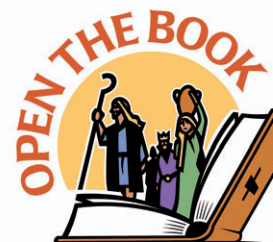


Spreading the Word - October 2011

Enabling every child to hear the story of the Bible at school in their primary years



Passing major milestones

Open the Book Press Release - June 2011

'A movement that presents Bible stories to children in primary schools celebrated the registration of its **1000th Bible story-telling church team** and **5,000th volunteer** this month. *Open the Book* was only established as a national venture as recently as 2007 and this significant milestone has been reached with extraordinary speed and minimal publicity.

The 1000th local church team is preparing to take engaging, enacted Bible storytelling assemblies into **Windmill Primary School in Telford, Shropshire** (See page 2). All the teams use *The Lion Storyteller Bible* by Bob Hartman, imaginative visual material and the school-friendly wording from the *Open the Book* handbooks and storybooks.

The Chairman of Trustees and the national project team, Peter LeRoy (below, left) commented: "In just four years the quiet, unsung growth of *Open the Book* has been remarkable, and exceeded all expectations. 1,000 volunteer Bible storytellers only three years ago has mushroomed into 5,000. All this is with just one paid member of staff, our **National Co-ordinator, Dianne Brookes** (below, right). It demonstrates what ordinary Christian people can achieve when they are inspired, equipped to work together and want to share the wonder and wisdom of the Bible with children".

The keys to *Open the Book* are its visual presentations, carefully-worded resources, simplicity to use and the involvement of the children. "They really enjoy it. It's engaging storytelling - not a sermon!" **Approximately 175,000 children in both Community and Church schools** across Britain are currently enjoying an *Open the Book* Bible storytelling each week - and this figure is rising by about 3,000 each month.

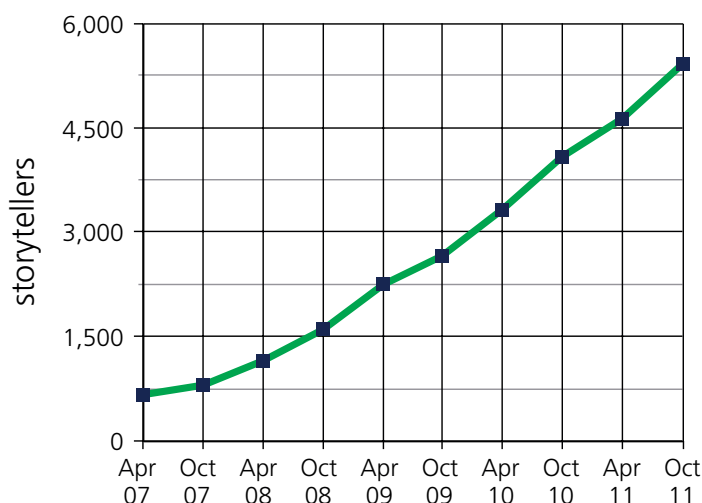
Peter LeRoy adds: "Everything depends on churches realising that although most have very few children attending on Sundays, all the children in their locality can be reached at their primary school. *Open the Book* does this through 'broadly and mainly Christian' **Collective Worship assemblies - as required by law**. The benefits to children, churches and for community cohesion are very real".

(1st October - 5,550 OtB volunteers going into 1,082 schools. Av. primary sch. = 237 children; av. C of E pr. sch. = 172; OtB av. figure = c.170)

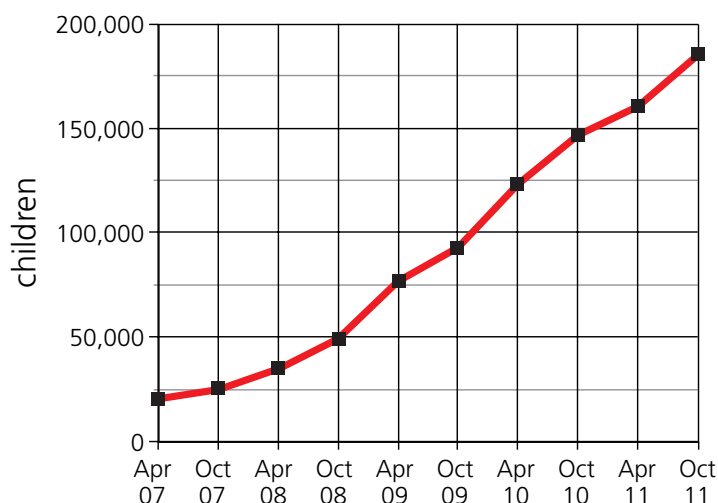


The Rt. Hon. Michael Gove MP (Secretary of State for Education) drops in unexpectedly at Priory Lower School immediately after the OtB assembly. Our OtB 'rep', Jean Eames tells us that he visited this culturally diverse school in Bedford with local MP, Richard Fuller to congratulate the children, because the school had just had an 'Outstanding' OFSTED inspection report. The part that the OtB Assembly played had contributed positively to this result. These mainly Muslim, Hindu and Sikh children love OtB and greet team members in the street with "Hello, Open the Book!" This was one of our founding OtB 'pilot' schools over 10 years ago.

Growth of OtB - number of registered storytellers - 2007 to 2011



Growth of OtB - approximate number of children in OtB Schools - 2007 to 2011



Encouraging growth in the Fens

'As part of our Ely Diocese focus this year on the 400th Anniversary of the King James Bible we wanted to gather existing teams to create a network of support and for those attending the training event we held in March. We were very encouraged by the discovery that we already had six *Open the Book* teams within the diocese. These are based in St Philip's Cambridge; the Bluntisham Group; The Ramseys; the Shingay Group; through the Crown's Trust working in West Norfolk Schools and in Meldreth Manor - a Scope Centre for adults with learning difficulties. Everyone was hugely encouraged by the training event, particularly as over 70 attended, including our existing teams - who were on hand to offer their advice and support. Church leaders and church members from a further nine parishes or teams expressed a keen interest in creating their own Bible storytelling teams and becoming more closely involved in the life of their local schools through *Open the Book*. Both Dr Shirley Hall (RE Adviser) and I are working closely with *Open the Book* to ensure future training and support for the diocese in order to encourage and equip parishes in their ministry and mission among schools.' (By July there were 23 *OtB* teams in Cambridgeshire and West Norfolk - the area of Ely Diocese.)



Julia Chamberlin - Diocesan Children's Adviser



Breezing to our 1,000th

Windmill Primary School in Brookside, Telford has become the 1,000th school to have an *Open the Book* team (left). The Acting Head has said: "At Windmill Primary School and Children's Centre, we are thrilled to have teamed up with Springfield Christian Fellowship for *Open the Book*. We have heard about how children look forward to *Open the Book* days at other schools and we are sure that bringing the Bible to life in our school will have a similar effect. We hope that working with Springfield in this way will further strengthen

our relationship with them and we hope that *Open the Book* will be a really positive experience for all our pupils."

Racing to our 5,000th

In July our 5,000th volunteer storyteller was registered at our national office in Gloucester - just over 4 years after *Open the Book* became an established national charity. Alice Leadbetter of Burwell, Newmarket, is part of a new team going into Burwell Village College (Primary) Cambridgeshire, where *Open the Book* continues to grow at a great pace.



The caption on the school noticeboard above these bandaged *OtB* team members in Bedford reads:

'Ten High Quality Outcomes of PE'. The story they were retelling in the assembly was 'The Ten Lepers'!

How 1,200 into 153 makes 26,000

Open the Book in Gloucestershire celebrated its 10th birthday in September. A series of Storyteller Mornings around the county gathered volunteers together to share news and eat cake. Back in 2001, 30 members of Churches Together in Cirencester bravely agreed to take *Open the Book* into 5 schools. They have played a vital role, with their feedback and encouragement, in the formation of what is now a rapidly growing national movement. David Williams and Rosemary Roberts are two of the original volunteers - and they are still storytelling. Jacqueline Rodwell and Dianne Brookes were the pioneers of *Open the Book* in the county and have been amazed by its growth. There are now almost 1,200 volunteers going into 153 schools reaching approximately 26,000 children - and it is still spreading! (*The C of E's usual Sunday attendance of under 16 year olds in the Diocese is c.2,400. The average size of a primary school in Gloucestershire is c.170.*)

Dianne Brookes, National Coordinator

Ecumenical laughter and fellowship

'We are all having such a great time with *Open the Book* and have been asked by other parishes and the Ely Diocese to help at setting up their own '*Open the Book*' teams. As you know, my team includes members from the Baptist, Catholic, Methodist and Anglican churches, so far. We have had such a good time of sharing fellowship and many laughs - and it's all thanks to *Open the Book*. It really is such a great and simple programme.'

The Revd. Gita Bond, Ramsey & Upwood, Cambs.

Challenged in Waitrose

'We would just like to tell you how delighted our new team is to find how much the children at our school are enjoying it. We have only done a few performances so far, but already the feed-back is very positive, and the school has been very welcoming.

Some of us have been thrilled to have been approached outside school by children who recognise us. "Do you do *Open the Book*?" one little boy asked me, in Waitrose, and I was able to explain to his Dad what it was about. Also one or two have said to us, "I love *Open the Book*!" So we feel very happy that it is working out so well.

We are very lucky to have several members of the group who are very creative and clever at prop making, so that is another blessing. Also, as a group, we are thoroughly enjoying the experience, and having a lot of fun together.'

The Revd. Sue Morrell, Tonbridge, Kent

'A small, quiet, army'

From the Coventry Diocese website - Mothers' Union page

'One of our Mothers' Union aims is to share our Christian faith with those around us. Many members go into schools to bring Bible stories to children on a regular basis, through *Open the Book*.

Perhaps one of the saddest church statistics is that barely 4% of children nationally attend a Christian church regularly. This means that 96% of today's children and tomorrow's teenagers and adults are growing up completely ignorant of the riches held within the Bible. They have no idea who Moses is and the name of Jesus is known only as an expletive! The Great Commission makes it clear that it is our Christian responsibility to tell successive generations about God's love. Our responsibility is not just to bring our own children up in the knowledge and love of the Lord; but to bring such knowledge to those who are spiritual orphans. **Since they do not come to our churches, we have been given access to them where they are, in their schools.**

It is a true wonder in these days of political correctness that the law requires every state school to teach about Christianity and hold a Christian school assembly every week. A door has been kept open for this generation of children. In many primary schools walks a small, quiet, army of Bible story tellers called the *Open the Book* team. Armed with a copy of the *Lion Storyteller Bible*, *Open the Book* Handbooks with introductory wording, a short reflection and a voluntary prayer, homemade costumes, some props and the willingness to sacrifice dignity. These teams present whole school Christian assemblies once a week, working through a three year rolling programme of stories.

About ten years ago St James, Styvechale in Coventry decided to run with it and significantly increased the visual impact by increasing the number of props and introducing full costumes. Soon there were 15 teams going into 15 schools in Coventry. Then St John's Kenilworth decided to enable more schools to be reached. The St John's props now go into 4 schools; so there is capacity!

(The Editor adds: In Open the Book's 'silent army' there are people of all ages, sorts and backgrounds, but with a welcome 'weighting' towards the 'retired-but-not-retired', including, for instance...

A former mayor, a bishop; clergy; a peeress; former teachers and head teachers; school governors; C of E General Synod members; GPs; a School Inspector; missionaries; a theological college principal; a Mothers' Union chairwoman; a Diocesan Synod Lay Chairman; Board of Education members; the biographer of Charles Wesley; a naval Captain; an RAF Wing Commander; lawyers; chairmen of Christian organisations (e.g. Scripture Union, Barnabas Fund, OMF, The New Room - Wesley's chapel)... and many, many more. But all agree that position and human achievement are of no importance in the Kingdom of God...or in Bible storytelling to the nation's children.)



Enthralled deep down in Devon

'Assemblies at Hemyock School have just become a little different. Over 140 children were enthralled by the first weekly presentation by members of the *Open the Book* team.

Head of Teaching and Learning, Leanne Arrowsmith, said, "using the *Open the Book* programme in our collective worship will enable us to discover all the wonder and wisdom that the Bible can offer and it will be great fun for everyone involved!"

Team leader, the Revd Steven Reed from Hemyock Baptist Church said "the volunteers represent churches from across the Upper Culm area including Methodists, Anglicans, Evangelicals and Baptists. They have a breadth of Bible knowledge which they will enthusiastically deliver through the *Open the Book* weekly presentations using the well-known Bible stories, including Adam and Eve, Noah, David, the life of Jesus and the stories of the New Testament."

Our picture shows Leanne Arrowsmith receiving a copy of the '*Lion Story Teller Bible*' from Steven Reed and the *Open the Book* team at the first of their presentations.



Press release from the School's Head and the Revd. Steven Reed of Hemyock Baptist Church, nr Honiton, Devon.



Next the Atlantic and then the USA?

Open the Book has arrived in the school nearest to Land's End, adjacent to beautiful Sennen Cove. The new team in Sennen Primary School, Cornwall enjoyed a great start with "*In the Beginning*".

Fame at last

'I was coming out of a supermarket with a laden trolley, when a mother held her daughter back to let me pass through the gap. "Ooh! Hello!" said the girl delightedly. But her mother ushered her on into the shop. I could hear the girl saying: "But Mummy, that's the *Open the Book* lady!" This, coupled with the joyful smiles when the children walk into our assemblies makes all the work very worthwhile.'

Jackie Sampson, Putley, Herefordshire

That's the best part!

'Just back from doing the story "Sarah spends her savings" and thought I'd share with you something that was said by one of the school children who volunteered to take part. The boy in question asked what part he would be playing in the assembly; he knew it was a speaking role, but that was all. "Jesus." I replied. "Hey!" he called over to his friends who were also taking part; "I'm Jesus. That's the best part!" (by email)

Welcome to all our new teams

105 in 6 months - from the Isle of Man to Lincolnshire, Cornwall to Essex, Surrey to Rutland, Dorset to Cambridgeshire, and Glamorgan to Yorkshire ... but not yet London.

March: Alfreton, Andreas Village (IOM), Barnham, Belbroughton, Brinkworth, Bromsgrove, Congleton, Dauntsey, Hemyock, Ipswich, Kirk Michael (IOM), Oakham, Shaftesbury, Smallwood. **April:** Bewdley, Chippenham, Claydon, Deepcar, Huntingdon, Leeds, Loughborough, Lower Swell, Oare, Marlborough, Milford Haven, Looe, Pebmarsh, Ramsey, Rowlands Castle, Rushall, South Ruislip, Tydd St. Mary. **May:** Burford, Chard, Doddinghurst, Needham Market, Seend, Telford. **June:** Abertridwr, Bisley, Bradford on Avon, Burwell, Cambridge, Congleton, Hagley, Holcombe Brook, LLanfaes, Mawnan Smith, Oakham, Senghenydd, Stowmarket, Walpole St. Peter. **July:** Bettws, Cannington, Coalville, Delph, Hadfield, Malvern, Matson, Ogmere Vale, Old Windsor, Pendeen, Pulham Market, Ramsey, Rotherwick, Takeley, Thorncombe, Tiverton, Winterborne Whitchurch. **August:** Appledore, Bacton, Bentley, Brynhyfryd, Cheltenham, Chatham, Colchester, Coverack, Delabole, Dersingham, Dorrington, Grainthorpe, Guildford, Halesowen, Intake, Ketton, Knutsford, Long Itchingham, Longnor, Longstanton, Maidenhead, North Somercotes, Parkham, Redditch, Scawthorpe, Sennen, St. Keverne, Treboeth, Trumpington, Wenhaston, West Lulworth, Whitmoor, Winterton on Sea, Woking.

WILL YOU?

Will you consider including a gift towards the spread and development of Open the Book in your will? You may wish to remember the spiritual hunger of our nation's children and to enable your contribution to Open the Book to live on.

A very big 'thank-you' to all those churches and individuals who have contributed a total of over £7,843 to the extension work of Open the Book since our April newsletter. However, this is much less than the budgeted figure of £16,000 needed from these supporter sources. A minimum of £42,000 p.a. is required just to maintain the outreach and development work of Open the Book; but our total budget is twice that figure. Will you and your church help us to 'spread the word' more widely still across the UK? Please make this urgent extension and development need known to your church leaders and treasurer.

A donation form is enclosed. Regular giving by Standing Order greatly helps our budgeting.

NB Donations also possible via www.justgiving.com.

The heavens opened

The Churches Together in Cornwall tent team at the Royal Cornwall Show decided in this year of celebrating the 400th Anniversary of the King

James Bible to have continuous storytelling from the Bible. This took place outside the marquee during all three days of this large agricultural show, which is the social event of the year in Cornwall. Many people took part in this project, but the highlight was the *Open the Book* team from Mevagissey telling the story, 'Goodbye at last'. Unfortunately, just before they told the story the heavens opened and the rain poured down; but 'the show must go on'. So they 'performed' to a large group of sheltering families inside the marquee, complete with props and costumes.

Since the show there has been lots of interest in the work of *Open the Book*, including some visitors from Sussex and New Zealand. Many thanks to the team from Mevagissey, who rose to the challenge magnificently.

Shelley Porter, Children's Officer, Diocese of Truro



Survey shows that schools are defying law on Christian worship

A 'ComRes' study has found that many state schools - especially secondaries - are flouting the law on daily Christian assemblies. The research (for BBC local radio) found that 64% of parents believe their child is not attending worship every day. In addition, 60% of the 1,743 adults questioned said that Collective Worship should not be compulsory. Some schools teach pupils about community life and values rather than provide worship. A C of E spokesman said that 'Collective Worship ... should not be confused with corporate worship when everyone is of the same belief. It provides an important chance to focus on pupils' spiritual, moral, social & cultural development'. The Bishop of Oxford added that Christian assemblies are an 'important statement' about 'what we believe as a country'. The National Secular Society condemned this worship as 'an abuse of children's human rights'.

National Co-ordinator: Dianne Brookes

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