

When growing up as a child I always went to church every week with my mother, sadly when my mum passed away I felt lost and cheated by god for taking her from us, her funeral was the last time I entered a church, to the point I couldn't face a church wedding knowing she wasn't sitting at the end of the aisle, church felt a sad and lonely place from then on. This all changed the moment I had my daughter Ivy, I knew in my heart that I wanted her to have the same believes and up bringing I had received in the church community. Now came the hard bit finding a church that felt right. The moment I walked into church I knew that St Mary's and Twinkles was the place we wanted to start Ivy's journey she was only weeks old and who knew when feeding time was coming nappy changing and of course crying!!! All things you like to confide to your home.

I remember standing in Twinkles with tears down my face and Verena giving me that all important hug which was so needed as the pain missing my mum was growing.

On the day of Ivy's baptism Twinkles was bursting with all of Ivy's friends and family - many friends commented on the great Twinkles environment even saying I wish my church had this... Something we at St Marys should be proud of.

My final comments is that I choose St Marys for both Ivy and I, as the congregation and Twinkles made Ivy welcome, it's not like when I went to church when Sunday school was firm and children should be silent; times have changed and so has church environment however Twinkles have found a great balance of traditional Sunday service and exciting fun activities without judgement of children and their antics.

Thank you St Marys and God for finding me once again after being lost for years.

*Sally mum to Ivy*

**When I first moved to the Parish of St Mary's my children were 3 and 2 years old. My partner worked long days, and I was, to be honest, exhausted. Leaving our old Church behind, I felt a little lost. Church had always provided me with a place of calm, amidst whatever was going on in my life.**

**When I walked in to St Mary's for the first time I was quickly greeted by a warm welcome, and shown to the children's area. It was such a relief to know that I could bring my family to Church without them causing a distraction to the congregation. I was also so relieved to know that this Church, on our doorstep, could become a place of worship for the whole family.**

**It can be difficult bringing children to Church, they are loud, they are lively, and they don't always understand when they should sit still. But to me, it is so important, that they understand God's love for them. From this early age, they can feel the love from their Church family, and grow in that love.**

**Teaching the love of Jesus to our young children is such an important task, and the ministry at Twinkles is thriving. This is due to the dedication of the Leaders and their commitment to our children. For this I cannot say how grateful I am. The leader's task is a big one, and as we welcome more and more children to St Mary's it would be such a shame if the ministry were hampered due to the physical space we have to worship on a Sunday.**

**I wanted to write this piece to let you know how much St Mary's and the Twinkle's team has meant to my family and how I hope their dedication and love can now be recognised in the need for more space.**

**An extension will allow the leader's to carry out their work with more ease, for mother's and father's to feel more comfortable, and for, crucially, the children to enjoy a space more suitable to their needs.**

**Acts 20:28** *Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood.*

***Heather, mum to Aria and Noah***

"Drinks at the end is good so we twinkles group can catch up - no one gets there early, we're too busy trying to get out the door and rushing to church! Feedback from the twinkles parents is usually positive and you and the other organisers have shown you listen and follow up our ideas - ie drinks at the end, prayers during the twinkles session. Personally, we are very happy with the set-up and leadership. It would be useful to get feedback from the wider congregation on how we are. I have always felt relaxed about the activity and noise from twinkles and I truly believe a lot of the older members value our presence. The content of the twinkles sessions is good and interactive. We are thankful for you and the other leader's efforts and commitment."

**Hannah and Stevyn Walder (Alfred, Arthur and Oliver's mummy and daddy)**

"I have to say I love the coffee time at the end of the service- it's not normally something I can partake in because of Ben and it is wonderful to feel included by having it in the twinkles area- so much more convenient for those of us who have pushchairs, babies, slings, etc. So well done to the marvellous brain behind that idea! I'm really loving all the positive changes taking place with twinkles- and I really appreciate the text message updates (particularly when you learn the names of the children being baptised- it makes it less of a family affair for them and more of a church wide welcome). It would be lovely to have some more socialising with other parents or even our own little monthly newsletter (just a little printed sheet) with updates on twinkles activities or 'meet a family' section where you learn a little more about a particular twinkle and their family. I feel terrible sometimes that I know most of the children's names but not the parents! Thanks for all the hard work- I appreciate the twinkles more than you know. It gives me a chance to pray and to attend church and also to introduce my little one to the concept of regular worship and modern Christianity."

**Sharon Ibbotson (Ben's mummy)**