



Chris Cox with teenage helpers and children on a sports camp

'I gave up my work to focus on mission'

CHRIS Cox gave up his work and salary to spend more time on mission.

He stopped working for BT 10 years ago because God called him to Christian ministry via sport.

His previous voluntary work organising sports events had prompted him to consider whether this was a vocation.

Chris set up the charity Spirit in Sport, which provides sports coaching, runs holiday clubs and organises football and netball leagues with a Christian focus. In 2018, a total of 120 children took part in sports activities at

six separate camps taking place through the year.

Chris, now 61, was a worshipper at St Jude's, Southsea, and based his charity at Immanuel Baptist Church. He gives teenagers positions of responsibility in coaching those who are younger.

Recently, the charity has set up a new arm - Spirit in the Community - which includes a weekly cafe, a befriending service for those feeling isolated, and a men's shed.

"All our sports and other activities are geared for people of all abilities," said Chris, "We're

interested in seeing adults and children improving in confidence and in developing the young leaders of the future.

"Some of them turn up without faith, and then it's great to see them develop into Christians who go to university or take on roles in other churches.

"If I'd tried to do this in my own power, I would have failed. But God has encouraged us for 10 years. I've lived by faith all that time and our bank balance has never been in the red.

"I don't need to be ordained to do what God's calling me to, just obedient."

he said. "Teachers, doctors, engineers and street-cleaners may all feel they have a calling from God to do their job.

"Some may feel they have a vocation to be a parent, a grandparent or a trusted friend to someone in need. And others may feel God's call to volunteer in a particular role in their community. Vocations isn't all about working for the Church.

"For those who do feel called to work or minister in the Church,

there is nothing wrong with having another career first, as I did. But equally, no one should think they are too young to serve God in this way. Younger people can become an intern, or enrol on the Church of England Ministry Experience Scheme (CEMES) which gives them some experience in a parish.

"It is also possible to gain some theological training on our Portsmouth Pathway programme without being an ordinand, pioneer or Reader-in-training."

If you sense a calling from God towards licensed ministry, you'll be given a chance to explore that calling with experienced practitioners from across the diocese.

You may be sent on a selection conference for others to determine if you should go forward for formal training.

For details, contact Canon Peter Hall on 023-9225 1520 or peter.hall@portsmouth.anglican.org, or see www.portsmouth.anglican.org/vocations

Is God calling you to help the homeless?

DO you feel a vocation to make a difference to the society you live in? Is God calling you to volunteer with a project to help the homeless?

A church-run project which was launched in Portsmouth for the first time this year is to double in length in 2019.

Worshippers from Portsmouth are inviting homeless people to eat and sleep inside their church buildings every night for eight weeks from January 7 to March 4 next year. And they'll also increase the number of beds available each night from 10 to 12.

Seven churches took it in turns to host vulnerable people each night for four weeks as part of a pilot project in January and February 2018. All those churches have signed up for 'Open Church'



One of the guests tries out a bed at Open Church earlier this year again in 2019.

Of the guests hosted earlier this year, some gained employment through a work trial, three were rehoused, and one made a trip home. One pregnant woman was supported

in temporary housing, funded by the churches, until her baby was born.

Anyone interested in volunteering can contact the project via St Jude's Church, Southsea, on 023-9275 0442.

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Further information and an application form are obtainable from:
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