

# Camels will return to streets of Leigh Park

CAMELS will walk through the streets of Leigh Park again in the latest Christmas event organised by its local churches.

Worshippers at St Francis Church and St Clare's Church will spearhead a festival that aims to weave together the community and spiritual aspects of Christmas.

The Leigh Park and Warren Park Starlight Festival aims to promote community spirit by bringing together local groups for an event held in St Francis Church that will also provide opportunities to pray.

And it will be launched with the community's second procession of camels in two years. The first was in December 2016 at the start of the church's Community Nativity Play. This one aims to draw crowds into this special festival.

Event organiser Carolyn Owens said: "We want to create an event for residents which brings together all community groups and stakeholders in preparation for Christmas.

"We want to draw people into a reflective, rather than a commercialised start to Christmas, based on community cohesion. It will be, in a sense, a community Christmas launch, with Jesus at its centre.

"We want to have the camel procession because it will attract crowds and draw people to this event, but also because it is our way of saying to people who live



**The camel procession ahead of the Community Nativity Play in 2016**

here that they are valued, and that something special like camels wandering about Leigh Park is our gift to them."

They hope local groups will showcase their talents, and publicise what they are doing over Christmas. Art and craft, plus refreshments will be provided. Worshippers will also build on the success of their Prayer Spaces in Schools initiative for local pupils by providing similar prayer stations at the festival.

Children from the area's local primary schools will be invited to decorate stars that can then be exhibited at the festival. Worshippers will distribute more than 2,000 stars in advance.

The festival will take place on November 24 and will be followed the next weekend

with performances of the latest community pantomime produced by the churches - a production of Aladdin.

This will be the third year that the churches have staged a play for Christmas. After the Community Nativity Play of 2016, the group of actors were keen to stage another production, so tackled Cinderella last year.

The festival is being supported financially by our diocese's Mission Opportunities Fund. This dates back to our diocese's Ministry for Mission strategy, when funding was allocated to innovative projects that promoted mission.

A small amount of money is still available for parishes to apply for. Allocations are made twice a year. For more details, see [www.portsmouth.anglican.org/MOF](http://www.portsmouth.anglican.org/MOF)