

Hospice to mark 35 years of service

CHURCHGOERS are urged to celebrate 35 years of the Isle of Wight's hospice at a special anniversary service this month.

The thanksgiving service at 3pm on May 4 is an opportunity to mark the contributions of all those involved in the development of the Earl Mountbatten Hospice, and give thanks for the community's huge support.

Bishop Christopher and the Lord Lieutenant of the Isle of Wight, Maj Gen Martin White, will attend the celebration at All Saints Church, Ryde.

Past and current staff members and volunteers will also be present, along with patients, carers and fundraising supporters. The service will include a performance from the hospice's community choir.

Chief executive Nigel Hartley said: "Our hospice belongs to everyone and this is a celebration of their contribution, which is so important to recognise."

The Archdeacon of the Isle of Wight, the Ven Peter Sutton, said "All of our parishes are familiar with the work of the hospice and delight in giving thanks to God for it and celebrating this milestone. Chaplains, parish clergy, lay pastoral assistants and many others engage with the hospice in many ways and are privileged to share in such important ministry."

There are refreshments after the service. Parking around the church is limited.

Retiring after 38 years of ministry

HE is our diocese's longest-serving parish priest – and he's stepping down this summer.

Canon Mike Sheffield, vicar of St George's Church, Waterloo, will retire this summer after 38 years in ordained ministry, all within our diocese. He was ordained deacon back in July 1979 by the then Bishop of Portsmouth, the Rt Rev Ronald Gordon.

Mike had originally been a teacher in Essex and trained for ordination in Salisbury. His first post, as curate, was at St John's Church, Locks Heath, where he was part of a team that introduced a new scheme for more than 50 teenagers.

After four years there, he became curate at Holy Trinity, Ryde – the start of 13 years serving churches in Ryde. Among the highlights there was the creation of the Ryde Group Ministry, which involved six parishes. Mike was the convenor of the group, and found it rewarding to see the churches working together.

He said: "A particular highlight was a Holy Saturday evening service when all six Paschal Candles were lit together from one candle brought from the cathedral in a glass jar, still alight, and carried by Canon David Isaac on the hovercraft!"

Mike also helped to organise Bishop Timothy Bavin's farewell visit to the East Wight deanery in 1995. The bishop wanted to visit



Mike Sheffield being installed as a Canon last year with his wife Lynda and Bishop Christopher

each of the 13 groups of parishes in a day. He did so by reaching each one by a different mode of transport. These included ferry, train, bus, fire engine, police car and the Bembridge lifeboat.

From 1996, he was vicar of St Alban's, West Leigh, where he was delighted to work alongside the people and clergy of the other Leigh Park parishes.

He arranged a deanery-wide Eucharist on Hayling Island which brought together worshippers from parishes across Havant and Waterloo. And he was proud to take the people of St Alban's to celebrate their Sunday Parish Eucharist in our cathedral.

In 2002, our diocese marked its 75th anniversary and the centrepiece of the celebrations was an open-air Diocesan Eucharist on Castle Field in Southsea.

It involved 6,000 worshippers from parishes across the mainland and the Isle of Wight coming together on a very hot day.

Mike chaired a planning team which chartered an Isle of Wight ferry, commissioned giant puppets to tell the Emmaus Road story, and organised a Family Fun Day, including a beer tent and children's fairground rides.

Then in 2004, he became vicar at St George's Waterloo, where processions, schools and music have continued to feature in Mike's ministry. Among other developments was the annual Waterloo Music Festival, hosted by the church and attracting thousands of music-lovers.

Bishop Christopher paid tribute to him last year as he was installed as an honorary Canon of Portsmouth Cathedral.

"Mike is an incorrigible, imaginative and energetic enthusiast," he said.

"Whether it's ministry among young people, which has been a characteristic of his work; processions, which are undertaken for the thinnest of reasons; pilgrimages – ten to the Holy Land and many to Walsingham; the stage, where his roles have included a nun in *The Sound of Music*; or incense which once made an outing at Locks Heath where, in a parish obviously without a thurible, he used a coconut shell instead."

And Mike is keen for the Church to be seen not as a members-only club, but a place where Christians worship and hear God's call for mission.

"God is in everything we do!" he said. "The really vital role of a parish priest is to introduce people to God by bringing them into Church or by taking the Church to them. It has been a real privilege to work and worship alongside so many willing and hard-working people in the Church and in the community."

"My wife Lynda and I feel very sorry to be leaving but we're reassured to know that the congregation of St George's will keep the worship vibrant and the welcome warm for all those who venture inside."

"I hope that during my ministry people have been brought into the Church and helped to listen to God's call, in small and un-noticed ways as well as in the big events and great acts of worship."

Pompey Chimes

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Walking football hits the right spot

WHEN Farlington churchgoer John Twine injured his knee, he realised there was a way he could still play football.

He organised a team of over-50s to play walking football each week at Goals in Tangier Road, Portsmouth. It's under the umbrella of the Christian charity Faith and Football, for which John is a trustee.

Each Wednesday night from 6.30pm-7.30pm, 20 or so over 50s gather to play, including ex-Pompey player Mick Mellows.

"We don't take ourselves too seriously," said John.



The walking football team at Goals in Portsmouth

"In fact we have a good time, getting some exercise, developing friendships and entering tournaments against

other local sides."

All new players are welcome – just turn up. It costs just £3 a session.