

GROWING THROUGH
GOD'S FAITHFULNESS
IN EVERY CHAPTER

seasons of change

It's a joy when our church family grows as new people join us. We love the sense of vibrancy and excitement. But have you ever stopped to think what a big change it is for those people coming along?

Much is at stake as they seek a new place of worship, belonging, nurture, growth and service. How vital it is that their transition is positive and that they put down roots at a time of upheaval. And how vital is the part each of us plays in making that possible.

Bekie, Sandra and Luci are all new to our church family over the last two years. They represent different stages of life and have different challenges as they seek to integrate. I asked them questions to draw out their experiences, wisdom and longings.

Do read and be encouraged. But also, be challenged and pray that our church family will be a place of warm welcome where people are drawn to the core of our family life around Jesus.

I asked first what fears and challenges they faced as they sought to find their place in a new church

Bekie says she felt slightly apprehensive about how they would be received. For her and her husband Peter, starting a new church was one big change among others to adjust to, as they arrived having just had their first baby and moved to the village.

Luci commented how involved they had been in their previous church for a long time. Leaving it behind, along with family and friends and a home of 36 years to start all over again is a big challenge. With life being so busy they knew it was very important to attend church as much as possible to help them settle.

Sandra had been lacking a settled, anchored feeling in her previous church. She was longing for the support of a church family and a place for growth. In addition, she came with anxieties about coming alone, since most of her family don't come to church. Sandra says: "My life is a balancing act between spending time at church and spending time at home with my family. There often has to be compromise and I asked myself would my church family understand?"

We went on to explore what has helped with some of these challenges

Bekie says "In our first few weeks we were grateful for the many people who came and introduced themselves and made us feel at ease. It made such a difference that people noticed we were new and made an effort to come speak to us. Whilst we've been at All Saints for nine months, we still feel very new and we have lots of the church family to meet.



Bekie, Peter & Dorothea

Our challenge is getting to know people more deeply and to have intentional relationships. We're conscious that these things take time though we so often forget. I am particularly thankful for Coffee Plus, Noah's Ark and the women's Bible study, all of which have been fantastic. Without these groups I wouldn't have had the chance to meet as many people in the church and community. We recently went to a picnic at the vicarage after church and found it a great opportunity to spend time with people. More of those informal events would be super!

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Luci says "Everyone is so welcoming and friendly and every time we attend a service, we meet someone we haven't met before. We have been extremely grateful for Steve, Stuart and Hugh who have sent messages and even knocked on our door to say hello. The Welcome tea was such a lovely event to attend so that we could meet some people in a smaller environment and find out more about the church.



Luci with husband John

I attended the Women's away weekend, which was very daunting as we hadn't long been going to the church. A lovely lady looked out for me the whole weekend and that was extremely comforting and helpful, there is nothing worse than having to walk into rooms full of people you don't know. The whole weekend was a real blessing and a wonderful way to meet new people.

Another way we have been helped is through joining a connect group. We have built relationships and a support network, a wonderful resource."

Sandra now treasures many aspects of church life including her Connect Group and says "Church never feels too large and scary because my Connect Group makes the large church family accessible to me.

It has meant a lot to me to have the sense of security and belonging that comes with being part of a church family. I am finding myself adopted into a larger family. Slowly I am growing in confidence to serve Him more openly as part of the church family. The desire in me to make others feel just as welcome is strong.

I invited them to share why becoming part of a church family is so important to them and worth the challenges

Bekie says "There is something amazing and special to be part of a church family; loving, praising and worshipping God together. Being around other Christians helps me keep my eyes fixed on Jesus through their wisdom, kindness and grace."

Luci says "it is so wonderful to worship together, to be able to pray with others, to give and receive support and encouragement and to be accountable to other people who share your faith. We have both felt our relationship with God grow since being at the church as we learn through the teaching and apply it into our lives."

Sandra says that "coming to church feels like being able to come home to the Father, no matter what. Also at just the right moment when you cry out to your fellow Christians, someone is there to listen, to catch you - because this is how God makes us feel his fatherly love for us, through his people."

Finally, reflecting on the idea of change, I asked them what their hopes and prayers were for this new season of life in a new church family?

Bekie says "we have seen and experienced the love of the church family and our prayer is that we would also be an encouragement to others, welcoming church family new and old with the same enthusiasm as we have received. With time we hope that we would have long lasting relationships and that we grow with our Christian brothers and sisters. We also pray for our daughter, that she would come to know Christ for herself and that she would find good friendships at church."

Luci says "Our hopes are to really get involved in church life, to find the role that God wants for us, to minister to others and I pray that we listen and allow God to use us in the way that he has planned."

"We believe God has called us here to Lindfield for a purpose and we want to be available and willing to make a difference in this community for Him. Change can be exciting but also a time of uncertainty but we pray God will give us peace, strength and guide us and that All Saints will become a close family for us."

Sandra says "My hopes and prayers for the time ahead are that I grow in confidence, playing a bigger role in the church family, but equally at a pace that fits in with the other demands in my life, especially with regards to my family."

"The biggest prayer of all is that my family see how nourishing church is for me and that this may open their hearts to consider this for themselves."

