



when she arrived in the village of Pett in East Sussex ten years ago
each.

She discovered it was a small chapel, formerly a coastguard station, which held monthly services but was closed the rest of the time.

She said: "I have a faith, but I am not a regular worshipper. I believe churches need to be open for people who don't go to church and be used as a community hub."

Over the last seven years Fran has, with the help of locals, transformed St Nicholas into a thriving and welcoming centre for residents and tourists.

She said: "We installed new lighting and once the place looked inviting, I then obtained bookshelves and approached people for books.

"All the church chairs were restored. Each was rubbed down and waxed. The stained-glass window was repaired, the floor sanded and waxed, and a new metal beach-themed cross, made by local artist Leigh Dyer, was installed and dedicated.

"An annual carol service was also reinstated in 2017, which has become very popular, with the chapel decorated with trees and lights. It now spills outdoors.

"In the summer there is a beach treasure hunt to keep children occupied. People come from all over. Some are regular holiday visitors and many others are very surprised when they discover us.

"Over the years school groups have asked to use the church in case of bad weather, and filming companies, using the beach for music videos, short films or commercials, have also made use of the chapel. We are now on our third visitor book since 2017."

Fran and the team keep the church open for as long as they can each day. Earlier this year they welcomed the new priest in charge, Jonathan Meyer. He also looks after the churches in Winchelsea and Icklesham. He leads a 30-minute services at St Nicholas on the second Sunday of every month at 8.30am. Other special services take place in the year to mark Christmas and Easter and other key Christian celebrations.

Fran (pictured with Bishop Martin Warner below) said working at St Nicholas in Pett Level is a privilege, not a burden, and the feedback received from visitors is its own reward.









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