

And the Archbishop believes our churches, chaplaincies and church schools are on the right track as we aim to offer a life-transforming encounter with Jesus to all.

"The Diocese of Portsmouth is doing superbly," he said. "I'm impressed by the depth of its spiritual life and the call for others to be part of that, the sense of focus without being bossy,

and the love shown without being cloying. There's also the wisdom in appointments so that wonderful people are doing the key jobs that makes my heart sing.

"What you are doing with Anna Chaplaincy is phenomenal, and the outreach is amazing in places like The Four at Christ Church, Gosport. We should be filled with hope about the future of the Church of England in this diocese."

The Archbishop began his final day in our diocese with a celebration of 100 years of **St Wilfrid's Church, Cowplain**. Former vicars Bishop Peter Hancock, the Ven Paul Moore and the Rev Ian Snares returned to take part. Bishop Peter preached, Paul and Ian both read lessons, while Lucy Moore led intercessions ahead of Archbishop Justin celebrating the Eucharist.

Current and former members of the congregation shared their memories. Neil Eastwood, whose

father was vicar in the 1950s, told a hilarious story about stealing marriage certificates from his father's study and 'marrying' classmates at school for a small fee. Others talked about the development of the church plant at Westbrook Church, and recent efforts to bless the local community.

Among the congregation was Valerie German, now 83, who was a missionary in Kenya in 1974 when Justin Welby arrived as part of a group of young people working there, and ended up sleeping on Valerie's floor. It was in Kenya that he first started reading the Bible, which led to his commitment to Christ in Cambridge in 1975. Valerie is a regular at St Wilfrid's, and the Archbishop made a point of seeking her out to offer her Communion.

"It was Justin's friend Robin who first gave him a Bible in Kenya, which he thought was a bit weird," she said. "But he read it, and I think that led him towards faith. It was

Quizzed by students from island schools

IT was a question that the Archbishop of Canterbury had never been asked before. Fifteen-year-old Yasmin Smith, from the Bay C of E School in Sandown, wanted to know if there was anyone who Archbishop Justin Welby had not wanted to pray for. She asked her question as part of a visit by the archbishop to her school.

He said it was a brand new question for him, and admitted there are people he struggles to pray for. But once he starts to talk to God about them, the Holy Spirit helps him to actually believe what he's praying.

Yasmin said: "I always thought that bishops and archbishops had to pray for everyone. So it was good to hear that he does find it difficult. It was a convincing answer."

The archbishop visited the Bay C of E School and Christ the King College in Newport on the first day of his three-day visit to our diocese. He met more than 2,000 students for question-and-answer sessions at which no question was off limits.

He talked about his personal faith, his experiences as archbishop, what it felt like to crown the new King, and what he thought of the current conflict in Israel and Gaza.

At Christ the King College in Newport, he spoke to staff about the shock they must have felt when they heard about the serious accident their colleague Gilly Harland had been involved in. He then blessed a classroom which was being used as a chapel for the first time.

The archbishop then met students in three different

Yasmin Smith (back, left) listens to the Archbishop at The Bay C of E School in Sandown with other students



sessions in the auditorium and sixth-form block. Each was preceded by worship led by an accomplished student worship band.

Among the questions he was asked by students were how he became archbishop, how many services he attends each week, and whether he ever regretted becoming a priest.

Sixth-former Kylan Sawyer, 16, asked him about Islam and the current conflict in Israel and Gaza. He said: "It was really interesting to hear what he thought."

At The Bay C of E School, Archbishop Justin was welcomed by a samba band as soon as he stepped out of the car. Inside, he heard a joint choir from the primary and secondary sites singing, and then prayed for both parts of the school as he blessed two commemorative plaques. He spent time in the school's library, where Yasmin Smith and others asked him questions.

He then took part in two student conferences with pupils from the Bay C of E School and



Question and answer session at Christ the King College, Newport

Niton Primary School, where he was asked more questions about his faith and his role. Among them were queries about the Bible verse that had helped him the most, and his attitude towards fossil fuel as a former oil executive. He described one of his proudest moments as being with refugees last week in Armenia.

Then he met parents picking up their children from the primary site of the Bay C of E school, and spoke to staff after the school day.

Bram Lorenz, whose son Buddy, aged 7, goes to the Bay C of E School, said: "You don't expect to run into the archbishop when you are picking up your child from school, but he was very relaxed and we appreciated it."