

# Taizé trip was a real eye-opener for us all

YOUNG pilgrims from parishes across our diocese were given an eye-opening spiritual experience during a week in Taizé.

Bishop Jonathan led the young adults on their pilgrimage to the ecumenical Taizé Community, where they met thousands of young Christians from around the world. They enjoyed reflective worship, community living and silent prayer.

The 13 pilgrims were aged between 18 and 30, in line with the bishop's vision to deepen the discipleship of young people. The daily programme included worship three times a day, the sharing of domestic tasks and the opportunity to study the Bible in small groups.

The Rev Will Alvarez, 29, curate at St Faith's, Lee-on-the-Solent, said: "It's not often that you get the opportunity to work and serve alongside other Christians from around the world. We were all given jobs and I was on food distribution. It was great to build relationships as we worked together.

"I really enjoyed the times of reflective worship and the chance to study the Bible with others. It was a really significant time for me and for many of the others who came."

Rebecca Gemmell, 18, from St Paul's, Sarisbury Green, was leading worship in her church when Bishop Jonathan approached her to suggest going to Taizé.

"It's like nothing I've ever experienced before," she said. "It's so different to how everyone



Young adults from our diocese at the Taizé Community in France

leads their real lives. There's no technology, and it's hard to take that kind of break at home. You had nothing to worry about, including all your food was provided, and it was jam-packed with fun stuff and amazing times.

"My job was to work on the recycling bins – physically jumping on things to compact them. We did go straight from that into worship, and I might have liked to have a shower first! But both the weather and the worship were amazing.

"They really value silence, so having 10 minutes of silence at the start of each worship time – three times a day – was a massive part of it. As a worship leader, I loved the songs. Repeating the same phrase many times really solidifies it in your brain. The simplest words can mean so much.

"I was part of the choir they put together as well. I'd hope to bring back some of what I've learned for

when we lead worship at church."

And Pip Collins-White, 19, from St Mary's, Fratton, said: "I was blown away by the community and the tranquility and the peace there. I loved the way that it unites Christians from different traditions, backgrounds and beliefs, and we were able to have productive discussions and understand each other much better.

"It has changed the way I think about my faith, and I've found a deeper way of connecting with God. There is a routine, which you have to get accustomed to, but it helps you to focus on the important things, rather than what you're going to eat or what clothes to wear.

"It was also lovely meeting people from different traditions, and interesting to see how they worship. It was great to learn more and to think about how we can work together to share an understanding of God."