

My family was made to feel so welcome

Vicky Newhouse was relieved that worshippers at St Barnabas, Swanmore, didn't mind how much noise her children made

Who are you? I'm Vicky Newhouse, a wife to Chris and a mother to Charlotte and Henry. We live in Swanmore, Hampshire

What church are you part of? I am a part of the serving team at St Barnabas, helping out wherever I can, sometimes acting as crucifer, server or even helping on the sound desk. I also help manage the Facebook page.

Why did you start going there? I moved to Swanmore in 2009. After not really finding a church I connected to where I previously lived, I wanted to have a look at the 'local' church.

My first impression of St Barnabas was that it was such a very welcoming church and, after having both my children christened there it became very special to me.

What do you love about your church? St Barnabas has always been so welcoming to me and my family. I remember turning up – probably looking incredibly harassed with two incredibly small children in tow – and I was greeted with a smile and a helping hand.

It made me feel that no matter how much noise or interruption my children made, they were welcome. Henry, my son, had a bit of a habit of chatting to the vicar



Vicky Newhouse spends time in prayer inside St Barnabas, Swanmore

when we approached the rail for Communion. This was always met with giggles, smiles and answers to his questions, despite me trying to shush him from the sideline!

When my daughter was invited to join the acolyte team it was then that I volunteered to help serve, and now Henry jumps into Sunday Club and Ben (the leader) welcomes him and manages his enthusiasm when I'm busy in church.

As soon as St Barnabas opened up again for private prayer in June 2020, I popped in to thank God for answering prayers about my father, who had been in hospital with Covid.

I had missed being there, and I had missed the church community during that lockdown. I had watched the vicar, Claire, as she led online services, but being there myself was a different experience.

I'm proud of everything St Barnabas does in the community, from the interaction in the local primary school to the innovative ways of connecting with the community via the St Barnabas coffee shop, the drive-in services they organised during lockdown and much more.

I believe it has a very inclusive feel and its comforting to be part of that church family.