

Johanna Evans

*Jo's love of the church helped her to discover the fullness of her mothering heart.*

When Jo was asked by her vicar over three decades ago to start a youth group, she said no. In fact, she said, "Why would I want to do that? I don't like children!" However, the vicar was persistent and said God had told him she should do it. Jo insisted He hadn't told her! But Jo is a faithful soul and after letting God get a word in edgeways, she finally agreed. Jo discovered she not only liked children but she had a mothering heart and went on to foster many children.

Jo first attended St John's in the Fields at Halsetown, St Ives as a child before moving away. She only returned to visit when asked to be a Godparent, and was warned they were all mad at the church. When she was greeted at the door with hugs and kisses she agreed! But she also felt she'd come home. She went back week after week, loving the joy of being part of the church family, and has stayed ever since.

The youth group grew under Jo's care. She had no fear, taking children more comfortable with a TV remote control than the outdoors on huge treks, getting them involved in her own love of dance by putting on shows and plays, incorporating Bible stories, studies and even encouraging them to organise their own outdoor worship and services. She took them on a trip to the Isles of Scilly where, she says, "It rained for ten days but we had a wonderful time, enjoying a service and a picnic in every church garden on the Isles."

The first child Jo fostered was having difficulties at school. She was disruptive and told she wouldn't succeed at anything, but Jo unlocked the child's potential with a second-hand clarinet. She practised daily and alongside this determination, Jo slipped in bedtime tasks around learning words and their definitions. That child went on to achieve Grade 8 on the clarinet, succeed at school, get a degree and today works as a social worker.

Other children followed, including three that stayed with Jo and her husband long term, all with different challenges, including mental health issues. Today, they are all in their forties and are Jo's family.

Latterly, for the past fourteen years, Jo has been a faithful church warden at St John's. For her, the multitude of duties she undertakes cements not just her love of the Church, but of God and all the things he has done for her and her family.

She was nominated for the Cross of St Piran Award by the Penwith Deanery.