



These stalwarts have served us for so long

ELEVEN faithful worshippers have been honoured for their service to the Church and their local communities. Bishop Christopher presented the stalwarts with a St Thomas Award to mark their commitment during a special Evensong in our cathedral.

It is the fourth year that the bishop has rewarded churchgoers across our diocese with this award, which is named after St Thomas a Becket.

Among the recipients was **John Matthews**, the former coroner on the Isle of Wight, who goes to St John's Church, Newport. He has been organist there for 39 years and part of the choir for 50 years. He now chairs the group that is seeking to transform the church building.

The Rev Di Netherway, from Northwood and Gurnard, has been chaplain at St Mary's Hospital on the Isle of Wight for more than 20 years, visiting weekly and helping with Sunday worship monthly. She voluntarily goes on call when the chaplaincy is short-staffed, and serves faithfully in her parishes too.

George Westcott is also from the Isle of Wight. At 29, he is one of our youngest churchwardens and has also been playing the organ at St Boniface, Bonchurch, since he was

just 16 years old. His huge pastoral heart for the church and the local community is illustrated by his devotion as a full-time carer for his mother.

Two churchwardens from the same parish were also recognised for their commitment during a difficult few years there. **Christopher Morrison** and **Tony Harris** were churchwardens in Warblington-with-Emsworth and selflessly gave their time and energy to serve the parish during that time.

Fred Mant has been a dedicated member of St Wilfrid's Church, Cowplain, since 1953. He has been in the choir since 1960, co-ordinates the team of servers, is verger of the church and caretaker of the halls. At 90, he is the oldest recipient of this year's St Thomas Awards.

Elizabeth Hawkins, from Hawkley with Priors Dean, has worked selflessly to help both the church and wider community. She's been a Reader since 2005 and village hall trustee. She has been on the PCC for 28 years, including nine years as PCC secretary, and has organised the parish's Sunday School groups and children's workshops.

Reader **Phil Rutt** has been instrumental in the growth and

development of ministry with families in St Paul's Church, Sarisbury Green. He also masterminded the oversight of the building of the church's new extension, but was primarily nominated for this award for his work with Fareham and Gosport Basics Bank.

Three of the recipients were not able to be in the cathedral to receive their St Thomas Awards from the bishop. **Eileen and Barrie Jones** were abroad promoting marriage and supporting Christian groups in Africa, Pakistan and elsewhere.

The pair, from Church of the Good Shepherd in Crookhorn, have been part of the Time for Marriage team since 1984, wrote the book 'When 2 Pray' in 2004 which has been translated and published in seven countries, and started travelling abroad to teach on the subject in 2007.

Barbara Holbrook, from St Mary's Church, Carisbrooke, was also unable to be there. She has held a host of parish roles, including being a Reader, churchwarden and Bible study group leader. Her ministry has involved many years of pastoral visiting and leading funerals, and in her 80s has continued to offer respite care to those who need it.