

Rosemary

I first met Rosemary when, with David and Abigail, their daughter, they came to All Saints' Methodist Church. They had moved from Dronfield near Sheffield.

The family joined in the activities of the Church and we got to know them well.

Abigail and my two children were attending Rush Common Primary school and this provided a further link. Rosemary at this time was working at Abingdon FE College, she also was playing a major part with Abingdon Christian Aid Committee

Abigail and my children transferred to John Mason School as they reached secondary level but, shortly after, the family moved to Newcastle.

My late wife and I kept in touch and we were pleased when the family returned to Abingdon, David having obtained a post firstly at Templeton College and later at the Bodleian Library . Rosemary gained a teaching post at the Cherwell School in Oxford where she taught geography. She was known as a hard working and popular teacher. She worked her way up to Head of Department and undertook many extra duties. Very heavy workload and other problems saw Rosemary suddenly leaving the School and feeling teaching in any form was not for her. She felt depressed and had lost confidence.

Things changed when, in 2009, Rosemary decided to apply for a post to head a project in which Trinity members and their minister the Rev Richard Bittlestone wished to encourage outreach in the field of education the project to be funded by Trinity Church.

She was chosen to lead the project under the chosen title Trinity Learning.

Rosemary approached head teachers to ascertain what they considered a priority. According to the journal "Reform" one head teacher described teachers as, "Overworked, under resourced, demoralised by OFSTED and staff were passing on their stress to the children." I guess Rosemary thought Yes, I know all about that."

The main thrust of activity was, therefore, seen as the well being of teachers and pupils

Courses and workshops were provided to give support and encouragement to all.

The local school close to Trinity received much support which was greatly appreciated.

Some years ago Rosemary showed me a document produced by the Diocese of Gloucester entitled Experience Easter. Looking at it together we thought it needed slight alteration to some of the wording and,

together with Abigail and her understanding of special needs, we made the alterations.

Rosemary, with excitement and imagination now began to bring the words of Experience Easter to reality, the work had many facets, designing tableaux, thinking out simple activities and deciding how Trinity Church would be set out to accommodate them. Risk assessments had to be made, decisions on how children would move around the activities, where they would put their coats, access to toilets and many other practical matters.

Then volunteers – an army of helpers to staff the workshops and the need to train them

Rosemary with her helpers did all this. Now to invite the schools. Would they come? Yes they did and year after year they continued to do so.

With Experience Easter children gained some understanding of the events of Holy Week through listening, seeing and doing. This knowledge might otherwise have remained unknown to them.

Some children were led to discuss their own personal feelings with their teachers following Experience Easter and to be helped.

Those of us who assisted with the project were impressed by the way in which Rosemary had the whole enterprise under her control. Of all that she did the creation and delivery of Experience Easter will remain as a lasting tribute

Others were also impressed with Rosemary and in 2018 she received the United Reformed Church Award which came with the sum of £2000.

This money was used to fund “Thinking Books”, a scheme to develop discussion from selected books and designed to particularly help children with emotional problems.

While Rosemary was spearheading all this activity she was also playing a full part in the life and witness of All Saints’. This included junior Church and Messy church. She also was effective in presenting new information, making it clear what one needed to know and do.

Church Twinning was another involvement for Rosemary where, with me she represented All Saints’ on the Committee

She was always bursting with ideas and saw ways of implementing them. She enjoyed visits to twin towns and hosting visitors when they came to Abingdon . She had clear ideas on what Church twinning was about as you will hear from Angela Waterhouse.

So, Rosemary, what memories do I have of you? A lady always smiling always cheerful and an always encouraging attitude – “You can do it, you’ll be fine, Go for it.” Along with this, understanding and an ability to empathise.

Rosemary, hard working, caring, happy, encouraging, talented.

She had a strong Christian faith and in all that she did she enjoyed putting her faith into action

To conclude:

Well done, Rosemary, good and faithful servant
Enter now into the joy of your Lord.