

Church to move after outgrowing building

PORTSMOUTH'S fastest-growing congregation will move its main Sunday service to a historic church building after outgrowing its current premises.

Harbour Church is to work in partnership with St George's Church in Portsea from this summer. The two congregations will share the 18th century building opposite Gunwharf Quays as they work towards merging.

The St George's congregation will continue with regular Communion services at 9.30am each Sunday. Then the two congregations will share coffee and pastries together from 10.30am before the Harbour Church service starts at 11am.

The Rev Alex Wood, vicar of Harbour Church, will become priest-in-charge of St George's. And the Rev Matt Bray, who is curate at both Harbour Church and Portsmouth Cathedral, will take specific responsibility for the St George's congregation.

Ultimately, the aim is to create one thriving church that plays a pivotal role in the local Portsea community – as well as continuing to reach the young people and students that are attracted to Harbour Church.

Harbour Church is also launching a brand new family service this June at St Alban's, Copnor, where Alex is also priest-in-charge. It will build on the work already done with families at its weekly Tots and Toddlers group.



Harbour Church will move its main Sunday service from here to St George's

Each Sunday at 4pm, St Alban's Church will offer families free coffee and cake, plus a bouncy castle, toddlers' soft play area, face-painting and a photo booth. There will then be a half-hour presentation including lively songs, drama and prayer, after which families will share tea together.

Harbour Church was originally launched in a refurbished department store in Commercial Road in September 2016, with a core group of just 20 people. The bishop invited them to move from Brighton to set up a brand new church appealing to students and young people.

Now they welcome 320 people each week, with an average age of 26. Its main Sunday service, which includes groups for children and young people of different ages, needs more space.

Alex said: "We are part of a church planting movement that wants to

see churches revitalised across the UK. At Harbour Church, we have a role in helping Anglican churches in the city to thrive.

"That's why we want to work together with the existing congregations at St George's and St Alban's to help them to reach out to their local communities in new ways. We aren't taking over – we genuinely want to work in partnership with them. At St George's, we are aiming to create one community, rather than two congregations sharing a building and worshipping separately."

Rachel Scott-Thompson and Sarah Everett, churchwardens at St George's, said: "We are pleased to welcome the Harbour community. We may be a smaller congregation and used to a more traditional style of service, but we are excited about the potential for us to grow together and learn from one another."