



Nick Capon at St Mary and All Saints Church, Droxford

## Course helped me to lead informal services

WHEN Nick Capon started worshipping at Droxford Church, he quickly began leading informal services with a team of others.

As he'd moved there from a Methodist Church, he was grateful for a course for lay worship leaders that ensured his previous experience was blended within Anglican practice.

Nick had been living in Droxford and was a trustee of the church's Wilfrid's Café, but had worshipped and was treasurer at Shirrell Heath Methodist. He felt God nudge him to attend his local church, and then discovered there was a desire for informal, all-age worship.

"God was speaking to a few of us during the vacancy, so we formed a team," he said. "I should credit the churchwarden Colin Matthisson for allowing us to launch something."

The first such service took place at St Mary and All Saints Church in November 2022. Monthly services include worship songs, a children's talk, visual aids, participation in an orchestra, craft and prayer.

Each has a Biblical theme that is locally advertised and aims to make it relevant to all, such as 'Forgiveness' or 'What is heaven

like?' - and one of the team makes chocolate mice to give away.

"We wanted to check with the area dean, Canon David Isaac, that our services were proper Anglican worship," said Nick. "He said they were actually holding a course for lay worship leaders, so I signed up for the six sessions.

"We learnt from visiting speakers and each other. It was encouraging to see people from neighbouring villages were in a similar situation. My wife and I also enjoy attending informal worship at St Peter's, Bishop's Waltham, and we learn from them.

"It is a team that puts our services together. Everyone has different gifts - there is an author who helps children dramatise Bible stories, someone who loves doing craft, musicians who want to lead worship, my wife who loves making cakes, and I'm willing to stand up and talk in front of people. We each take it in turns to lead.

"What works for our village may well not work for others. To start something new during an interregnum shows that the congregation here feels confident and happy to follow where God is leading."

Angela Adams, who is churchwarden and Lay Worship Leader at **St Lawrence**, found herself leading a thanksgiving service after the death of the late Queen Elizabeth. She said: "There was a lot of work put into that service. There is a lot expected of us in these roles, but it is a privilege to lead worship. I probably do about 24 a year now - planning the service, setting the hymns and offering a homily."

And Jill Fothergill, who is a past churchwarden and now a Lay Worship Leader at **St Lawrence**, said: "People get used to the idea that it's not the vicar leading it, and people in our congregations said I should do the course. It's great they have such faith in me. And people appreciate that you live in the village and know what it's like, rather than being a visiting clergy person."

Some lay people have been trained to visit parishioners in their own homes, to offer pastoral care. Among them is Hazel Peach, from **Niton**, who has now received training as a Lay Pastoral Assistant.

She said: "I believe that part of our faith does involve being in the community and living it out with people. You hear about those who'd like a visit via connections around the village. They may be poorly or housebound. They may not come to church, but they know who we are.

"The training does help, but you may be dealing with people who end up in tears, or dealing with something confidential that it is difficult to prepare for. So you don't do too many in one day. We visit in pairs, and people seem to find it valuable."

And Elizabeth Marsden, who is also a churchwarden and Lay Pastoral Assistant from **Niton**, said: "I love befriending people, welcoming them to the village, and helping them. It is a great privilege. People are very grateful for you coming."

A new cohort of lay ministers was commissioned last month at a

## Young people given taste of parish ministry

FOR Rebecca Gemmell, it's a valuable way of discovering what it might look like to work for a church.

The 19-year-old is spending a year on the staff at St Faith's Church, Lee-on-the-Solent, as well as getting some theological training.

She's one of three young people in our diocese on the Church of England's Ministry Experience Scheme, which gives those aged 18-30 a chance to work out their gifts and skills. The other two, Hannah Scott and Mary Ijuka, are working at St Jude's, Southsea.

Rebecca was part of the congregation at St Paul's, Sarisbury, before heading to the Taizé Community with Bishop Jonathan last summer and then starting her year at St Faith's last September. She's gained valuable experience there, leading sung

worship, helping at Messy Church, visiting the elderly and working with the youth group.

"I actually Googled 'How do you become a vicar?' and it was this scheme that came up," she said. "I'd also spoken to Bishop Jonathan when he came to St Paul's. It's very useful to see all the kinds of jobs available in a church team, and to see how a church runs - it's more complex than you might think!

"I help lead worship at the 11am service on a Sunday, and sometimes I'm the crucifer for the 9.30am service. I work with the elderly on a Thursday and with our community drop-in on a Friday.

"And our theological training happens each Wednesday at St Jude's, Southsea. We worship together, pray and hear from a speaker. We also have to write essays, which has been



Rebecca Gemmell

a highlight. It has been eye-opening and has broadened my perspective. It's improved my confidence and spirituality, and I'm able to share my faith better."

The scheme has been running for 10 years, and is based around practical experience of ministry. There's now also a strand of the scheme devoted to those who'd like to work with young people called 'Future Youth'.

See more details on [www.portsmouth.anglican.org/CEMES](http://www.portsmouth.anglican.org/CEMES)



Lay worship leaders from Bishop's Waltham deanery at their commissioning service in St Nicholas Church, Wickham

service in St Mark's, Wootton. The Archdeacon of the Isle of Wight, the Ven Steve Daughtery, commissioned eight new Lay Preachers and re-commissioned two Lay Worship Leaders and two Lay Pastoral Assistants.

Training for these kinds of commissioned lay ministers happens at deanery level, with input and support from diocesan officers. In some cases, one specific

clergy person has responsibility for this kind of training across their deanery.

In **Petersfield**, that is part of the job for the Ven Peter Sutton, who leads the deanery's work on lay ministry and is also vicar of Greatham, Empshott and Hawkley with Priors Dean. He recently led a Lay Preachers' course for 10 people over six sessions, having already run a Lay Worship Leaders' course. He

had previously helped develop the courses on the Isle of Wight.

"We thought about what sermons are for, listened to some, examined the use of our voices, thought about the theology - and then we each preached a six-minute sermon for each other, and invited feedback," he said. "I really enjoyed exploring these issues with some very engaged lay people."

Amanda Greenlee, from **All Saints Church, Steep**, said: "We have an all-age service once a month and I was principally interested in preaching at this type of service. We learnt from each other and from the course content. We observed sermons and practised analysing biblical texts. Our sermons were recorded and commented upon in our final session."

And the Ven Kathryn Percival commissioned 11 new Lay Worship Leaders to serve in the Bishop's Waltham deanery, at a service at St Nicholas, Wickham, last month.