

# Pilgrims cover our deaneries in prayer



OUR worshippers surrounded all seven of our deaneries in prayer as part of this year's Thy Kingdom Come celebrations.

Clergy, churchgoers and schoolchildren embarked on seven Prayer Pilgrimages – walking around a different deanery each day to mark the 10th anniversary of the global prayer initiative.

They stopped every hour, on the hour, at a series of locations to pray for others to come to know Jesus, and for the churches and communities they were visiting.

After the Prayer Pilgrimage during the day, one church in that deanery also hosted an evening celebration, which might include worship, teaching about prayer and a variety of ways that people can pray.

Day 1 saw pilgrims from **Bishop's Waltham deanery** begin walking in Wickham, following the Meon Valley Trail northwards to St Peter's Church, Soberton, and St Mary and All Saints, Droxford. Pilgrims then continued up Old Winchester Hill,

where almost the whole diocese could be seen, and then finished on Beacon Hill. The evening prayer celebration took place in St Peter's, Curdridge.

Seven children from Swanmore CofE Primary School joined the pilgrims in Soberton and walked all the way to the top of Old Winchester Hill.

**'It was great to talk to others about their lives and make connections.'**

One of them, Elodie Osmond, aged six, helped to lead prayers near the disused Droxford railway station, which was used by Winston Churchill to meet military commanders and Allied leaders to plan the Normandy landings on D-Day.

She said: "It was nice because I didn't think we'd get to do the prayers. I would definitely do a pilgrimage again."

Day 2 saw the pilgrims cross

**Fareham deanery**, from Warsash in the west to Portchester Castle in the east. Rain didn't dampen their enthusiasm as they took in Titchfield Abbey, Holy Trinity Fareham and St Peter and St Paul Fareham on the way.

And the evening celebration that night at St Mary's, Portchester, began with pizza served in the tea room. Then musicians from Holy Rood, Stubbington, led worship, and worshippers tried out a variety of ways to pray.

Day 3 saw worshippers walking across **Havant deanery** – from St Peter's Church, Hayling Island, in the south to All Saints Church, Catherington, towards the north. They prayed in a number of churches on the way, including St Faith's, Havant; St Thomas, Bedhampton; Church of the Good Shepherd, Crookhorn; St George's, Waterlooville; and Hart Plain Church.

More than 100 people joined the walk at various stages during the day, some walking for part of the route, a few walking the whole

route, and some joining in the prayer in specific churches. Many also attended the evening prayer celebration at All Saints Church, Denmead.

Leah Elsey, from St James Church, Emsworth, said: "I was only going to walk from Hayling Island to Havant, but at each stage I felt there was nothing stopping me from going further. It was great to talk to others about their lives and to make connections with them."

Pilgrims prayed and walked around **Petersfield** on Day 4. The Rev Andrew Hargreaves then walked to All Saints Church, Steep, where he helped to lead collective worship for the pupils from Steep CofE Primary School alongside the Rev Sue Jones. The evening celebration took place in St Mary Magdalen, Sheet.

Worshippers strode 15 miles around the **Isle of Wight deanery** on Day 5. They began at Oakfield CofE Primary School in Ryde, where the Revs David Morgan and Andrew Hargreaves led collective worship. Several classes then joined the walkers for the first kilometre of the walk through Ryde, while other children waved them off as they marched out of the playground.

The walkers shared Communion and lunch in The Bay CofE School in Sandown, before walking on to Newport. The evening prayer celebration took place in Newport Minster.

Day 6 of our prayer pilgrimages involved walking right around **Gosport**, from Holy Trinity Church in the south, to Elson, Rowner and Bridgemary further north, down to Lee-on-the-Solent, and then past HMS Sultan and Gosport War Memorial Hospital to St Mary's Alverstoke.

Pilgrims were given bacon sandwiches at St Matts on the Corner cafe in St Matthew's, Bridgemary, and prayed inside St Faith's, Lee-on-the-Solent,



Far left: Pilgrims outside All Saints, Catherington, on Day 3; top: outside St Peter's Church in Soberton; below: children from Oakfield CofE Primary on Day 5

while the church's summer fete was happening. The evening celebration was at Christ Church, Stoke Road, which is part of Haven Church.

The final day of our Thy Kingdom Come prayer pilgrimages was in **Portsmouth**, and started and ended at our cathedral. Worshippers walked and prayed around the entire Portsea Island, strolling along the seafront in Southsea, Eastney and along the side of Langstone Harbour before heading for Hilsea Lines.

They arrived back at our cathedral just before a special Pentecost Sunday prayer celebration, where worship was led by Harbour Church and people were able to place

candles on a map of the diocese to denote their prayers.

Among those who completed the entire 14-mile walk were Michael and Marina Horner from Church of the Resurrection in Farlington. Michael said: "It has been great to chat to people and to understand a bit more about their views, and I hope that went both ways. And when we stopped to pray, it was pitched just right."

And Jonathan Sandland, 20, from St Jude's, Southsea, said: "It's been good to meet new people and to do a lot of prayer. We've stopped and prayed for specific parts of the diocese on the way, and for the five people who we are praying for to become Christians."