

How God helped me illustrate Christ's passion

LYNN New always loved drawing, writing and art. But she never imagined that one day she would be publishing a book she had written and illustrated about the Stations of the Cross.

Her book, *Christ's Journey Shared*, features illustrations of the 15 Stations of the Cross coupled with reflections and suggestions for Bible readings. The profits will go to the appeal for building work at her church – St Helen's Church in the village of St Helens, on the Isle of Wight.

Despite only recently having started attending church regularly, Lynn always had an intense relationship with Jesus. Due to ill health as a child, she spent a lot of time in hospital, away from family and friends, and found comfort and refuge in Christ.

"I didn't want to go to church," she said "Because I was too busy with Jesus. My faith was a precious gift and I didn't want to lay it anywhere in case it got broken."

She had always been interested in writing and art. She credits a particular teacher at her school who encouraged her creativity as inspiration for starting her work up again later in life.

Lynn started writing poetry in the early 1990s, using calligraphy skills she had acquired at school, inspired by the Holy Spirit, for herself and other people. For her late partner's funeral, she read a poem she'd written, and was surprised when a colleague of his asked for a copy and later wanted

to meet for a coffee.

"We were chatting about church," said Lynn. "And I was explaining my faith in relation to creative work, when he asked 'Don't you think the church is needing something like this?'"

"I had never thought of it like that before. I attended his ordination some months later; the experience opened my eyes to my own future."

Lynn enrolled on an Exploring Christianity course and was later selected for Reader training, which she is currently near to completing.

"I knew by then that I wanted a church, I didn't want to be one of those people who are spiritual, but without the authority of the church," she said "Once I was selected, it all followed through. I

knew it was my calling because it was just so right!"

Her final year has involved training, work in her chosen placement of hospital chaplaincy, pastoral activities, involvement with the PCC and work on the spiritual side of church life. She credits the advice of her incumbent in gaining confidence.

"He said 'You don't have to be good at everything. Be aware of your individual gifts,'" she said. "And that was great because it means I can be a part of the full



Lynn New with one of her illustrations for the Stations of the Cross

last year, she had no intention of making a book, and she had no clear ideas about how to paint the pictures.

She was asked to create and lead the Good Friday Stations service during the interregnum at St Helen's, but could not find any online that she wanted to use. She was encouraged to paint them; not least by God himself!

"It was six weeks of intense experience," she said. "But a friend from Exploring Christianity said to me 'You start, and if you find you can't do it, stop, I have a series to lend.' It was like a safety net, so I started."

For each of the 15 pictures, Lynn only knew where Jesus and the cross were to be. Everything else was directed by Jesus.

"He directed the colours, the characters, and the symbolism," she said. "There is a little girl in one picture that I drew without realising it. Then I decided there was no reason for her to be there, but I heard a voice in my head and heart say 'No!', and so she stayed."

Lynn found it draining emotionally, because while she was painting the stations, she was envisaging, watching and living the things she was painting.

"I was leading my normal life at the same time, but I don't remember anything else I did in those weeks apart from the stations," she said.

church but with the accent on the spiritual side involving pastoral work."

Back in the early 1990s, she had illustrated her poetry herself and sold them at craft fairs.

my faith

Lynn New was inspired by the Holy Spirit to illustrate the Stations of the Cross last year. Now they've been published as the latest in a series of books she's written and illustrated

Someone suggested she should put them in a book, so she did so. The first was published in 1996.

Since then, she's compiled eight books of poems and illustrations, based on spiritual reflection and themes such as love poetry and maritime images, inspired by the years she grew to know and love Portsmouth. Lynn also created greetings cards which were sold on the home and international market.

However, when it came to creating the Stations of the Cross

The pictures are designed to encourage others to have their own spiritual reflections based on them. "Someone suggested putting them together for a reflection/ resource book," Lynn said. "Not just for Lent or Easter, but for the whole year round."

She rewrote the reflections used with the Stations for the Good Friday service, and published it herself. The profits from sales of *Christ's Journey Shared* will go towards the St Helen's Church appeal to build toilets and other facilities, including a room to be used for children's ministry, which will make the building more useful for weddings, baptisms and children's activities. Lynn hopes to raise £1,500 for the cause, and will need to sell all the books to reach this aim.

"It's my way of giving something back to a church which has supported me through tough times, using my own hands and my own gifts," she said.

Christ's Journey Shared, with a foreword by our own Archdeacon Peter Sutton, is priced at £4.50, and is available from Portsmouth Cathedral, Quarr Abbey, the Living Room in Newport, and other mainland outlets or directly from Lynn herself by emailing lynn@lynnznew.plus.com.

● Lynn will be leading a quiet day at St John's Church, Locks Heath, on April 30, from 1.30pm-3.30pm.