

Our newest congregation is launched



It was an emotional occasion as Sunday worship began in a Portsmouth parish for the first time in almost two years.

Around 70 worshippers crammed into the hall of St Margaret's church hall in Eastney for the Sunday afternoon service. It included lively songs, passionate prayers and inspiring testimony.

It was led by a team of 15 Christians, mostly from nearby St Jude's Church, who felt called to serve the community living around the Highland Road church. They'd already held regular midweek meetings, community open days and men's fitness sessions since the spring.

The vicar of St Jude's, the Rev Mike Duff, who is overseeing the new congregation, opened the service by mentioning the faithful worship at St Margaret's over more than 100 years.

"It was so sad when worship had to stop here in December 2015, and we want to acknowledge the real grief that people felt at that point," he said. "Some of those former congregation members found new homes in nearby churches, but have turned up today to wish us well, and we're grateful for that."

"It was exciting when St Jude's was asked to plant a new congregation here, and we're really looking forward to seeing what God does."

The service was led by team leader Fran Carabott, and included a children's song, worship led by a small music group, and a sermon by congregation member Steve Dawson based on Isaiah 61.

Children were welcomed with activities at the back of the hall. The deputy Lord Mayor of Portsmouth, Cllr Lee Mason, was there to add his support.

Brenda Cook, who was part of the original St Margaret's congregation and now goes to St James, Milton, was among those attending.

She said: "I'm glad to see a living Christian presence in this part of Eastney. It's very different from the old St Margaret's, but in spite of that, I wish them well and trust they will flourish."

And Jill Chalmers, who was the only previous member of St Margaret's to join the 15-strong core team, said: "I really enjoyed it. It's very lively, and there was a good atmosphere, and it was good to see it so full."

Aileen Kellam, who was part of St Jude's Church, said: "There's always been something in my heart for St Margaret's. I kept in touch and I remember when the church closed down. So it's lovely to come along and I think we'll come regularly."

Her mum Margaret Colquhoun said: "I enjoyed it. It was a lovely atmosphere, and Stephen's talk was appealing to all the congregation. This church plant is a wonderful thing, and I'll pray for those who are drawn to it."

And Susan Brown, who went to St

MEET SOME OF THE CORE TEAM AT ST MARGARET'S



CLARE CARABOTT met Fran while travelling through Australia. They got married, have two teenage children and lived in London before settling to Southsea. She now works for a property management company in Southsea.

She said: "My passion is to see children and youth praising Jesus, knowing they are loved. I am so excited to be part of St Margaret's, to serve the community, to see lives transformed – especially women."



STEVE DAWSON is married to Philippa and they have four children – one is a teacher, two at university and one at the city's new engineering college. They moved to Southsea with the Royal Navy around 25 years ago, loved it and stayed. He left the Navy seven years ago and now works for the Church of England in Salisbury.

He said: "Spreading the good news about Jesus has been in my heart for many years, so I jumped at the chance to help do that with St Margaret's."



FRANKIE BREWER is 27, married to Darren and has a two-year-old daughter, Ezellah. She's an illustrator and she is part of the St Margaret's worship group.

She grew up in the Catholic Church but her family stopped attending when she was nine.

She said: "I gave my life to Jesus when I was 18, when I learnt the truth about who He really was. I am a continuous work in progress and I have learnt the importance of a strong church family."



SUSAN BROWN is married to Jerry and then have two adult children and three young grandchildren.

She has lived in Southsea all her life and thinks it's a great place to live, work or relax in. She worked in a local school for 12 years and has been involved in many community events in the past.

She said: "When I heard about this new church starting up I was excited by the opportunity to get involved and serve the local community."



STEVE HEYWARD, was born in Southsea and works for Portsmouth City Council. He's married to Jeannette (see her story on page 12), and they have three children and one grandchild.

He's supported Pompey FC since 1960 and is part of a group of Christians who pray at Fratton Park. His interests include steam railways, aviation and model railways. He plays bass guitar and six-string guitar for a number of groups, including in St Margaret's.

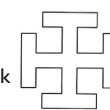


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REGULAR EVENTS AT ST MARGARET'S

Sundays:

4pm: Informal worship. With lively songs, children's work and challenging preaching.

Thursdays:

1.45pm: Little Fish Big Fish. Toddler group for parents and carers with pre-school children.

Fridays:

7pm: Relentless. Circuit-based fitness training for men of all ages and all abilities.

Team leader Fran Carabott said: "God has called us here to serve this community, and we're going to do everything we can to do so."

"It's fantastic to meet people who have had some previous link with the church – they were married there, or had children baptised there, or they used to attend."

"They all seem really pleased that worship is happening here again, and it's been great to welcome them back."

The St Margaret's Church building still remains unsafe for use. Services and midweek events will happen in the church hall for the foreseeable future. The new congregation is also co-ordinating hall bookings for non-church groups.

For more details, search for 'St Margaret's Community Church' on Facebook.

● **MY FAITH:** Jeannette Hayward from St Margaret's: see page 12.



The Rev Mike Duff introduces the first Sunday service in St Margaret's for almost two years; top right: worship at St Margaret's

Simon's, Southsea, and Portsmouth Family Church before joining the core team, said: "I could grow. It's also good that it is under the St Jude's umbrella, which gives it credibility."

was looking to be based somewhere nearer where I live, and I was also attracted to the idea of being in something that was small, but

"It's really good to have a variety of different kinds of churches across Portsmouth, because you can then recommend a church that you think your neighbours will like."

Sunday services will continue in the St Margaret's Community Church at 4pm each week.

The church has also launched a toddler group, which meets on Thursday afternoons from 1.45pm-3.30pm. Its men's fitness sessions, which involve an hour of intensive circuit training, happen from 7pm-8pm on Friday evenings.

The congregation will host fireworks on the beach after their service on November 5, and is already planning a Christmas carol service on December 16 at 6.30pm.

eyewitness



Top: Abi Nelson leads children's work during the service; middle: worship team Frankie Brewer and Steve Hayward; bottom: Fran Carabott interviews Lisa

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