

Remembering Joy



The Reverend Joy Todd

27th September 1928 – 1st September 2018

Joy Todd was a gracious, kind and sensitive person. She put others first, and cared deeply for them. Joy loved this parish: the music, the people, the connections with the town. After her working life in Guildford, Joy became a lay reader and then was ordained in the early 1990s, being one of the first tranche of women priests. Through her gentle service and deep prayerfulness, she encouraged a number of people to change their opinions about women's ordination. Her spirituality and deep Christian character shone through.

Joy was committed to offering pastoral care, especially to those who might otherwise be forgotten. She cycled up and down hills, taking Communion and bringing comfort to many. She loved the music in the parish as well as the attitude of "open our hearts to the High Street".

Joy was a treasured member of this parish community, a faithful priest and a fine friend to many.

Robert Cotton

A message from the Bishop of Dorking:

I'm very sad to hear of the Rev'd Joy Todd's death yesterday, not least because in learning of her death I realise all that I have missed in her life.

Robert's few words about her lead me to want to thank her for her role as a forebear of women in ministry—and particular in ordained ministry—in Guildford. I wish I could have thanked her personally for that. Her role in the pastoral care of others inspires me—along with her commitment to the study of theology and her inspiration to others to know and love God. All the essential marks of a priest...

It's also clear from Robert's words that Joy understood the church as her true family. I send fond wishes and my heartfelt prayers to all in that family, especially at Holy Trinity and St Mary's, who mourn her passing.

"Precious in the eyes of the Lord is the death of his saints." Psalm 116.14

Thanks be to God for Joy!

+ Jo

Sermon given by the Rev'd Rod Pierce

20th September 2018

Whenever Joy stood up to preach a sermon, you just knew that it wouldn't be a complicated or difficult to understand theological argument or a convoluted dissection of scripture.

I remember her so vividly talking about her beloved garden, or her 'just recent' travels to visit friends across southern England, talking about the weather, the changing seasons, the lambs in the fields or the majesty of the scenery, as she delivered her message of God's love for the world, and its people, whilst managing to link such themes to the Gospel reading for the day, in a simple but profound way that many people appreciated and loved.

For Joy, spreading God's message in an easily understandable and digestible way was the essence of her preaching ministry. In such a way she was following much the style of Christ himself, who often drew his illustrations from the rural occupations such as farming, looking after animals, growing crops, and the natural world that the people were familiar with, and knew so well.

With her theological degree and training, she was well-read and perfectly able to offer a well-researched and thorough Bible exposition if necessary and indeed started to learn and study New Testament Greek in order to make more sense of some of the accepted Bible translations – I know because I have some of her Greek Bible Lexicons and translations and her Greek New Testament at home, all inscribed with her name and the years 1990, 91 or 92 which was when she undertook these studies.

Her collection of religious study books of course had to be passed on when she realised that she would no longer be able to return to her beloved home and kindly offered them to us as her colleagues at the time, a magnanimous gesture, and typical of her generosity..

She was of course undeniably a 'people-person', devoting so much of her ministry to helping people, spending much time at the Royal Surrey hospital, and caring for and ministering to parishioners, especially the more senior ones, and the infirm, until she could no longer do so, and many of them then came to visit her. She took numerous funerals when she retired from her finance position at the Council and she was of course a familiar figure as she cycled across the town on her many visits.

I remember when after training and first becoming what was then known as a Lay Reader, after some years, Joy was encouraged by Kenneth Stevenson to consider ordination – but in those days, of course, women could only be ordained to the Diaconate – normally referred to as Deaconesses – However Kenneth ...and Joy ..made it clear that Joy would be a ‘Deacon’ not a Deaconess, and it wasn’t long after that that the legislation was passed for women to be ordained Priest, and as we know Joy was in that pioneering group of women deacons priested in that very first year.

She did so much to embody the virtues of a priest, and many of us felt that in her quiet, her dedicated and priestly way, especially when she visited other churches to preach, she did more to convert those who were still unsure or unhappy about the appropriate role of a woman as priest than any other in this area in those early years.

Confined to her nursing home in Stoughton, Brian Roberts arranged a rota for us to take home communion to Joy, - she also happily received Communion each month from the clergy of Emmanuel Stoughton who visited the home.

As a priest, Joy loved to be able to participate fully in the consecration of the bread and wine, and delighted in being able to celebrate communion services in her room with us, delivering the sacred words of consecration herself as long as she could, so continuing her priestly role for which she was so eminently suited. Its fitting that her own Bible accompanies her in her coffin today.

She will be badly missed. May she rest in peace, and rise in glory, Amen.

Tribute given by Chris Roberts

20th September 2018

It is a privilege and an honour to speak about Joy and I am not sure that I can really do her justice, all who knew her will realise what a wonderful person she was, a modern-day Saint and a fine priest.

Joy was born on the 27th of September 1928 and would have been 90 years old had she lived a few more weeks. Her Father was a gardener at Willow Grange, now the home of the Bishop of Guildford. They lived at Stringers Barn a house just off Saltbox Road, near Britten's Pond before moving to Stoke Road, to the house where Joy lived for most of her life, before she moved into Queen Elizabeth Park Care Home.

Joy was a lifelong Guildfordian, she went to Bellfield's School and then to the Central School in Harvey Road leaving at the age of 15. Her first job was in Guildford, and most of her career was spent working for Guildford Borough Council in the Treasurers Department.

Joy got her love of gardening from her father and enjoyed growing her own vegetables, we often discussed her garden. She also enjoyed days out with friends, in particular to Chichester and Portsmouth and her holidays in Devon with her lifelong friend Evelyn.

She originally worshiped and sang in the choir at St Johns Church Stoke until her Mother died in the 1970's. Joy then moved to the parish of Holy Trinity and St Marys and worshiped here, as a member of the choir, a lay reader and later as a priest.

In the early days women in the choir did not walk in procession but crept in at the last minute to the back row. How things have changed for the better since then.

Joy later became a lay reader under Canon Cary and started taking a prominent part in services. Kenneth Stevenson arrived as Rector in 1987, and immediately appreciated Joys many talents, and it was not long before she was training to be a priest. Joy had never been to university and took a degree at Kings College London, a big step to take in her 60's, having left school at 15 years.

Joy was one of the first women priests to be ordained in 1994. It was not always easy being one of the first, there was still prejudice in the church which at times could be quite hurtful. I remember being present at her first Celebration of Holy Communion. It seemed so natural that she should now be performing this role. There was no side to Joy, it just happened and seemed to be so right. I felt at the time, as I am sure many others did, that Joy was the best advertisement for having women in the priesthood.

Her ministry was varied, taking services at both Holy Trinity. St Marys and at Addison Court. It was a common site to see Joy cycling along Stoke Road and the High Street, and then seeing her bike locked to the railings. Her kind and caring manner made her ideal to carry out pastoral care in the parish, and so many people benefited from her help and advice. Joys sermons were always to the point and contained carefully considered spiritual direction. She was unassuming and non-judgemental when helping and advising parishioners. When my Mother was in hospital she took her communion and gave my family comfort and advice, later taking the funeral and cremation. I know she did this for so many people, all of whom were deeply indebted to Joy. Her compassion and support were appreciated by so many in the parish. Her kindness was also shown as she helped as a volunteer at the Royal Surrey Hospital.

Joys latter years were far from easy, her strong faith and saintly qualities carried her through.

The 10th of June 2012 was our Ruby Wedding and Joy was due to attend the celebration. We heard that she was not well and unable to attend. This of course was the start of her illness; the lower part of her body was paralysed from then on. During the following 6 years many of us visited her in hospital and then in the Queen Elizabeth Park Care Home.

It was always a pleasure to visit Joy and I have done so most weeks over the last 6 years. It was far from a chore and I was always greeted by a lovely smile and an interesting conversation. Despite all her medical problems she never complained, remained cheerful, grateful, and interested in all that was happening around her. Life in bed or in a wheelchair for so long must have been very frustrating, and yet Joy coped with it, greeted visitors with affection, and kept her faith. We always finished by holding hands and saying the grace. Her bible and prayer book were always by her side. At first, she was able to come to some services at Holy Trinity but the difficulty of getting a wheelchair taxi early on a Sunday morning put her off. She had days out at garden centres and other venues and liked to talk and laugh about them. At Christmas we would hang up her cards and get out her home-made crib made of cork tiles. This was a ritual and had to be done correctly.

She used to love her visits from Audrey Bonner, Mary Bell, Helen Poole, Rosy and other friends too many to mention. Audrey who was her senior would get a bus up to see her, and Joy was always worried about how she would get home. As it turned out Audrey moved into Queen Elizabeth Park a few weeks ago and was able to spend time with Joy during her last days. Brian Roberts and I visited Joy on the Thursday before she died. It was obvious that she would soon be at peace and her nurse Sue Ann told me that she and Joy had kissed and expressed their love for each other. Joy and Sue Ann realised it would not be long. Helen then visited in the afternoon and together with Audrey celebrated communion and anointed Joy. The following day Audrey sat with Joy holding her hand and then at 12.20am very early on Saturday morning her faith was rewarded, and she passed into Gods hands.

Thanks are due to Sue Ann and the other nurses at Queen Elizabeth Park who cared for Joy so well and to all who visited her, to the priests of Emmanuel Stoughton, and Helen Poole who watched over Joy so well in the last months.

But finally, it was a privilege and a joy to know her. A saintly priest who helped and guided so many through out their lives.

May Joy rest in peace and light perpetual shine upon her.