

Remembering Rosemary

TrinityLearning began in October 2009, when Trinity Church, Abingdon, appointed Rosemary Perrow as their Education & Development Officer. Her remit was to explore ways in which the church could use its time, talents and space to enhance the quality of life for all those working in local schools – both students and staff. Rosemary was central to the formation and development of TrinityLearning from then on. As a teacher, Rosemary was able to use her extensive experience to help young people of all ages get a better start in life.

Eve Newton was part of a small support group from Trinity Church which met with Rosemary every few months to listen and help carry out her ideas right from the start. 'However much there was to organise, however tiring the physical furniture shifting, Rosemary was always enthusiastic, cheerful and unremittingly thoughtful for us who were sometimes quite daunted by what we were letting ourselves in for! But it was clear that the teachers and children responded with interest and enjoyment to what was offered.'

Working from an initial idea by the Diocese of Gloucester, Rosemary developed Experience Easter which still sits at the centre of TrinityLearning's offer to schools. Volunteer Maurice Tubb remembers how Rosemary:

'with excitement and imagination, 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 round the activities, where they would put their coats, access toilets and many other practical matters.'

Angela Waterhouse adds, 'I was very much aware of Rosemary's openness, and sensitivity to the issue of sharing the Christian story of Easter with children and



teachers of different Christian traditions, of different faiths, and of no faith. Starting with that peaceful moment when she calmed the children to begin the storytelling - at the same time calming the nerves of the team of helpers of all denominations whom she had gathered round her - or sharing the peace in song at the end of the

session, she succeeded in opening up the universal themes of love and service, death and loss, hope and commitment, for reflection by such very young children, without proselytising, reaching people wherever they were on their spiritual journey.'

Mary Anderson, another TrinityLearning volunteer remembers:

'My main memory of Rosemary is that she was so wise. No rush, no shouting from rooftops, but a steady source of Christian love and inspiration. We had various

discussions about the future of TrinityLearning, and she guided me through Experience Easter in 2019, a real privilege.'

Rosemary's work at TrinityLearning is widely recognised and appreciated locally but also achieved national recognition in 2018 when she received the United Reformed Church Award which came with the sum of £2000. This money was used to start 'Thinking Books', a scheme to develop discussion from selected books and designed to help children develop empathy.

Providing work experience for students with low confidence was a high priority for Rosemary. Specially selected pupils worked alongside her for a week in the summer term. Eluned Hallas, Trinity Church's administrator, remembers:

'I worked in the room next door for several of these placements and heard Rosemary's patience, more than I could have managed, and noted the way she worked with the pupils to find what they enjoyed or were good at so they could go back after their week having achieved something positive. However, she was also not afraid to challenge them out of their comfort zone, but always in a way that ensured they succeeded. Her placement reports were a positive affirmation of the pupil's achievements.'

We also remember the joy and peace enjoyed by students and staff in the reflective gardens she brought into being, working with groups of volunteers of all ages in a number of primary schools in the town, including the most recent garden at Kingfisher School which she worked on after her retirement till it was completed. One of these garden projects was recognised as one of the top three Groundwork Community UK Awards in November 2018.

Rosemary retired from leading TrinityLearning in 2019, having helped to secure ongoing funding and overseeing TrinityLearning established as a registered charity. Her retirement was marked by a joyful celebration in Trinity Church, attended by many past and present TrinityLearning volunteers and supporters, as well as the mayor of Abingdon.

It seems right to finish with Rosemary's own words:

'So, what of these last few months? Yes, there has been pain and frustration, but also the cards, the flowers, and most of all, time to be with David, and an overwhelming sense that the job is done and I can truly now rest in peace.'

Rosemary was right to say that her job was done and that she could rest in peace. Her work will continue through TrinityLearning and its wonderful volunteers.



A Thanksgiving Service for Rosemary's life will be held at Trinity Church on her birthday, Monday 21st June.