

Years of prayer are embedded in its walls

Paddie Collyer enjoys the beauty and calm of her historic church, and the warmth of the people worshipping at St John's, Niton

Who am I? I'm Paddie Collyer, now preacher, worship leader, churchwarden and vice-chair of our PCC

What church are you part of? St John's, Niton, in the Isle of Wight

Why did you start going there?

I started attending in 1988 when my husband and I moved to the island. I'd been brought up as a Christian but in my twenties had moved away from organised religion because I became overwhelmed with family, work and other distractions.

We were looking at houses in South Wight and agreed we wanted to belong to a proper community with everything that encompassed, especially a church. We found Niton, which looked like a proper village, with shops, a pub and a beautiful ancient church.

We entered via the old lychgate, wandered up the church path and sat on a bench in the graveyard which looked south, towards fields and farmhouses. There was an amazing peace about the place, and when we entered the beautiful 12th century building we immediately felt sure that this was the place we sought for our worship.

We found a house in the Undercliff looking towards St Catherine's lighthouse and the English Channel. Once settled we met friendly



Above: Paddie Collyer; right: St John's Church, Niton

neighbours who offered to take us to the Sunday service of Holy Communion and we became regular attenders. We were welcomed by the congregation and we found that this was where our new circle of friends would be drawn. Everyone was, and is, friendly and, most importantly, they all contribute to the life of the church in some way.

What do you love about the church? Over the years we both became very involved and served on the PCC. A few years ago, I trained to become a lay worship leader and lay preacher. Then, finding ourselves plunged into an interregnum and losing our churchwarden, I found myself elected as churchwarden and vice chair of the PCC.

The amazing support I have had from the members of the church

has been tremendous and enabled me to carry out all my duties. It is this warmth and kindness that helps me to hold fast to my faith.

The church itself has an amazing atmosphere. You can feel the years of prayer and devotion that are embedded in its old stone walls. It has been very well cared for. This is evident as soon as you step inside.

The rich colours of the stained-glass windows are reflected in the red and blue furnishings, and the shabby pews have been replaced with upholstered chairs. The brass shines brightly and the flowers are always immaculate.

So God's love is to be found in both the people and in the church building. It is a place of beauty and calm, bound to restore anyone seeking peace. This is why I love it.