

IN DEPTH: PRAYER LIFE

Earlier in the week, **Churches Together in Petersfield** had created a pop-up prayer space in the High Street for Thy Kingdom Come. Shoppers could try different prayer stations, write prayers and pin them to a board, and add Post-It notes to a map to indicate prayers for world issues.

Christians in Portsmouth prayed in each others' churches in a variety of styles each evening during Thy Kingdom Come. And on the morning of June 8, they prayed together on Portsdown Hill looking down at the city.

St Faith's Church in Lee-on-Solent hosted 24 hours of prayer from June 7-8, while worshippers at **St Jude's Church in Southsea** prayed continuously for 72 hours from June 7-9. **Churches in Cosham** took part in prayer walks across the area, while **St Hubert's, Idsworth**, threw a prayer and picnic party on the evening of Ascension Day.

'It was exciting to see Christians praying together in different styles'

Diocesan mission development officer the Rev Andrew Hargreaves said: "I went to each of the prayer events in Portsmouth across the city. It was exciting to see Christians from such a wide range of churches praying together in a number of different styles for people to come to know the love of God revealed in Jesus Christ and for God's Kingdom to come across the city."

Our diocese has offered spirituality days, prayer resources and weekly courses for a number of years to those who would like to develop their prayer lives further. Currently the spirituality



Top: worshippers at the Big Prayer Picnic stretched out their hands to pray in turn for each area of our diocese; below: anointing and healing prayer was one of the styles on offer at the Portchester Castle event

team is running a two-year training course for spiritual directors, but look out for short modules on various spiritual themes from the autumn of 2020. They will be advertised on the website in good time.

A series of stand-alone spirituality days offers worshippers the chance to hear from experts on different aspects of spirituality. This autumn's sessions includes one on 'A Personal Relationship with Jesus' on September 7 in Bishop's Waltham, and one on 'Encountering God in all things' on October 5, in Rowlands Castle. Details on www.portsmouth.anglican.org/spirituality.

Our diocesan spirituality adviser the Rev Ruth Tuschling also

coordinates a network of spiritual directors, who can journey alongside those seeking to engage with God in new ways. If you would like to explore this, please contact Ruth on ruth.tuschling@portsmouth.anglican.org.

And Ruth has also created a Rule of Life called Lifelines, which provides a structure for those who would like to deepen their discipleship and live daily with Christ. It's part of our **live | pray | serve** strategy, and you can download the booklet from www.portsmouth.anglican.org/spirituality.

Many other resources to help you pray can also be found on that part of our website.

Celtic prayer reveals 'God in all things'

IT was 10 years ago that Sandra Matthews was introduced to Celtic prayer on a diocesan spirituality course. Now she leads a monthly act of worship based on Celtic liturgy.

The simple liturgy, with its emphasis on 'God in all things', enables worshippers to take their prayers out of church services and into their daily life.

Sandra now leads Celtic worship services on the third Sunday evening of each month in the chancel of the 12th century St Thomas's Church in Bedhampton.

She said: "We use daily prayer from the Northumbria community,



Celtic prayer is a simple liturgy

which includes lighting a candle, praying simple words from the Celtic tradition, a brief homily, and a focus on the seasons of the year and the seasons of our life.

"For some people, it is the only time in the week that they slow down and reflect. The Celtic cross includes both a circle of the world and the cross of the redemption and both are important.

"It is very tempting to go to church and then just go home and for it to make no difference, but

Celtic prayer is something that you can carry through the rest of your life.

"The idea was always to take those simple prayers into people's working lives, so they could continue to pray those prayers as they worked in the fields. It feels right that, in all our busyness, we can join with prayers that people have prayed in the past."

The next Celtic prayer session at St Thomas's, Bedhampton, will happen at 6pm on September 15.

Prayer for others provides pastoral support

PRAYER for, and with, others is as important to our faith as our personal prayer to God.

In most of our services, there will be intercessions, asking God for his help in a variety of ways. Face-to-face prayer with those who need his help is also important.

For Rachel Hicks, who leads the pastoral care team at St John's Church, Fareham, prayer is a vital part of the support they offer.

"Caring for others, listening to them, and being part of their journey through life has always been something I've done, in church and elsewhere," she said. "But having an official team of volunteers here has made it more structured.

"There are around eight of us, and people will be referred to us if they need to be visited. We might go as a pair first time, assess their needs and then go individually.

"Everyone has the bishop's licence to take home Communion to people, if they want it, and we always offer prayer.



Praying for others is a vital part of our prayer life

"What kind of prayer depends on the person - it can be formal or familiar prayer, such as the Lord's Prayer, or more free and spontaneous.

"Pastoral care involves praying alongside people and helping them to hear God in the midst of their struggles and complicated lives. There is something really special and valuable about being able to do that.

"We also have a good phone

ministry network, which means ringing people up to check if they are OK, as well as writing people letters, and sending them cards at Easter, Christmas and so on.

"There are some people who don't consider the church has been until the vicar comes, but they do know that Bruce Deans prays by name once a month at our 9am service for all our faithful congregation members who are housebound."