

A Celebration of the Life of
Rosemary Ann Perrow



21st June 1955 - 19th February 2021

All Saints Methodist Church Abingdon

Friday 5th March 2021



In order to keep everyone safe please:

Wear masks throughout the service and whilst in the building

Remember to maintain social distance and do not assemble in
the building or outside the church

Please remain seated until asked to stand by the Minister

Do not sing along to the songs
Hymns will either be sung by the soloist or are pre-recorded

Service conducted by Rev'd Alan Grist

Soloist – Rev'd Ian Griffiths

Gathering

Sung Call to Worship: Be Still for the Presence of the Lord v.1

Welcome

Prayer

Be Still for the Presence of the Lord v.2 & 3 (Solo)

Readings:

John 14 v25 - 27

Isaiah 40 v 28-31

Romans 8 v38-39

Hymn: Lord the Light of Your Love is Shining (Recording)

Reflections on Rosemary's life by Angela Waterhouse & Maurice Tubb

Prayers (including response sung by soloist: In the Lord I'll be Ever Thankful)

Hymn: And Can it Be (Recording)

Rosemary's Poem "Heaven" – Read by Valerie Grist

Hymn – "Broken Allelujah" by Bright City (Recording)

Sung Blessing

Wonderful World Powerpoint

Please remain in your seats for the Powerpoint until shown out by the Stewards

Donations to either or both: Christian Aid/Trinity Learning

Gift Aid Envelopes are available

Heaven

Please don't imagine me perched on a cloud
- frills and feathers were never my thing.

None of us knows what lies beyond,
But I'm certain that somehow life goes on
And that I'll be meeting my Father and my Lord
- and that holds no fear at all.

You see, I've met them every day as I've walked this life.
Like the dust that floats invisible and sparkles in the sun,
I've glimpsed their love
In the trusting smile of a child
The love of family and friends
And the glorious sunsets I took far too many photos of.
So Heaven won't seem strange - I've lived it already, in so many ways.

Rosemary Perrow - September 2020

My life

I was born at home in Bristol on June 21st 1955. Right from the start I caused problems! - Dad had to be despatched to retrieve the doctor from a dinner-dance; a ten-year old June was left waiting for the new baby on the eve of her 11-plus and then I was born jaundiced. Having a little one after a 10 year-gap must have been quite a shock to my family, and throughout my childhood June was more like a second Mum than a big sister.



I remember my early years as quite lonely in some ways, but spent many happy hours playing in the garden - eating redcurrants from the bushes (did Mum really not guess it wasn't the birds?) and telling long imaginative stories using a variety of toys and china ornaments. In those non-PC days I loved to watch The Black and White Minstrel Show and Mum once found me in the flower-bed totally naked and covered in mud "I'm a black and white minstrel" I proudly boasted. Then there was the time I nearly set myself and the house on fire by dressing up as The Holy Ghost near an open fire!

I loved school, and despite seeming to catch almost every possible childhood illness and having to attend weekly physiotherapy sessions at The Children's Hospital, did quite well. Geography was always my favourite subject, fuelled by TV documentaries and vivid correspondence from Mum's best-friend in India.

Mum & Dad, hadn't expected me to pass the entrance exam into the newly independent Colston's Girls' School and even with a bursary, it was a struggle on a plumber's wage. A combination of bullying and Mum being ill made it a difficult time for me too, but I loved the learning - so much so that the staff encouraged me to apply for Cambridge. When I got the offer, I told the Head I had no intention of accepting - then she went straight into assembly and announced proudly to the whole school that I was going! Unethical, probably, psychologically risky, definitely, successful, yes, as this opened up a whole new world for me.

My introduction to Cambridge life began in summer 1973, when I was invited to join an undergraduate group doing fieldwork in the Alps. Rough camping across Europe was a real adventure for someone whose holidays were mainly day trips or short breaks in Devon, so June was drafted in to chaperone and provide safe transport. It was there I met Catriona, who's remained my best friend ever since. Cambridge offered many new opportunities. MethSoc provided a safe base, while Ecumenical Fellowship Groups, including everyone from Quakers to Catholic Nuns, allowed me to explore my new-found faith. I found myself leading a group, then leading services, and have been a strong advocate of ecumenism ever since.



Of course, it was also at Cambridge that I met David, the love of my life. We were an odd pair - him tall dark and silent, me short and chatty; me disorganised, him tidy - but, strengthened by our shared faith and desire for social justice, it's been a winning combination through thick and thin for over 40 years. Not that we haven't had our ups and downs - from our first rented home, the miners cottage with pigeons in the loft and a waterfall in the bedroom, to negative equity in the 90's and job insecurity in the millennium.

The first ten years of our marriage were spent in Dronfield, just south of Sheffield. David worked for the University while I taught at Henry Fanshawe School - a delightful comprehensive upper school. *GCSE Geology* proved quite a challenge, with a (still rather naïve) probationary teacher wondering why the 14 year-old lads sniggered at the mention of "rocks" and "schist". I really enjoyed the progressive A level teaching there and quickly became a 6th Form Tutor. We joined the town's Christian Aid Committee, where I organised my first Fashion Show, and I was active on the Ecumenical Church Council.



Abigail was born in Sheffield in 1984. Her disability came as a total shock, but as with so many difficult times, the support of family and church friends lifted us up and we soon realised that she'd cope fine. I took up a role as a Traidcraft rep, filling the guest room with bulk orders of toilet rolls and coffee and taking Abigail with me to talks and coffee mornings, while settling into a routine of one day's supply teaching each week and marking GCSE exams. In my spare time, I contributed to The Geographical Association, on the local steering group, and by helping compile a national careers resource-pack.



David's job brought us to Abingdon in 1989. Joining All Saints was almost a given, as we bought our new home from members of the congregation, whose children rapidly became Abi's best friends. I joined Abingdon Christian Aid Committee, where I was church rep., press officer and chair and organised a Traidcraft Fashion Show. Between ferrying Abigail to gymnastics and band, I took up teaching at Abingdon College, where the more adult atmosphere and support of Ray Strugnell gave me the happiest years of my teaching career. I also found myself leading Abingdon Woodcraft Folk.

In 1995 David's job took us to Newcastle upon Tyne. Thanks to a tip-off from Paul Williams, we joined a very lively LEP where I quickly got involved in The Ecumenical Church Council and Christian Aid (including fashion show number 3!) I started teaching in a huge 11 - 18 comprehensive school - a shock to the system after F.E. (especially as it included Year 9 sex education!) and worked my way up to Head of Department within five years.

We loved Newcastle, the countryside and coast, its people and lifestyle, but it was a long way north and family brought us back south, to Abingdon, in 2000. I found a job at Cherwell School in Oxford, where again I gradually worked my way up to Head of Department, running the annual Japan Day, which led to an all-expenses paid trip to Japan in 1997.





But in 2009 things all got too much for me. A combination of admin overload, family concerns and health problems resulted in stress and discipline issues and I left suddenly, vowing never to return to the classroom. It was a bleak time, even as my confidence slowly recovered, for all my skills were teaching-related. I was a lost soul.

Dreadful as it was at the time, looking back, that breakdown was probably the best thing that could have happened. It took me off a treadmill that was going ever faster and led me to TrinityLearning. I will for ever be thankful to Richard Bittleston and the congregation at Trinity for the opportunities this opened up. I was able to use all my experience to help others avoid the pitfalls I had met, to help young people of all ages get a better start in life. I re-gained confidence and discovered new skills as Trinity encouraged me with their trust, love and support, such that I felt able to offer to undertake the challenging role of Senior Steward at All Saints. It was a privilege to work closely alongside Peter Bennett and Ian Griffiths, and the rewards these roles offered made those years the best of my life. As if this wasn't enough, part-time work allowed me extra time with David, including time to travel.



A committed francophile, I was delighted to join The Church in Abingdon's Twinning Group, which developed casual holiday friendships into bonds of deep Christian fellowship, travelling to Argentan, St Nikolas and Colmar.



So what of these last few months? Yes, there has been pain and frustration, but also the cards, the flowers, but 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 Perrow

February 2021



Donations to Christian Aid, TrinityLearning (or both) can be made as you leave the Church. Alternatively you can give to Christian Aid via their website at <https://donate.christianaid.org.uk/Donate/Step/1> or direct to TrinityLearning via the address at <https://trinitylearning.org.uk/>





Thank you for coming and helping us to remember Rosemary's life

