



acity attendance for one of its Sunday services.

Saint Mary's Southampton is looking at ways of accommodating more people after its 10:30 contemporary Sunday service grew to 350 people – including around 50 children.

Rev Jon Finch, Vicar of Saint Mary's, who joined the church in 2018 after it had been in vacancy, said he had been surprised by the rapid growth of the congregation so soon after Covid restrictions were lifted.

"We have a phenomenal team, who are very dedicated," he said.

He added: "We are not doing anything new – the message is not changed. What we are doing is trying to be radically hospitable.

"We are not trying to just build a church, we are seeking the renewal of the city. We are saying that our lives as Christians are bigger than just ourselves and the church, it is about playing our part in the social, cultural and spiritual renewal of the city. We are passionate about working alongside and learning from the city's most vulnerable."

Saint Mary's runs a social supermarket and a café in partnership with other agencies and provides classes in areas such as IT, CV writing and mentoring for people seeking employment.

It has three Sunday services in different traditions. Its weekly attendance at the church stands at around 600 people with more than 300 having been through the Alpha Christian enquiry course and 32 adults baptised. More than half of its congregation is under 35.

Saint Mary's was made a resource church after receiving a Strategic Development Funding grant in 2018.

It has also been a means for further revitalisations: in 2021 a team from Saint Mary's went to Totton in Southampton to relaunch another church, St Win's, with two further revitalisations planned for this year.

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