

## **A Short History of Trinity Church**

### ***Background***

In the 1970s and early 1980s Lower Earley began to emerge as a new community. The area of land on the outskirts of Reading between “old” Earley and the loop of the M4 (including the old Solly Joel stud farm) was earmarked for what was then the biggest housing estate in Europe.

The local churches had identified that such a large development would warrant (and be able to support) a new Church and discussions were ongoing as to how to achieve that.

The impetus that triggered the formation of the new Church, though, was the building of the new Radstock Community centre (next to Radstock School) and the availability of the community centre on Sunday mornings. It was decided to take up the booking and start a new congregation worshipping there each Sunday morning.

Although we had exciting visions of a large new Church emerging – it was a nonetheless a challenging task to establish and nurture the first shoots of the venture.

### ***The Beginnings***

Thus the adventure of Trinity Church began in 1983 when a small group of Christians met in a house in Earley to plan services in the new Radstock community centre. From that small beginning Trinity Church has grown rapidly to what it is today.

In 1983 members of Christ Church Woodley (then a Methodist Church) and Park United Reformed Church came together to plan the first services of the new joint Church.

Services commenced in the new Radstock Community Centre on June 19th of that year, with a congregation of just 20 people, gathered in partly by word of mouth and partly by dropping leaflets through local doors.

However, word got round and that number soon started to increase. Later in 1983 a meeting was held to constitute the new Church (the “Fish and Chip” supper due to the refreshments provided that night). This formalised the offices and started a membership list. The new Church (known then as Radstock Church) was formally recognised by both denominations in 1984.

Strong lay-leadership (always a feature at Trinity) saw the congregation grow and flourish to over 100 members, and plans were put into place to get Trinity a building of its own.

Church of England participation in Trinity began in 1986/7 with support from St Peter's Earley, in whose parish Trinity was located, and in Jan 1988 the Revd Neil Davies joined Trinity as the Church of England priest.

### ***The Buildings***

A small plot of land was identified near to Asda, and negotiations began to acquire it and to plan the building of the new Church.

The new building began in 1986, as part of the larger scheme in that area for the sports centre, doctor's surgery, pub, youth centre and library.



Here's Revd John Stephens at the stone-laying ceremony.

We received the keys to our new building in October 1987 – just days before the hurricane of that year. But the building stood up well to its first test.



The new building was opened on November 7th 1987 by the Revd Bernard Arnold (our first minister) assisted by the Church's then minister - the Revd John Stephens, and the leaders of the URC, Church of England and the Methodist Church. This was followed by further rapid growth in the congregation.

In 2004 Trinity embarked upon a buildings alteration scheme, to add a new main entrance, a new chapel, new kitchens and toilets and improved side entrance, with a view to completing fund raising and building within 2 years.

It cost a bit more than we expected, and took a bit longer than we planned but the new buildings were opened by the Bishop of Reading (Rt Rev Stephen Cottrell) in October 2008.



## ***Our Ministers***

As mentioned Rev Bernard Arnold was our first minister. He was Methodist Minister at Woodley at the time and naturally took over the new Church forming in Lower Earley. He was supported by the URC Minister (Rev Michael Jackson) of Park URC.



**Rev Bernard Arnold**

Bernard left in 1985 and Rev John Stephens became our minister.

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The Revd Nina Mead served as a non-stipendary Minister of the URC from 1988 until 1990, and the Revd Judy Davies succeeded John Stephens in 1989 as a part time Methodist Minister prior to taking up the post of Chaplain at Reading University.

The Methodist Church and the URC had agreed on an alternating ministry and in September 1991 the Revd Terry Hinks was introduced as Trinity's first full-time URC minister. Terry was also given responsibility for the Three Mile Cross Methodist Church and Spencer's Wood URC.



**Rev Terry Hinks**

In 1992 the process to establish a new Church of England parish (Earley Trinity) was completed. This was celebrated on 16 January 1993 in the first 'beating of the bounds' - a walk around the Parish boundary. 1993 also saw the first of a series of ministers in training come to Trinity for placements as part of their training.

Trinity took part in a 'Share Jesus' mission in 1992 and in the 'Thames Valley Alive' mission in 1994, a mission that involved Churches across Reading of all the main traditions.

In July 1995 Neil and Judy Davies moved on to a new parish and in September 1996 Revd Simon Howard came to Trinity as the Church of England priest. Simon was given the additional responsibility of working on behalf of Churches Together in Earley and East Reading (CTEER) as schools work co-ordinator.



**Rev Simon Howard**

In 1997 Trinity celebrated the 10th anniversary of the opening of the building at Chalfont Close, giving thanks to God for all that has been achieved, looking at its future work in serving the community and glorifying God.

In 1997 Trinity hit the headlines when the press and television featured our celebration of the Harvest Festival (together with other CTEER churches) in the local Asda superstore next door. Where better to celebrate Harvest Festival than surrounded by Asda's fine display of greengrocery?

In 1998 Revd Terry Hinks moved on to pastures new, and the Revd Nick Thompson joined us as Methodist Minister.



**Rev Nick Thompson**

In May 2005 Revd Simon Howard departed us, leaving us with just one minister for the first time.

In the summer of 2007 the Revd Nick Thompson departed us and shortly afterwards Rev Jon Salmon took over the reigns.



**Rev Jon Salmon**