
A baptism in the sea

Baptisms are always a time of rejoicing, and this was such a joyous occasion: being baptised in a beautiful calm sea, with glorious morning sunshine and Nina's family and friends celebrating with her. By Ann Marie Fradgley



Alongside Anne Jackson (co-pioneer), I had the privilege of baptising Nina, a member of our 'Table Sanctuary', in the sea off Huttoft Beach in Lincolnshire last August.

The baptism was appropriate for Nina, who is a free spirit and very connected to nature.

Nina came to faith through Sanctuary at the Hub, (an opportunity for prayer and pamper set up by Anne before I arrived in the village). Table Sanctuary, where Nina grew in faith, is based on John 21:12 'Come and have breakfast'. That's what we do. We come, we share breakfast together around the table, we focus on God. It's rooted in hospitality and love, and we look at Scripture, we listen to music or worship, we break bread together. People can ask questions. There is space to be vulnerable. It's made up of people who have had a faith

and lost it and have come back to faith. Others have not had a faith at all, and some have been alienated from church. Nina had never really settled in an established church, because people have tried to put constraints on her, and she found that difficult.

I also started something called Soul Space, which grew organically for those wanting to go deeper with God. It is about stepping away from the busyness of life, and exploring different ways of prayerfulness. Through this Nina has grown, appreciating there's more than one way to pray. And Jesus is so evident in Nina's life. Her love of Jesus just shines out!

Both Anne and I spoke separately and independently to Nina about baptism. It turned out Nina had been thinking about baptism too, but didn't like the idea of being baptised in a church. Because

we do things differently, we felt free to imagine what was right for Nina. Previously I would have offered a baptism course, but this is not who Nina is. It would have put her off.

So, we had a cuppa and a talk. We heard how Jesus had impacted her life. We looked at examples of baptism in the Bible. We helped her understand the covenantal nature of baptism and its significance. She was ready.

We knew baptising in the sea was right for Nina. A key aspect of her growing faith is how she now really understands God isn't asking her to change who he's created her to be. Creation and nature are part of who she is.

I have baptised in a baptistry and in a paddling pool, all special occasions. But this was the most indescribable experience, and not just because we needed to be aware of the jellyfish!



It was just totally different and almost felt like we were in the River Jordan - so profound and powerful.

Most of Nina's friends and family are not Christians, and Nina says everybody who came was so impacted. It really moved them, because they'd never seen a baptism before.

I think we've learned with the Table Sanctuary, and especially Soul Space, the value of looking at different ways of connecting with God, helping people to understand and use the spirituality they have (as long as it's not heretical) to connect with God. It doesn't have to be in a set way.

As for Nina, she is flourishing. Baptism affirmed to her that God is in her heart. She sees her work as God's work and is happy to tell

others about Jesus. There's a real sense of God being in every part of her life.

As a Baptist minister Ann Fradgley's first pastorate was in Fleet Meadow Baptist Church, a missional-hearted community church in Didcot.

In moving to Nettleham, Lincolnshire the hospice chaplain role Ann initially undertook developed into more of a pioneering role. In June 2023 she took a leap of faith and is now exploring pioneering in the village as she follows God's call to create places of sanctuary: God-centered spaces in which people of faith, or no faith, can be themselves and experience the love and presence of Jesus and explore their spirituality.

