



Joanne Parr

Case Study

Born in 1979 in Sutton-in-Ashfield, my early years were tough and filled with challenges. I often cared for my younger siblings as our family moved from one home to another, living in places like Whitwell, New Houghton, and Skegness before eventually returning to Sutton-in-Ashfield.

Tragically, I lost our third child, a baby boy. However, after the birth of our fourth child, we found solace and hope at New Cross Community Church. The warmth and welcome we received there were indescribable, and it felt as though God had lit a path for us to follow.

Motivated by faith and community, I began volunteering and supporting others. I worked with FSID, supporting families who had lost babies, even completing training with top professionals in Wakefield. I also collaborated with charities like Sands and Home Start, while regularly fundraising for King's Mill Hospital's baby unit. Together, we raised funds to provide several CONI (Care of Next Infant) boxes, which monitor infants' vital signs and have helped save lives.

It was during this time that I met Liz, the Principal of ATTFE College, who introduced me to the pantomimes and plays at Sutton Centre Theatre. Inspired, I enrolled in adult courses to improve my reading, writing, and numeracy skills.

Later, we were welcomed into the Let's All Eat food pantry community, where we attended family meals and made lifelong friends. When COVID-19 struck and everything shut down, I felt called to step up for my community. Together with my family, Linda Smith from ATTFE College, and Liz, we delivered food to vulnerable families. Meeting and helping people during this time was deeply fulfilling, and I realized I wanted to do even more.

I eventually became a Church Warden, with encouragement from friends and family who believed I was called to God's work. During a beach mission with Reverend Julie, I felt a clear calling to lead my community with love, kindness, and hope.

However, doubts about my learning abilities held me back. Seeking support, I turned to ATTFE College and enrolled in several courses. Thanks to the encouragement and guidance of tutors like Jo Alais and Linda, I gained confidence and found the strength to keep pushing forward.





With my husband's support, I began formal training with the Church of England and eventually undertook the Licensed Lay Minister (LLM) course. It was one of the hardest things I've ever done, taking two years to complete, but it was also incredibly rewarding.

Today, I am deeply grateful to ATTFE College, Reverend Julie, my church team, and everyone who has supported me. I now have the confidence to stand before a congregation, lead services, and bring my community together. Recently, I led a Walk of Witness, a remembrance service, and a children's and family service.



When I began this journey, I couldn't read or write. But I've learned that it's never too late to grow and learn. If you try and give your best, you can achieve amazing things. I am proud to say I am now a Licensed Lay Minister—a testament to perseverance, faith, and the power of community.

