

Actors stage musical telling life of Jesus

PAUL Wren will be relying on God as he plays the part of Jesus in a musical.

He's taking the lead role in *The Miracle*, which is being performed before Easter at St John's Church, Locks Heath. It tells the story of Jesus's life through words and song. And Paul, who goes to St Paul's Church, Sarisbury Green, knows God is helping him to rehearse and perform.

"I do play the piano and I have sung in the church choir," he said. "But when they originally asked me to take this part, I thought 'I can't remember lines or sing'. I prayed and felt God saying I should trust him. And now when I hear my voice singing, it feels as though it is quite strong - but that's nothing to do with me!"

"We are amateurs, but this musical really does have moments that make you think. There are at least a couple of moments that choke me up."

The musical brings together a cast of 50 people, aged from seven to 90, from churches in Locks Heath, Warsash, Sarisbury Green and Titchfield, as well as pupils from St John the Baptist Primary, Titchfield Common. It will be performed on three successive nights - March 30 and 31 and April 1.

Retired teachers Jim Wood and Bob Isaac originally wrote the script and music more than 20 years ago for the millennium. It takes the audience from Jesus as a young boy through his miracles



Worshippers re-enact the triumphal procession into Jerusalem, led by Paul Wren, playing the part of Jesus

and parables, to the crucifixion and beyond. The play is performed in modern dress.

Jim said: "Bob and I taught at Bay House School and we wrote a number of songs that were then used by local schools performing at Ferneham Hall and elsewhere. We wrote *The Miracle* for the millennium and a Christmas musical called *The Gift* which we've also performed here.

"We were rehearsing *The Miracle* just before the first lockdown, but had to stop. Part of the reason we wanted to do it is that we have a traditional 9.30am congregation and more contemporary worship at 11am.

"One of our aims was to offer something that brought together all members of the church. We've also opened it up to other churches in the Western Wards, and to pupils from the school. And Paul was quite

a find. He's got an excellent singing voice and he knew all of his lines before the first rehearsal."

Hannah Weager, who recently finished her course at Bath Spa University, plays both Mary Magdalen and the woman caught in adultery. "I grew up at this church," she said. "Jim found out I was back from uni and asked me to be involved. The lines are really good and quite emotional. And the rest of the cast are very supportive."

One of the narrators, Kate Hastings, said: "I'd never done anything like this before, but Jim thought I'd be good. I enjoy the rehearsal process and everyone is so friendly."

The performances, at St John's Locks Heath, start at 7.30pm on all three nights. Tickets, priced at £5 each, can be bought from the church office on 01489-578082. More details on www.sjlh.org.uk/miracle.