

30 December 2017

## Fr EDWARD ROGERS 9 November 1924 – 30 December 2017



Ted, as he was known, was born into a family of nine children in a poor district of Liverpool. His father worked in a shipping company and was active in the Vincent de Paul Society. His mother shepherded the boys towards being Mass servers. At 16, Ted got a job in a factory and when the war reached Liverpool through nightly air raids in 1940, he joined the rest of his family in a shelter in the back garden. The next year he joined the Merchant Navy ferrying supplies to distant parts in convoys which were

often attacked by submarines. Once, 15 ships were sunk with a loss of 1077 lives. He too was torpedoed off the Sierra Leone coast and was adrift in a crowded lifeboat for four days.

After the war he went to Osterley, the college in London for late vocations and he joined the novitiate in 1947. After ordination in 1958 he came to Musami for two years and then our imaginative superior of the time, Terence Corrigan, set him to ‘do social work’. Corrigan left it up to Ted to discover what this might mean. Ted’s first thought was to provide a study group for the youngsters in the high-density suburbs (1964). He gathered voluntary teachers to help – among them Fay Chung, later Zimbabwe’s first Minister of Education. This work gradually grew into St Peter’s Community School and later added ‘Kubabtana’ to its name and extended its activities to technical education. Misereor provided funding for up-to-the-moment equipment. At the same time Ted was wondering what ‘social work’ might mean. There were no models in Africa to draw on.

Again, he gathered volunteers – nine professionals from both sides of the Zambezi – who enthusiastically set about designing courses in community building. (Ted later recorded all these activities in detail in his 2012 300-page memoir, simply called *Ted Rogers*). Interest grew, the university co-operated, granting associate status in 1969, and finally the School of Social Work was born. Misereor again provided the means for building an attractive campus in the Kopje area.

By this time Ted was 45 and had no qualifications to lead an academic institution. He put this right by doing a year’s Master’s in Social Administration at Cardiff University in Wales. The 1970s were the war years and Ted extended

his activities as Principal of the School by becoming involved in the Justice and Peace Commission, Help the Aged, Christian Care, CADEC and VOICE (Voluntary Organisations in Community Enterprise). After Independence, he went on to help President Banana in setting up Kushinga Phikelele agricultural college near Marondera. He was also involved in setting up Shelter Trust for women with unwanted pregnancies.

In 1985 he went on sabbatical to St Anthony's in Oxford, a college for International Studies, where he was given the title of 'Professor' much to his amusement. During that time, he also went to Brazil to study the Basic Christian Communities (*Comunidades de Base?*). When he returned to Zimbabwe there was a new crisis: AIDS. Ted immediately turned his attention to this, studying the issues in detail and setting up the AIDS Counselling Trust which then morphed into JAP (Jesuit AIDS Programme) and fed into AJAN, the Africa Jesuit AIDS Network.

At the same time he was called to be the secretary of IMBISA, the Southern Africa Bishops' Conference, and, in the words of Cardinal Napier, 'he was always challenging us bishops to see the needs of the people in our care and devise ways of responding to them'.

Ted received an honorary doctorate from the University of Zimbabwe in 2002 in recognition of all his work. In 2010 he retired to Boscombe in England as he was told the altitude of Zimbabwe was no good for his heart. But his heart was still in Zimbabwe and he wrote two books, the memoir mentioned, and an account of the martyrs of the recent war in Zimbabwe. He continued to support the education of AIDS orphans by raising funds.

His name is often associated with that of John Dove, a fellow innovator but they never worked together though they were in widely similar fields. They were both 'lone rangers' and even lonely rangers as their work was not always appreciated by their fellow Jesuits. But Ted appreciated the care he received in Boscombe in his last days.

Ted liked Ps 107: 'Some sailed to the sea in ships / to trade on the might waters. These men have seen the Lord's deeds / the wonders he does in the deep' (v23).

