

Rich musical tradition helps deepen my faith

Elsbeth Lamb enjoys the variety of musical styles at All Saints, Botley - and a loving community just five minutes from home

Who are you? I'm Elspeth and I live in Botley with my husband Simon. We have two daughters in their twenties.

What church are you part of? I'm part of All Saints' Church in Botley, although I do sometimes attend St Peter's Curdridge and Holy Cross Durley - the other churches within our plurality.

I'm currently churchwarden and temporary administrator. I'm also a member of the choir.

Why did you start going there? Simon and I and our young family were looking to move from the Thames Valley to the area around Winchester at the end of the 1990s, as Simon still needed to commute to London.

However, house prices soon meant we were looking further afield and moving to Botley was more by accident than design!

I do believe God played a part in this though. Having been a lifelong Christian who loves singing, I was very keen to attend a church that had a choir. I got in touch with an old school friend Philippa Mills (now vicar of Whiteley) who lived near Botley.

She told me that All Saints' had a choir and a music group so I thought that was a good start!



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What do you love about your church? What I love most is that I can walk out of my front door and five minutes later I'm in a church in the heart of my community where I can be involved in music of many sorts.

That can be singing in the church choir on a weekly basis, as this is the best way for me to experience worship and spirituality, as well as enjoying meditative Taize worship once a month, taking part in concerts within the church, singing in a bigger choir with Botley Choral Society, or playing in a recorder orchestra.

All this has enabled me to have the experience and confidence to

sing with a choir with members from all over the country. It leads the worship in cathedrals during school holidays, which in turn enriches and deepens my relationship with God. It is also a good way to meet others from outside the diocese who share faith, to discuss thoughts and ideas.

I love that many people remark on the warm welcome they receive from people at All Saints. In part this is made easier by the extension built 12 years ago, with its glass doors that lead to a light and airy foyer before entering the church itself. Our foyer has many different uses during the week and I love that my church is about more than just Sundays.

We also have a large stained-glass cross which is kept lit at night and is a symbol of Christ's love shining out to the village. If I drive past it in the dark having been away, I find it very reassuring to know that I am being welcomed home.

Each Good Friday we walk between the churches in Botley, Curdridge and Durley, carrying a wooden cross and stopping at each church for a short service. This is another of the aspects of All Saints that I love. My church is more than a building.