

Churches offer calm oasis for Christmas

THIS Advent is a chance for each church to become an oasis of calm amid the busyness of Christmas preparations. That's the thinking behind the national Church of England's Christmas campaign this year.

Their theme - 'Follow the Star: Calm and Bright' - draws on the sentiments expressed in the carol *Silent Night*, with daily reflections offering a chance to pause during Advent and prepare for a 'Calm' Christmas. Then through Christmas the focus will be on 'Bright', with a series of joyful reflections from Christmas Eve to Epiphany.

Parishes across our diocese will offer a variety of ways to engage with the Nativity story. We'll celebrate the mind-blowing idea that God chose to share in the joys and sorrows of being human as we host carol services, musical events and dramatic re-enactments. The story of how Jesus became a vulnerable baby so he could ultimately become our Saviour will be told again and again.

Among the events taking place are candlelit carol services at **Portsmouth Cathedral** on the evenings of December 21, 22, 23 and 24. The cathedral holds four identical services of lessons and carols to cope with demand. Our cathedral is also hosting family singalongs to the films *Frozen* and *The Muppets Christmas Carol* on December 20 - at 5.30pm and 8pm respectively.

Newport Minster will host Carols



Carols by candlelight in our cathedral

in the Square at 4.30pm on December 14. Join Wight Diamonds and the minster's Singing for Fun group to sing carols around the tree in St Thomas' Square. Then on December 17 at 5pm, Ryde Chorus invite you to sing Handel's *Messiah* from scratch.

at 2pm and 3:30pm. Each also includes a Christingle service. And worshippers are invited to dress up as a character from the Nativity for the church's Scratch Nativity at 10am on December 22.

Two vicars will dress as pantomime dames for the annual panto hosted by **St Clare's Church in Warren Park**, from December 6-8. The Rev Jonathan Jeffery, vicar of Leigh Park and Warren Park, and the Rev Hugo Deadman, vicar of Paulsgrove, will appear with a cast drawn from the local community in *Cinderella*.

Performances by the Leigh Park and Warren Park Community Panto Players are at 7pm on Friday, 2.30pm and 7pm on Saturday and 2.30pm on Sunday. Tickets are available on 023-9247 5276.

For more details of carol services and festive events, see: www.portsmouth.anglican.org/christmas



The **Brighstone Christmas Tree Festival** will once again take place in venues across Brighstone,

Calbourne and Mottistone, from December 5-8. Around 150 trees will be decorated by local organisations and displayed, with music and refreshments available for visitors. The festival has been held since 1996 and has raised over £100,000 for charity.

Holy Rood Church, Stubbington, will host a Christmas family fun event twice on December 21,