

# Bringing Bible to life for 26 years



Judy Notley, from St John's, Rowlands Castle

**AFTER 26 years helping to bring Bible stories to life for pupils, a Rowlands Castle grandmother has retired.**

Judy Notley, 77, started volunteering to help lead Christian assemblies at St John's C of E Primary School in the village soon after her husband Philip died in 1990.

She joined an ecumenical team with volunteers from her church – St John's – plus those from the Church on the Green, Leigh Park Baptist Church and Portsdown Community Church.

"The then vicar asked if I would like to be involved knowing my background as a

primary and secondary school teacher and I have really enjoyed every minute of it," said Judy.

"When we started, we were just telling Bible stories in an interactive way but about three years ago, a new person joined the team and introduced us to the Open the Book material so we started using that instead.

"It's wonderful. It tells stories from the Old and New Testament with detailed acting instructions. We are never short of children volunteering to act out the parts! The children are so enthusiastic about it all. It is wonderful. They are absolutely riveted by the stories."

Open the Book happens every fortnight on a Friday morning. Using drama, mime, props, costume – and the

children and staff themselves – the team present Bible stories in ways that are lively, engaging, informative and great fun for everyone, staff and pupils alike.

Judy said: "After we've told the story, we sing an action song and then the vicar or the team leader for the day says a few words, to help us all to think about what the story tells us about Jesus and what it means for us here and now. The headteacher then weaves this message into everyday school life.

"We finish with prayers which are led by Year 5 or 6 pupils and then say the Lord's Prayer together."

Although she finds the ministry really rewarding, Judy feels that now is the right time

to retire and enable someone younger to get involved.

"I'm finding it increasingly difficult to get about and I think it is time that someone younger took over," she said. "I am sure they will get as much fun out of it as I have."

The team threw a party for Judy to thank her for all she has given over the years, including a specially-made cake. They also bought her a rose bush for her garden.

Judy will now focus on her other ministries within the church including hosting and helping to lead a home group and supporting families bringing their children to be baptised in the church.

For more information about Open the Book, visit [www.openthebook.net](http://www.openthebook.net).

## GraveTalk launches in city parish

A CHURCH is creating a café space to get people talking about death, after being inspired by the national launch of GraveTalk in our Cathedral.

Grave Talk – a café space to talk about death, dying and funerals – will be held at the Church of the Resurrection in Penrhyn Ave, Drayton on Sunday 11 October from 11.30am-1.30pm.

The church will be laid out in a café style. A light lunch will be served and people will be encouraged to use questions from a pack of GraveTalk cards to start talking about something that is a taboo subject in society today.



The Rev Lyn Comerford, with some of the question cards that will be used for GraveTalk in her parish

The Rev Lyn Comerford, assistant curate at Farlington, said: "Some of us went along

to the Grave Talk cafe in the cathedral and it might surprise you to hear that it wasn't a sad and morbid

experience but really interesting to hear people's experiences.

"Death is something that we simply don't talk about as a society and I feel it is so important that we do.

"As a priest, I know the practical and emotional difficulties faced by bereaved families who haven't had those conversations with their loved ones before they died and so are often left paralysed by the decisions that they have to make after their death.

"We hope that by creating a relaxed and informal space for open conversation, it will almost give people permission to speak about death."

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