

Stubbington switch has been a blessing

Matt and Ali Lockwood joined Holy Rood Church in lockdown and found themselves leading worship and making good friends

Who are you?

I'm Matt, I'm married to Ali and we have three children, two of whom are married. I'm the communications and net zero carbon officer for our diocese, and Ali is head of schools at a local primary school. I'm about to be licensed as a lay minister, having spent the last three years training at Portsmouth Pathway.

What church are you part of?

Holy Rood Church, in Stubbington. We lead the worship team and host training and worship events.

Why did you start going there?

Neither Ali nor I are Anglicans. We both grew up in different denominations and met at a small charismatic fellowship in East Anglia. We were part of a large Pentecostal church in Portsmouth, where we oversaw the worship and creative ministry.

During the lockdowns of 2020 we felt God was leading us to move on. I connected with the team at Holy Rood to see how they were putting their services online and use them as a model for other churches.

We became friends with Richard England, the vicar, and his wife Kathryn, who also became our daughter's piano teacher. We found a friendly welcome and family atmosphere that we'd been looking for. It was also closer to where we lived, and we have since moved into the village.



Matt, Ali and Matilda Lockwood

What do you love about the church? The church is very community-focused and exists to reach out and love the people in the area – summed up in its vision statement of being the heart of God in the heart of the community.

It's also a church that values and welcomes the presence of God through its worship, prayer, and preaching. In the 1980s the church was part of the charismatic renewal that swept across the country, and the legacy of that remains in the church's culture and ethos, which Ali and I enjoy, having grown up in that movement ourselves.

Our daughter Matilda has made great friendships and enjoys the openness to children engaging in worship – if there's a song with actions, she'll be up the front

leading it! As she's growing and learning she's asking more and deeper questions about faith, which is very encouraging.

Soon after joining the church, we became part of a community group where we gather fortnightly at someone's house to chat and pray. We also go for long walks in the countryside – we took on the Clarendon Walk between Salisbury Cathedral and Winchester Cathedral recently in two parts.

We also share big family meals together. This has been a real strength and encouragement for us, through which we've built some good friendships. Getting to hang out around a board game or some cheese and wine and feel safe to share and listen has been so refreshing.