

the worship style and the way they teach.”

Another church that baptised several people by immersion recently is **Hope Church, Whiteley**. It meets in the hall of Cornerstone C of E Primary School on a Sunday, so it made sense for candidates to be baptised in a paddling pool in the school’s playground.

Among those being baptised in July was Talitha Adeniran, the six-year-old daughter of the vicar Amy. It was Talitha who decided she wanted to be ‘completely dunked’, which led to the church hunting for a paddling pool. Others then came forward wanting to be baptised.

In the end, the church’s first ever baptisms by immersion in July involved three children – Talitha Adeniran, now 6, Daniel and Isaac Chan, aged 8 and 6 – a teenager, James Flowers, and an adult, Gavin Young, being baptised. And Charlotte Baker reaffirmed her baptismal vows.

‘We wanted a public declaration that we want our boys to grow up in faith’

Gavin said: “I found myself coming towards the Lord and wanted to show that I’ve repented and want to change my personality. I wanted to wash away my past and start again as a fresh new Christian. Previously I had no real purpose, but now my life is full of colour and joy and happiness, with great family and friends around me.”

Amy said: “All of these people are part of our family here at Hope Church Whiteley. Some have been with us for a few years, others about nine months. It was extraordinary holding it in the school playground, and an amazing way to continue to link the life of church and school together – especially as the three



Above: the Hope Church baptisms outside Cornerstone C of E Primary School, Whiteley; right: Gavin Young emerges from the water after being baptised by the Rev Amy Adeniran

kids are pupils at Cornerstone, and some of their teachers had come to support them.

“I think holding our services in the school hall can make church a little less scary. It was lovely to see the hall full, as many people came to support our baptism candidates, both their family and friends as well as the wider community.

“Our congregation has been steadily growing over the past year and I think these full immersion baptisms will be looked back upon as a key moment in our journey.

“Baptising my daughter was very special. It’s been wonderful to see how her faith has grown and been nurtured through our children’s work and encouraged by her whole church family. I managed to hold it together until the moment I went to baptise her, and I couldn’t quite say the words as a rush of emotion came to me.

“I had a real moment with God giving thanks for her, and all that she is, and what her faith means to her. Not many mums get the chance to do that. What an amazing blessing.”

Many families of course choose



The Rev Adam Tams baptises Josh Drake at St Jude’s, Southsea

to have their children baptised as babies or infants. It’s often called ‘christening’, although the ceremony doesn’t actually confirm the name of the baby. Parents and godparents make promises on behalf of the child. When they grow up, their children can confirm their belief in the Christian faith in confirmation services.

Congregation members Rob and Rachel Drake chose to have their children baptised this summer at **St Jude’s Church, Southsea**. Zack, who is now two, and Josh, who is now 11 months, were baptised as part of the main morning service.



“We’d both grown up in the Church of England, so we’d seen a lot of infant baptisms,” said Rob. “We wanted to have a public declaration – a moment of saying that we want our boys to grow up in the Christian faith. We wanted to make promises that we’ll pray for them, and that we’ll lead them into a faith of their own. And the people we chose as godparents wanted to do the same.

“We recognise that they may want to make their own commitment and decision later on in life, and they’ll have an opportunity to do that at confirmation. For us, it was more about what we wanted to promise as parents, rather than about their decision. But you have to make a decision every day to follow Jesus, and we hope they will.

“Our friends and family were there to witness the baptisms. We’re not great at having conversations with them about faith, so – like our wedding – this was a good opportunity to invite them to an occasion where we declare our faith. We can show them a side of our life that we’re not so great at showing.”

For more information about baptism, see www.portsmouth.anglican.org/baptism



The Rev Jonathan Jeffery baptises a baby

Baptism is a part of our parish’s mission

INFANT baptism is a large part of what worshippers at St Francis and St Clare in Leigh Park can offer to local young families – and something they do respond to.

In 2018, the two churches saw 32 infants baptised. In 2019 it was 29, and since resuming after the Covid pandemic, they have baptised 46 infants and babies since July 2021.

Most services take place on a Sunday but after the busyness of the main Parish Eucharist and often attract congregations in excess of 50 people.

The parish encourages the family to attend a Sunday service with godparents ahead of the date of the baptism, which is a great way to show the church’s welcome, and what it can offer to children and young families

These encounters have also led to adult baptisms, with five

in 2018, two in 2019 and 12 in the period since July 2021.

The vicar, the Rev Jonathan Jeffery, said: “It’s such a joy to celebrate with families as children are born and brought for baptism.

“Often families are amazed that there is no charge for the service, but I like to explain that it is the Church’s gift to them.

“The imagery of the signing with the sign of the cross, the washing with water and then receiving a lighted candle all speak of the theme of journey.

“It is powerful for families to hear and believe that they and their children are journeying towards God, and alongside God, in the person of Jesus.

“Infant baptism allows us the privilege to be involved in the celebration of the gift of children, and to show that we long to be with them as their children grow and to walk with them through their lives.”