

# We came 11,000 miles to an awesome church

**Leighton and Judith Braddock** came to Southsea from New Zealand and discovered St Jude's Church was ideal for their family

**Who are you?** We are Leighton and Judith Braddock. Our two oldest children have left home, and our other three are Jono, Miki and Evie.

**What church are you part of?** We emigrated from New Zealand to Southsea in 2022 and started going to St Jude's Church in Southsea.

**Why did you start going there?**

Leighton got a job as a software engineer with BAE Systems in England, so visited Portsmouth a couple of times by himself to investigate houses, schools and churches.

One Saturday morning he got talking to Jos, who was walking his dog at Hilsea Lines and is part of St Jude's. Jos invited Leighton to come to church the next day, and he met someone who also works at BAE Systems. The second time he came, he met a teacher who recommended a school for the girls.

We were part of a wonderful church in New Zealand, and our prayer was that we'd find a church in England where there were young people already, and where God showed up. We also prayed that God would show us somewhere, rather than us having to shop around. So everything pointed to St Jude's!

When we all flew to England together for the first time, Gary from St Jude's was at the airport waiting to drive us to our new home. So that was incredibly helpful.



Leighton and Judith Braddock with Jono, 20, Miki, 17, and Evie, 12

**What do you love about the church?** Evie loves the various groups available for the youth, and also that she can naturally be friends with older teenagers who have a faith.

Miki felt so welcome that it seemed as though she belonged very quickly. She enjoys the youth activities – especially that the church is holding a Surf Camp this summer. She's also pleased that Christian teaching for teenagers is not 'dumbed down'.

She appreciates her youth leaders and the atmosphere they create for all the kids. And she loves the worship at evening services.

Jono likes the fact that Anglican worship is a different flavour from the Pentecostal style they are used

to. He calls it "crisp and holy".

Judith enjoys the church's outreach into the community, helping those who are homeless or in need. And she loves the acceptance from others at the church, that there is no judgement if they don't happen to be on time for worship, only welcome!

And Leighton enjoys the fact that there are people of all backgrounds, cultures and ethnicities there, and that people have helped them to move and to settle in a new country. He's pleased there is a range of activities for young people, for men, for women, and in outreach.

He also loves the worship, the Bible teaching and the fact that there is plenty of opportunity to discuss and debate complex issues.