

Dyslexic trainee finding new ways to study

KEVIN Jones says the only book he's ever read all the way through is the Bible.

His dyslexia made him nervous about signing up to an academic theological course, but he is enjoying the Portsmouth Pathway. The mix of learning and practical experience suits him.

The 62-year-old grandfather, who goes to the Church of the Good Shepherd in Crookhorn, is on the first year of his three-year Reader training course. But he's already preaching in churches of various denominations.

"I think I am a natural evangelist, and I have preached in a number of places already," he said. "The academic side does scare me, as I am dyslexic, but I was encouraged to do this.

"It's not easy, but I love learning, and enjoy the chats we have together. The residential part

pandemic, physical interaction wasn't possible and training was held digitally. But the students appreciate the renewed chance to be part of a physical community of faith.

Then at around 6.45pm, the theological sessions start, with first-year ordinands and trainee Readers in one room, and second and third-year students learning together in another.

Among the subjects covered are Old and New Testament studies, ethics, ministry skills, pastoral care, worship, mission and leadership. Students are also given the chance to practice their preaching skills at local churches, and to go through what is involved with leading weddings, funerals and baptisms.

The course is run in partnership with Ripon College Cuddesdon, near Oxford, which is also a residential theological college.



Kevin Jones with colleagues on the Pathway course

of what we do in Oxford is also interesting, although it's full-on as we eat, pray and study together all weekend.

"I am struggling with the essay side of things, but I can get help. It's not just the writing side of it, but the reading too. We're trying to

find ways for me to access audio books, which makes it easier for me. But a few years ago, when it was perhaps a more academic course, I wouldn't have been able to access it.

"Trainee Readers and ordinands do slightly different things, with an extra residential in Oxford for them. But it is good to train alongside each other, and we do have the same homework. And I live in Portsmouth, so I'm really grateful that this course exists within the city.

"I've been at Church of the Good Shepherd for 14 years, and I do visit other churches, preaching. I take the view that we are one Church, and the message is the same, whichever denomination you belong to. I just wish we could be more united."

from other places.

The director of the Portsmouth Pathway is the Rev Dr Richard Wyld, who was previously our bishop's chaplain. He is supported by tutors drawn from this diocese and further afield, who have expertise in specific subjects.

He said: "I love working alongside such a diverse and committed group of people, and my hope is to see everyone grow in faith, and confidence in their calling.

"For me the study of theology is not an academic thing. It's about knowing God more closely, hearing one another's perspectives and seeing things from a fresh angle. As much as I enjoy teaching, what I love even more is hearing the insights of the community."

If you are interested in applying for a place, please go to www.portsmouth.anglican.org/pathway for more information.



Students enjoy being on the Portsmouth Pathway

The three-year course leads either to a Higher Education Certificate or a Diploma, both of which are accredited by Durham University.

And our Pathway students also includes some from Chichester diocese, and some who choose to study theology independently. Some are on bespoke courses, to fit their specific needs and

experiences.

All students have the chance to experience residential weekends at Ripon College Cuddesdon, near Oxford, once a term, with ordinands usually having two separate weekends there each term. These allow more intensive study and the chance to meet students preparing for ministry



Chris Nicol enjoys learning on the Portsmouth Pathway

Ex-teacher appreciates being taught by others

CHRIS Nicol spent 15 years as an RE teacher - but studying on the Portsmouth Pathway has been a "paradigm shift" in how he sees faith.

The retired teacher says the study he's now doing has prompted a fundamental change in his mindset, giving him a deeper theological insight into God, the Christian faith and the Bible.

Chris, who worships at our cathedral, is now on the second year of his three-course as a trainee Reader.

He'd previously taught RE at St Edmund's RC School in Portsmouth, and before that taught at primary school.

"A friend in London said they'd been up all night thinking about me, and thought I should go for ordination," said Chris. "I'm over 60, so that wasn't possible, but I did decide to explore being a Reader and the doors opened.

"It has been such a fascinating journey and I'm so glad that I explored it. It has involved a paradigm shift in how I see Christianity, and it has opened up

all sorts of new things about God, life and the Bible.

"The course is so convenient, being at St Luke's. I can jump on my bike and get there on a Tuesday afternoon so easily. And it's a real city centre church with a community feel, so a great place to be. I'm looking forward to doing a placement here.

"The Pathway also has a really good selection of books in their library, which have been donated by former students and others.

"In my first academic year, a lot of the sessions were on Zoom, which is so impersonal. It was harder to have that bonding and to build relationships with others. It's so much better now.

"And I enjoy the fact that we take it in turns to lead worship. It's definitely out of my comfort zone, and helps us to prepare for leading different styles of worship.

"One thing that being a teacher taught me was the importance of good preparation and organisation. You can't wing it in school. I think it's going to be similar as I preach sermons and lead worship."