

TRIBUTES TO THE REVD CANON GARY PHILBRICK

From the Diocese of
Winchester



DIOCESE of
WINCHESTER



Sermon at the Funeral of Revd Canon Gary Philbrick

This is not a sermon in any sense that I *want* to preach, because Gary was taken from us far too early. But it is a sermon I am incredibly *honoured* to preach, and I hope and pray that in it I might just begin to do Gary justice. And it is a sermon in another way that is very easy to preach because it is so easy to say so many very good things about him – as indeed Craig already has. But I know I simply cannot say everything there is to say about Gary, not without detaining you for a very long time. All of us here will have our own stories and very fond recollections of the man. That's why it is so important that we gather together after the service in the North Transept to share those stories with one another. And how appropriate we do so over tea and cake. How Gary would have approved. Indeed we can use the lovely photo on the front of the order of service to visualise him joining in with us.

The moment I was asked to preach this sermon I knew where it was in scripture that I wanted to go – indeed to whom I wanted to go. It's to one of my favourite places and favourite people: it's to Barnabas, and to the description of him that we are given in Acts II where we're told, *'He was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and faith.'* Couldn't those words so easily be applied to Gary? He was indeed, *'a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and faith.'*

If we look at Barnabas in the Book of Acts – which we will do, before we look at Gary, in the light of Barnabas, and indeed before we come to our two readings, as we also will – if we look at Barnabas, we can see that he did so much good. The first we hear of him is that he's generous with his possessions, as he sells a field and gives the apostles the proceeds, and that generosity of heart sets the pattern for what's to follow. He's the one through whom St. Paul enters into his incredibly fruitful ministry as Barnabas takes him under his wing. Indeed without Barnabas all the Churches that Paul planted across the Mediterranean world, might never have been planted, and all the NT epistles Paul wrote might never have been written. So Barnabas' impact, through Paul, was huge. And actually without Barnabas' support of the young man called John Mark we might not have the gospels of Mark, Luke or Matthew either. Without Barnabas, indeed, our New Testaments might be very much thinner.

And Barnabas' impact was even greater than that. Without his recognition of the work of the Spirit in the city of Antioch amongst the Gentile believers there, the Christian faith would have remained a Jewish sect – and we would not be gathered here today.

Barnabas, then, was a good man through whom so many good things happened. And doesn't that sound so much like Gary? A good man through whom so many good things happened. And we can go further in the parallel between the two: the name 'Barnabas' was actually a nickname. It wasn't Barnabas' real name: he was really called Joseph. Barnabas was his nickname: it means simply 'Son of Encouragement' and that's just what he was: an encourager of good things; an encourager of others. And that too was writ large in Gary's life. He was a good man who encouraged so many good things; and who encouraged so many others too – so many of us here today. Gary was such a Barnabas, such a Son of Encouragement. He certainly encouraged me as I will say later.

Barnabas' ministry was incredibly significant - and remember why it was so. He was *'full of the Holy Spirit and of faith'*. Those words are so significant: they speak of a really powerful combination of the human and of the divine, as the gentle power of the Holy Spirit is met with humble human faith, hope and expectation. And it's as these two intersect, as human faith encounters divine power, that Barnabas becomes so fruitful in ministry and in mission.

And again, what we see in Barnabas, we saw in Gary. In his life, too, the human and the divine met, as simple, humble, human faith, hope and expectation were met with the gentle power of the Holy Spirit, so he too became so fruitful in ministry and in mission.

We saw that throughout Gary's ministry – a ministry exercised exclusively in this Diocese – as, Barnabas-like he bore fruit in ministry; as everywhere he went, he encouraged good things to happen, in people's lives, in the life of the church, and in the wider community too.





He read music at Southampton University, training for ministry in Edinburgh – a rare foray outside Hampshire – and after ordination in 1986 served his title in Maybush under his training incumbent, Canon Ron Diss. Ron had been chaplain to Bishop John Taylor whom Gary greatly admired. Ron, rather like Bishop John, led a simple, disciplined, ordered life, and I think that was an enduring influence on Gary too, for that was very much the life he lived. Indeed he could not have done all the bewildering array of things he did do without being in the best sense simple, disciplined and ordered. From Maybush he went to Fawley where he was an exemplary parish priest and, not surprisingly, much loved. What is less well known is that he was very nearly late for one Ascension Day service because he'd been out windsurfing and got so far out into the Solent he had to make landfall on the Isle of Wight, where, still in his wetsuit, he had to cadge a lift back home to the service.

From Fawley he moved to Swaythling, and became Area Dean of Southampton in 2007 and a Canon of this Cathedral in 2009, before then he moved to Fordingbridge and the Avon Valley Churches.

And of course when I moved here, he was not doing one, nor two, but three jobs. It's amazing what you can do when you live a simple, disciplined, and ordered life. He was Assistant Archdeacon of Winchester, Area Dean of Christchurch, and Chaplain of this Cathedral congregation.

Each of the places in which he served was very different; each role required something distinct. And in taking them on so well he showed great adaptability – and yet was always consistently, distinctively Gary. And in each role, typically, he was not only very effective but much loved. He was indeed a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and of faith through whom, in his ministry, so many good things happened.

But Gary was no workaholic. He had a great zest for life. Before I met Gary, I'd never come across the concept of a 'Mulberry Vodka Cream Tea'. But I have now! This summer he was so faithful in attending the marquee events at Wolvesey, working tirelessly in clearing up afterwards. But it was never a chore. When Ruth thanked him for all he was doing, he'd say, 'Oh it's fine. I like meeting people'. And he did.

And they liked meeting him. Just a couple of days ago a colleague told me how he once met a young boy wearing a striking pair of braces. And when he asked him why he was wearing them, the answer came back that that was a what his Vicar wore, and he thought he was great, and he wanted to be like him. You can guess who the Vicar was. Gary, you fashion icon!

And of course we can't forget his love of music, and of music in worship especially: indeed we're singing his music in this service. During his PGCE year at King Alfred's he was organist at Otterbourne and, through that, the wonderful phenomenon that is the Keble Choir developed and grew into the great thing that it is today, and we're delighted to have them sing with us in this service: thank you so much – and the Keble choir, and Gary's music, will be a significant part of his enduring legacy.

To tell the tale of Gary's life, however briefly, is to be reminded that he, like Barnabas is an example for each of us personally, of just what happens when the holy and the human meet: of what can happen when simple human faith encounters gentle divine power. And the best way we can honour Gary's memory is to follow him in that.

As you came in today you may well have received a sticker that just encourages us to 'Be more Gary' – because that's become a little watchword in our Diocese. 'Be more Gary': that's not just about wearing braces and sandals of course – but maybe we could institute a braces and sandals day in his honour. Just as long as we wore them with a beaming smile too.

But let us indeed be people in whom simple human faith encounters gentle divine power, by being humbly and simply open to that power being at work in our lives and in our world. We could not honour Gary better than by being such people, just as he himself was.

But lest we get carried away, we should sound a note of caution. Someone else in Acts is described in almost exactly the same way as Barnabas. In Acts 6 Luke tells us that Stephen too was 'full of faith and of the Holy Spirit.' Stephen's ministry in the end was perhaps no less fruitful than that of Barnabas. But it was far too short.



And let's be honest today and acknowledge that Gary died far, far too young. We all feel a sense of loss; cheated of years we might have expected to share with him. Indeed the sense of corporate loss across this Diocese and beyond has been palpable. But our loss is as nothing to those closest to him. It is those who will miss him most - Debs and Tony; Craig and Bethany, and Florence, Henry and Rose - it's them who must be foremost in our prayers and in our care today. I know his life was immensely enriched by being Craig's dad and by Bethany and his much-loved grandchildren in time too. And I know your lives were immensely enriched by him in return, and our hearts go out to you all today.

But, you know, in the end, it's not just Stephen and it's not just Barnabas and it's not just even Gary who could be described as someone in whom the human and holy meet. Of course that's exactly what we see in Jesus too. Indeed we only see that in Stephen and Barnabas and Gary and because first we see it in Jesus. It was in Jesus above all that the human and the holy met in such fruitful union.

And in the end it is Jesus, even more than Stephen or Barnabas, or even Gary - as Gary would be the first to say - who must be a blueprint for us; who must be the one we follow, and the pattern for our lives, as indeed he was for Gary.

And Jesus is not only the one who is a blueprint for us, but he is the one who promises us a future and a hope, as both our epistle and gospel today assure us.

St. Paul tells a small fledgling church in the mighty city of Rome that that *neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

And to frightened disciples facing the loss of their Lord and Master Jesus says, *'Do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house there are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, so that where I am, there you may be also.'* And to Thomas' bewildered question, *'Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?'* Jesus says, *'I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.'*

In Jesus' our future, for ever, is safe and secure. In Jesus, Gary's future, for ever, is safe and secure.

As part of the convoluted process for being appointed as a Bishop these days you are invited to meet with a number of people across the diocese, before the formal interview, so you can get a feel for the place. And Gary was one of the people I met. I asked each one what their one piece of advice for a new Bishop of Winchester would be, and I very clearly remember Gary saying to me, 'Oh, come and enjoy!' To me that was so encouraging; so Barnabas-like, and so very Gary-like too.

And, indeed, it strikes me that that was a keynote of all Gary's ministry. That was his standing invitation to people – to all of us. That's why we loved him so much. Because with such a smile on his face he would say, 'Oh, come and enjoy!' Come and enjoy music; come and enjoy faith; come and enjoy life; come and enjoy the love of God, as he himself so evidently did. He said it to so many of us, so often, over so many years: 'Come and enjoy!'

But more than that I do believe that is what Jesus has now said to Gary. 'Come and enjoy! That is his invitation to him, as it is to us all: an invitation to his Father's house, where there is room a-plenty and the way into which is secure, in Jesus. Jesus says to Gary, 'Oh, come and enjoy!' And I have no doubt at all that even now he does. Gary rejoices in Jesus in his Father's house.

And it is to that hope – and indeed it is to that joy – and to nothing less than that – that this day, with love, we entrust our dear brother Gary, in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

-Philip, Bishop of Winchester





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Dear Gary, Our friendship dates back to the mid 1990s and you have always been consistent in your care and concern for us, our children and more recently grandchildren!

You have offered such a prayerful and positive ministry and your cheerfulness is legendary. We really don't think you knew the word 'no' but were always ready to offer help and to see good and potential good in all situations.

It was a privilege to work alongside you when you were Area Dean of Southampton and being able to share ministry once again has been one of the joys of returning to our Diocese - a Diocese about which you genuinely cared so much.

Apart from your dislike of shoes and coffee cake we disagreed very little and you leave us with both many happy memories and the blessing of so many friends and colleagues who have been trained and inspired by you - and not least Craig.

The Choirs of Angels must be rejoicing that you are there to help them achieve even more perfection but we rejoice that we have had the opportunity to know and love you. Thank you for everything.

Gary - rest in peace and rise in glory!

Ann Annas and Geoff Annas (Acting Bishop of Southampton)

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A little while ago we moved, as a diocese, to having just the one archdeacon for a while - me. People were very understanding but the role wasn't doable and I needed some support. When I approached Bishop Debbie, then Acting Bishop of Winchester, she agreed, and she and I both came up with the same name of the best suited person to assist: Gary.

I needed someone who knew the diocese well, especially the south; who brought wisdom, experience, high emotional intelligence, clarity of thought, pastoral strength, and who could put up with me! Gary brought all this and far more.

Gary has been the most graceful priest with whom I have worked. His shortcomings were that he would volunteer for and take on too much; and was occasionally too generous in going the extra mile with a situation where our capacity was limited.

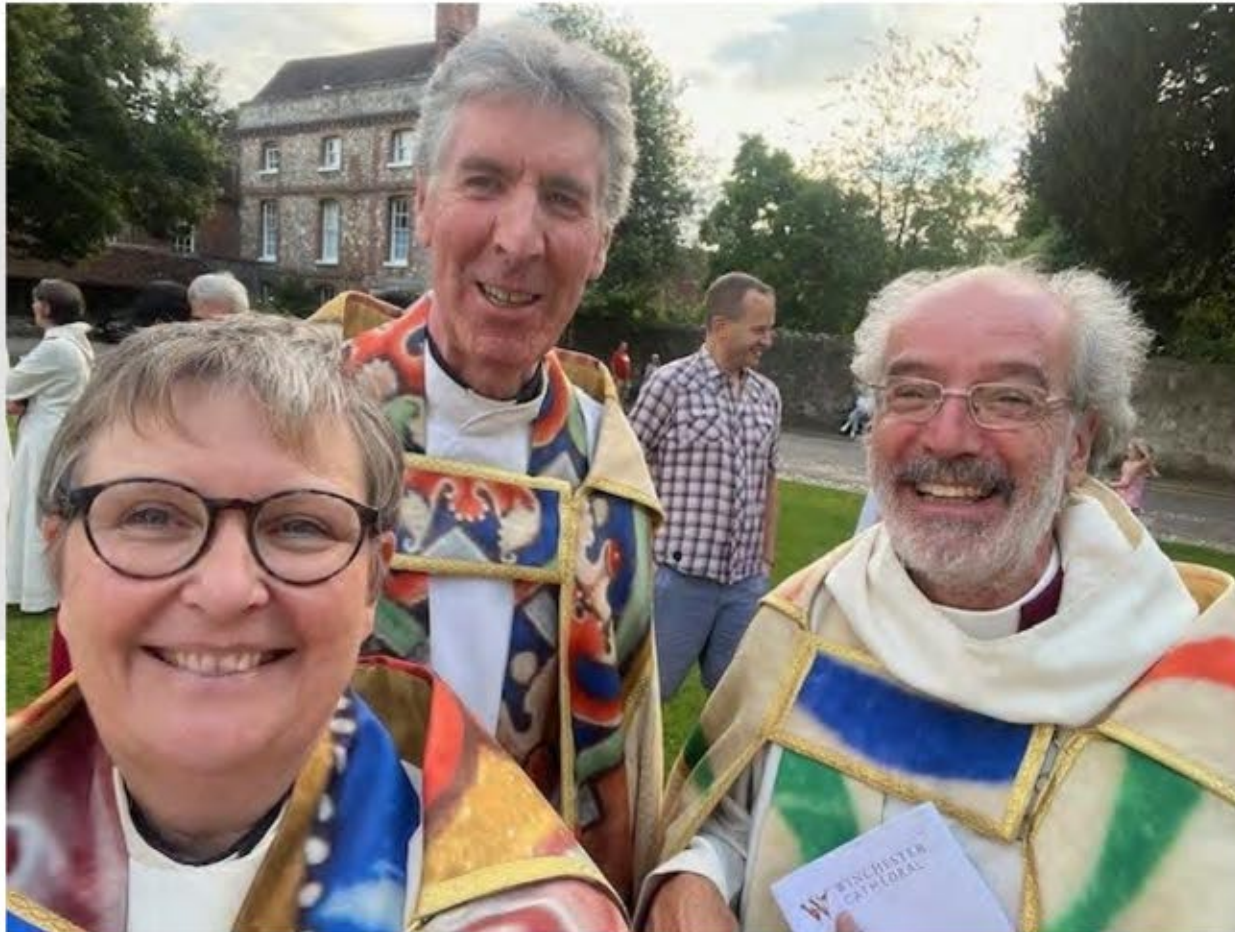
We worked closely together on many challenges and situations, and I always valued his ideas, insights and positive attitude in whatever we were dealing with. Whilst the loss is immense, my overwhelming feeling is one of gratitude, of 'eucharisteo', thank-fullness, for the gifts Gary brought but more so for him; a wonderful sandalled presence; a friend to many and companion to more; a liturgist, musician, cook and distiller; a true child of God and Christian light; irenic, joyful, hopeful.

Deo gratias.

Richard Brand, Archdeacon of Winchester

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I met Gary Feb 2023 when he showed me around the house during the interviews for my role. He was so funny and warm and laughed at me as I gushed over the shower in the bathroom (you'd understand if you had seen the shower in Manchester!)

I have been blessed to work alongside him in Winchester, sharing many car journeys, stories of family and quite a few grumbles about work related issues. He was a man who always saw the best in people and on only two occasions did I ever see him come close to what I would call irritated! May he rest in peace and rise in glory.

Archdeacon Jean Burgess

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When someone dies suddenly it can feel like a power cut. We are left flailing in the dark, the world suddenly seems unfamiliar and frightening, and we cannot get our bearings. When the person who has died was so full of life and light like Canon Gary was the disorientation caused by that light being so cruelly snuffed out is even worse.

All we can do is hold on to the fact that the light, joy and love that characterised Gary's life and which we miss so much had their source in God and His Son, Jesus Christ who in baptism had taken Gary with him through death into the life of the resurrection.

And because the things we loved most about Gary and made Gary who he was had their origin in God and the work of his Son, we believe they actually cannot die but have returned to their gloriously loving, unrelentingly merciful source from where they still shine to lighten our darkness. It can be hard to be far away when something like this happens, but grief also has the power to unite us in love for Gary and for one another.

Canon Liz Stuart

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Happy 90th Birthday – I can't believe I'm writing this!

We've known each other for over 40 years, since you first arrived at Otterbourne – perhaps even before that through Hannah B.

Lots of happy and funny memories – a walk on St Catharine's hill on a lovely summer's afternoon; a woodpigeon flying in through your bathroom window – the window was closed at the time; your lovely children as they were growing up; your pouring a glass of water over my head in the staff room for rather obscure reasons – all you said was you wanted to know whether it would run off, like water off a duck's back!; OBJ – my car number plate, which you Christened 'O Be Joyful!'; a lovely afternoon in your garden at Lyme Regis – and so much more.

I hope you'll have a wonderful birthday, and that we'll see each other again soon.

Lots of love,

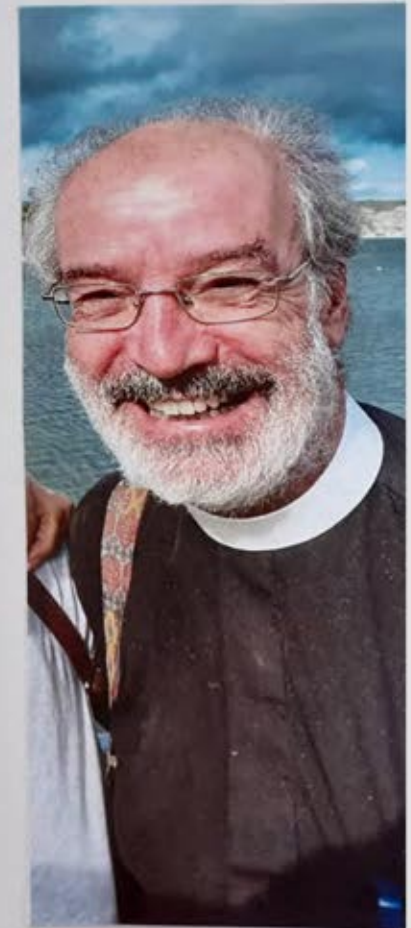
Gary P

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I first met Gary a long time ago when we both taught at Otterbourne. It was an auspicious meeting. He was sitting quietly in a chair reading when I suddenly poured a jug of water over his head!! This was the beginning of a long and joyous friendship which continued when we both left the school. To my delight he popped into see me in Lyme Regis last year and we spent the afternoon reminiscing and laughing...he hadn't changed! He was such a good man in all aspects and will be so missed by everyone he touched in his life.

Jo Furber

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Gary joined us at the Cathedral in 2022. As Chaplain, he became the second member of the Mission team and our one-to-one meetings (which always began with breakfast) never lasted less than two and half hours. He was also my next door neighbour and the sight of him in his red cassock and sandals standing at the gates of number 11 is so indelibly part of the landscape that I simply cannot believe he has gone. He had the gift of being 'present' at all times; so you always felt able to talk to him and pass the time of day for a few moments. It is a true gift, because he was an extremely busy man, but the air around him was never too busy for conversation. If I asked him about a meeting or a service on a day in the future, he would not take out his phone or diary to make a note, he would tie a knot in his hankie. He loved being at the Cathedral. It had been a spiritual home for him ever since he was a virger here (in the 1970's, I think?). He often joined the virgers for their tea break and was a familiar face to the volunteers. He was a big fan of a special offer, particularly for food or a hot drink. It was Gary who introduced me to the '2 good 2 go' app, and days before he died, he shared his delight in Octopus Energy's offer of a free hot drink. As Canon in Residence at the weekends, his stall was next to mine and his array of prayer books (many of which he had collated and written himself) and music notes and tuning forks was a wonderful thing to behold. He was never an intrusive person; his presence was companionable and joyful. At Evensong, we are blessed with an astonishing offering of music each night, from the settings of the introit, the responses, the psalms, the canticles and the anthems. Gary knew all of them and his pleasure in them was evident to those of us sitting next to him because he would hop up and down on his toes in delight and in time to the music. He always had a hymn book with full musical setting and could sing all the parts, usually one for each of the verses. My final whatsapp messages with Gary include a number of hilarious exchanges in the student group, where he would share silly pictures on scooters or with a trolley full of wine in France. When someone wanted to know more about a festival they had heard about in Winchester, it was Gary who shared the homepage of Boomtown as a link, and he couldn't resist taking a sneaky phone-pic of Jo at her first BCP eucharist, because he was so proud of her. Like so many others, in the days after his death I could not help thinking that I should 'be more Gary'. It will be different for each one of us, but for me it is about joy. And listening more than talking. One day I may be able to accept that he is no longer with us; but in the meantime his vitality and presence have made the thin veil between this world and the next a sorrowful but holy place to dwell in. Rest in peace, Gary, and rise in glory. And continue to intercede for us.

Canon Tess Kuin Lawton

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Gary was a lovely man. He was someone, who gave me great advice and support. He cared about everyone and he will be greatly missed.

RIP GARY.

Veronica Petch.

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Gary was so very, very kind.

Sebastian Page

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Having only known Gary for just over 20 years, I know I am one of his newer friends (!) but he was such a dear, dear friend to me. From my first New Year long weekend with the Keble Choir as a 2nd year student from Southampton University, I felt utterly welcome and included in everything the Keble Choir has ever done.

Gary's friendship, counsel and wise support has always meant so much to me over all the years I've known him, and I was so proud to be joint godparents to our friend's children with him. I couldn't believe that Carly and Steve had selected me alongside someone so holy and wise as Holy Gary! Just knowing that he was there in the background of life to ask a quick question to was so reassuring. Somehow whenever life was feeling a little tough an email about Keble would arrive from Gary, or about his Hale Christmas concert or some other singing thing he wanted Kebblers to bump the numbers for and there would be something to look forward to again. One of our Keble f* traditions was to "help" Gary solve his cryptic crossword each morning over breakfast (he was very tolerant of us - as with everything!). When Keble Durham 2020 was cancelled because of COVID, one of things we all said we missed so badly was the daily team cryptic crossword solving so Gary wrote us his own cryptic crossword clue, the answers of which were pieces from that year's music list. This became a new tradition and before the music list was released each year Gary would send out cryptic crossword clues each day for each of the things on the music list. We only got as far as one this year (the answer was Day in Bb, in case you were wondering)...perhaps a sign of him not being quite on top form in the run up to Keble. His fun and mischievous sense of humour was always such a welcome presence during Keble week and the thought of him never joining us for this vital annual holiday again is just heartbreaking.

As a Kebbler I felt part of Gary's extended family after a few years and I knew he was interested and cared about my life and achievements. His quiet, kind and gentle guidance was always available and I very much valued chatting to him one-to-one, solving a problem or just mulling over the day's events.

No one has really understood the sense of loss I've felt since Gary went hence and it's because no one can understand what a treasured and beautiful thing he created and nurtured in the Keble Choir. To have a choir whose selection criteria are based upon if you are a nice person that we want to spend a week with and if you'll fit in socially, having faith that the music will rise up out of the friendships, is quite the most special thing I have ever encountered. I feel so utterly privileged to have known Gary and called him a close friend for as long as I have. I am proud to be so engulfed in grief at his sudden departure from this world, to the next, because it shows just how special our dear friend was.

Gary, you told us several times that you are not the Keble Choir and the Keble Choir is not you (though I remember very many of us protesting wildly!), and making us promise that we would continue whatever happened to you. Well, we are continuing, starting with the hardest Keble week of the 39 years since you founded us. I hope you'd be proud of our rendition of O Nata Lux (with music!) tonight and that we managed to make a strong showing of all the music you so carefully chose for us to sing, despite the many tears shed throughout. You know how important Keble Choir is to so many of us and we can only thank you for everything you have given us. Somehow we will continue to sing and laugh together, though our light will always shine a little dimmer now you have left us. You make sure there is a Hall floor ready and waiting for us all to sleep on for an eternity of Keble weeks when we reach the pearly gates!

Lissie Fuller

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I first met Gary when he was vicar of All Saints Fawley. He knew a colleague who was a cofounder of the Wessex Brass Quintet and Gary booked the group to come along for the special outside church flood light switching on ceremony. We have a small recital based around lights and the light of the world.

On another occasion we played for and accompanied the All Saints Fawley choir at nine lessons and carols service. That was a magical time and I particularly remember Gary's wonderful uplifting sermon.

Gary always had a twinkle in his eye and as a fellow accomplished musician he always would remind folks that music was essential in church as a fine way of parsing God in the beauty of holiness. When Gary formed the diocesan orchestra it was his energies and abilities which drove it forward. A wonderful way of getting musicians involved and becoming part of a wider worshipping family. Wonderful times.

For me a magical moment was when his son Craig and Bethany married at Swaythling church in Southampton when Gary was Vicar there. A group of the worshipping community from Winchester Cathedral including Dean James and Mrs Loma Atwell and The Rev'd Canon Dr and Mrs Brian Rees . Gary made everyone so welcome, including having M&Ms to chew as we awaited the couple to appear before photographs were taken after the wonderful service. A great family occasion.

I particularly recall Gary's wonderful singing voice. He would often stand-in for the precentors at Winchester Cathedral when they were on leave or at meetings etc.. His Evensong prayers were always so poignant and meaningful.

Gary was always available to listen and to advise on so many levels. A wonderful pastor, priest and human-being. Gary will be sorely missed. Prayers and thoughts for his family at this time. May he rest in peace and rise in glory.

Timothy A Norris, The Winchester Music School

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I first got to know Gary when he was my placement Supervisor. Gary was in Fawley and I was training for the Priesthood at Cuddesdon.

Gary has been an inspiration for my ministry, a dedicated priest, a wonderful talented musician, and a positive role model. One of the things Gary taught me was how to keep on top of parish paperwork with a brilliant filing system. I am still trying to live up to that. Gary's kindness and sensible approach to ministry has been a great source of encouragement to me. Despite being in different Dioceses for the last 20 years, we have often met at various functions. I was shocked and so sad to hear that he had died. I will remember Gary as a valued friend and teacher. May he rest in peace and rise in glory.

Revd Deborah Matthews, Vicar of Verwood

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I just wanted to send a message on behalf of the children, staff and families of Swaythling Primary School.

Gary was such a wonderful friend to the school, governor, and chair of governors through a crucial and turbulent time in the school's history.

His wisdom, compassion, humour and kindness were endlessly and timelessly shared with us, and I always enjoyed the time spent in his company. I never ceased to marvel at his incredible humility and boundless knowledge, and most importantly, he never forgot the children and families who were at the root of every decision we took.

Our sympathy with the many, many friends and family members of Gary's.

We say a very fond farewell to a great friend to our school today.

John Draper, Headteacher

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Gary, you were my dear friend, pastor, priest, training incumbent, and liturgical oracle! You were just awesome, so many gifts and talents and the best training incumbent I could ever have asked for. I wouldn't be in ministry today if it wasn't for your wisdom, care and kindness... I will miss you so much dear brother... may you rest in eternal peace in the presence of our loving saviour. 🕊️🙏

Revd Michael Trotman, Parkstone St Peter and St Osmund with Branksea St Mary

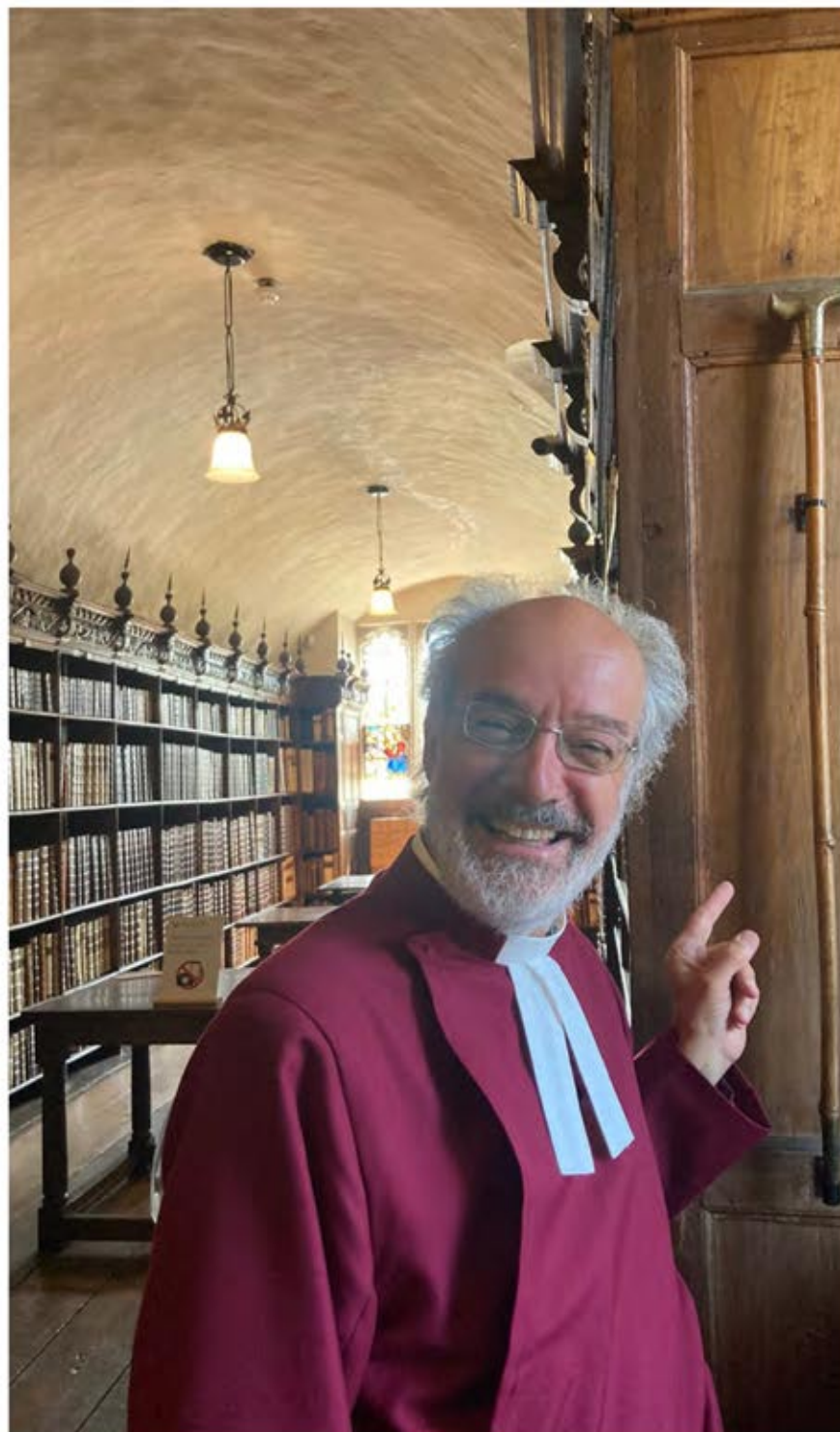
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Constantly kind, consistently Christlike - Gary was a perfectly ordinary while in many ways truly extraordinary ambassador for the gospel. At a vocations event in Fordingbridge, Gary not only hosted us but inspired and cheered us with both story and song! In an age when celebrity leaders have sometimes bequeathed a questionable and sadly tarnished legacy, the fruits of Gary's down-to-earth ministry bear seeds of unquestionable and enduring worth. In years to come such seeds will surely continue to flower forth the Kingdom of the Saviour he so faithfully served. It was an absolute privilege to have worked with and to have known Gary.

Rev Dr Marcus Throup

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I went for breakfast with him on the day of Bishop Philip's enthronement to talk about vocations. We spoke many different things and he told about how he took a group of school children to the then Soviet Union by train. At Germany the train separated leaving one half of students in Germany and the other half on the way to Moscow much to his distress; luckily the issue was resolved.

The same day we discussed theology and transubstantiation; he said about how it related to the idea of the unseen substance of an object and how that relates to the body and blood of Christ. A lady lent over from another table and said to us, "I've never heard anyone talk so casually about transubstantiation in a café before."

Gary was such a wonderful and generous person, he will be truly missed by all.

Ricky Wiggins

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My first recollection of Rev. Gary was meeting in the priest's vestry at St. Mary's Church, Fordingbridge. Who is this man wearing sandals? Black shoes is the normal attire?

A voice was heard "What's wrong with that - Jesus wore sandals!"

So many joyous memories of working with Gary on two Music Festivals. Gary on the guitar. Gary on the piano. Gary encouraging a French Horn Player. Forever remembered. RIP.

Helen & Trevor Tague

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Gary's funeral service reminded me of the joy we had at St Matthews, Otterbourne where if anything could be sung, it was, Psalms, Responses, Prayers - he understood how to connect - topped off with hymns and amazing Anthems!

He was a young man, mid-twenties when I met him. His influence, encouraging friendship & companionship went further than he could have imagined.

Thank you for the wonderful memories and awe held at singing in Winchester, Tewkesbury as part of his Keble Choir before his next chapter to Ordination.

What a very special individual. Quite literally one in a million as his son proudly affirmed to us.

Sending his family and loved ones peace and love at this impossible time. With very best wishes & sympathy, thanks & joy for his influence.

Amanda Burnie

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I met Gary in 1985 through university friends from the chapel choir at Exeter. I sang with Gary's Keble Choir on and off (having maternity leave for some years) for nearly 40 years. He was an inspiration to me personally - encouraging me to sing at a higher level than I thought possible given my lack of musical training. Keble Choir was a focal point of the year leaving one uplifted and motivated for many months. Gary's spirituality was a huge encouragement and source of support in ways he never knew. He was the modest and unassuming core of many of our lives and we can only take this forward in his memory. He will be missed beyond measure.

Jane Offler

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I met Gary when I was in the university choir at Southampton and we were looking for a new concert venue. Our committee were warmly invited to Sunday lunch (lasagne) cooked by him at the Rectory. He invited us to his 'summer choir' and so I joined the Keble Choir in 2000. He was such a warm, friendly person that everyone warmed to him immediately. Since that time, I have attended every Keble summer week plus the Candlemas service that Gary also did in Jan/Feb yearly. My husband and I asked him to marry us in 2006, and he then also baptised my sons in 2012 and 2014.

My overriding memories of him are holding my children during Keble week (they came along too while they were tiny) and looking after them/playing with them so I could have a break. There are many photos in the Keble choir archives of him welcoming them and my husband and making them feel part of the choir. He was always interested in them and us, and how they were doing. Even at Candlemas in January this year he was playing board games with them during our annual fish and chip supper. I remember him at Keble doing his daily cryptic crossword over a cup of tea in the morning and enjoying an afternoon tea (and a G&T after a service), plus his jovial nature. He always had a smile for everyone, in all situations. This year's Keble week was the most difficult week but (with much support) we continued in Norwich for him and were proud to sing at his funeral. We know he wanted us to 'carry on singing'. And so we shall, for you Gary. You will be much missed, by so many people.

#KebleForever #BeMoreGary!

The Heslops

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In May 1994 I moved to Blackfield to be the minister of the Baptist Church there. I believe it was my second day in the house when Gary rang on the door and with his usual smiling face said: "Hello, I'm Gary the vicar, welcome to Blackfield". Whilst in Blackfield Gary, his curate, the local Methodist Minister and myself had a rota of taking assemblies at all the local Infants and Junior Schools.

I enjoyed Gary's company as we met as Church leaders, and will always remember the day he said that he had gone windsurfing at Lepe, ended up on the Isle of Wight, and had to come back on the ferry. My contribution to our laughter at church leaders meetings was when my wife phoned to say that she was stuck in the car, flooded, at Beaulieu. I was at Gary's on my bike so couldn't really do much to help.

I will always be so grateful for time spent with Gary till he moved from Fawley, I then met him once at Fordingbridge, complete with beautiful, bright, waistcoat.

Rev Dave Pary

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Canon Gary was a diamond who shone with a unique brilliance! I didn't know him for very long, but I found him inspirational! I appreciated how such a busy man always found time to stop and chat and always with those twinkling eyes, tremendously endearing smile and warm manner. His deep faith shone out and clearly governed every aspect of his life.

I particularly remember a poignant sermon he gave on Mothering Sunday about two years ago when he took on the role of Mary, the mother of Jesus, and talked about family and love for others, just as if Mary herself was speaking. He seemed to understand the human condition so well, and whilst he was in literal terms 'preaching' from the lectern, his delivery was extraordinarily powerful, precisely because he wasn't being 'preachy' or overly didactic. I always loved it when he took services too because his musicianship was so evident and he always looked so happy!

I also remember with huge pleasure the wonderful talk he gave to a local group earlier this year about his pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostela in 2023. He communicated both the superficial and the more profound aspects of this experience in a very relatable way. In fact the talk was so good that I went to another version of it to another group shortly afterwards, and enjoyed it all over again! He just knew how to make what he said interesting, amusing, thought-provoking and above all, memorable. He must have been a brilliant teacher and parish priest before he became an equally wonderful Cathedral Chaplain!

Craig's tribute to his father at Gary's funeral was beautiful and so apt, as was the Bishop's sermon. I particularly loved that Craig mentioned everyone in his family with anecdotes about their different relationships with Gary, and especially how Gary was a brilliant 'big brother' to his younger sister. This really resonated with me, as I too had a wonderful 'big brother' who looked after me in childhood, looked out for me in later years and also died too young. He also gave me his teddy bear when I was born - and yes, I also still have it to this day! My heart goes out to Debs, as the pain of breaking that special bond with one's 'big brother' and best friend is terrible indeed. But I hope those precious memories she will have of her exceptional brother will bring her much solace as she comes to terms with his loss.

I shall miss Gary's presence at the Cathedral very much - I already do. His passing came as such a shock as he was always so full of vitality. But I know that what he gave to so many of us in his lifetime will help to sustain us as we mourn his passing. I send my sincerest condolences to all his family, to his colleagues around the Diocese and no doubt far beyond, and to his many friends, as we all come to terms with our grief and try to 'be more Gary'. After a life so well-lived, may Gary rest in peace and rise in glory!

Gill Rushton

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I was Gary's first churchwarden. I first met Gary in the churchyard at All Saints Church, Fawley on a bright summer day. He was a young man showing an interest in the church and the local area, we had a long chat together before he revealed his identity to me, the fact he was a candidate for the vacancy in our parish. It was much better than an interview as we really openly talked and I believe we both knew we could work together. My first impression of Gary was correct, he was a lovely, caring, hard working Priest. He was well loved and recognised as he cycled around the parish on his bike, raincoat flying out behind him and his distinguishing hair, beard and sandals. He was very popular within all the local schools and community. Music was a passion he shared with us and the choir thrived under his leadership. He was a great leader and Godly man and will be greatly missed. Rest in peace Gary.

Margaret Richards

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I was so lucky to work with Canon Gary at Winchester Cathedral, and I was even more fortuitous that he married my husband and I on 1st June 2024 inside Winchester Cathedral.

Canon Gary was asked to take on our wedding very last minute, and I was so worried about all the extra work it might have caused him. He simply said, 'it's an honour' with a huge smile on his face.

And that's the kind of gentleman Canon Gary was, nothing was ever too much trouble to ask him, and he'd always reassure you with that beaming warm smile and approachable nature.

He gave me that same smile when I stained my wedding dress just walking down the aisle. I was panicking until I saw Canon Gary. He smiled and reassured me no-one would notice it – the same reaction my bridesmaids gave, but because it came from him, I immediately felt much better.

I guess, through the stories I've told, I'm trying to demonstrate that Canon Gary was a person you could trust, whole heartedly, who would make you feel at ease, safe, and special.

He was Christ-like and saintly, and I think the world would be a better place if we all lived by the mantra of 'What would Canon Gary do?'

Lauren Bolter-Booth, A Colleague at Winchester Cathedral.

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“ Gary came to Kinkiizi Diocese in May 2015 to join the celebrations for 100 years of Christianity in South West Uganda. Here we are, guests of honour at the Sports Festival, with Gary looking splendid in his special Centenary waistcoat! The visit was one of my most memorable ones – we laughed, we prayed, we shared in wonderful African hospitality and celebratory worship (and we drank gin 😂 !!)

Gill Tybjerg

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Canon Gary carried out a special pet service for the families of Breamore CE Primary in November 2019. Here he is giving a blessing to our golden retriever, Willow. As daft as it might sound, this moment in Willow's life was a very special one to us; one that most pets will never have and we feel really lucky that, if only for a moment, their paths crossed.

Always a force for kindness, energy, music, a brilliant sense of humour.... the children simply loved him. I will treasure my memories of walking up to St. Mary's church across Breamore Marsh, come rain or shine, with Canon Gary at my side. Not to mention the annual end of term gathering for school staff, where Gary would serve his trademark Pimm's- a much-needed treat in the Summer term! What a testament that for a man of his years, Gary had so much more left in him, so much more to offer, so many more people to meet and make smile with his natural warmth. Heaven has gained a good man.

Clare Ingram (Teacher at Breamore CE Primary from 2015 to present)

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I will always remember Gary's kindness. Like when the sun comes through, when Gary was there he somehow managed to make everything seem a bit better, more hopeful, more doable, more fun.

Amy Roche

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Gary was my official mentor about twenty years ago, and I valued his wise counsel. That continued over the years while he fulfilled roles on a number of our schools' Governing Bodies, and when he was appointed to the Assistant Archdeacon role, I sat alongside him on Bishop's Staff.

We fluctuated in conversation between things education, cultural and topical, to our shared love of music. Always punctuated by levity and laughter, he was a colleague who will be sorely missed by both individuals and the wider Diocese. Gary's ability to bring ranges of opinion to a shared outcome, and a gift in affirming everyone was something special and offers a model for us to follow.

Canon Jeff Williams, Director of Education

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Canon Gary Philbrick is one of few who aren't relatives which I remember fondly from my childhood, he used to visit my school in Blackfield.

He never failed to disappoint when he'd arrive with his guitar, my highlight song was zoom zoom zoom and praise the lord, I remember all the words and actions and now sing with the actions with my own children who also love it!

He had an amazing way of keeping us entertained.

As an adult I've brought his name up many times telling people just how wonderful it was to have someone like him around growing up.

On hearing of his sad passing I messaged my best friend from childhood who mirrored all I've said.

Amazing man who helped so many of us grow, love and prayers to his family.

Catherine Welland

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My memories of Revd. Canon Gary Philbrick go back to his visits to my primary school when he was Rector at Fawley Church. He would always explain his message to my reception class in a clear and entertaining way. He also played the guitar and sang in assembly with much musicality, and a calm and confident faithfulness.

Later, Gary wrote to my secondary school to say he was in need of a pianist within his Parish, as there were four churches to cover on Sundays. My music teacher put my name forward, and I was delighted to begin my first paid job at the age of fifteen, playing the piano twice monthly at the Church of the Good Shepherd, Holbury. It was always enjoyable receiving Gary's hymn sheet and printed music, preparing the musical items, and then going to play at the services he was taking. Many details of his sermons remain in my mind to this day.

Before my first time accompanying the hymns, Gary booked a visit with me to pass on some tips regarding church music. My family and I were most surprised that he did not arrive at the appointed time. Half-an-hour later, I received a reverse-charge phone call from the Isle of Wight to say he had gone windsurfing that day and couldn't return to Lepe Beach due to the prevailing winds! He had not set out intending to go as far as the Island!

Needless to say, Gary made his next appointment and kindly passed on accompanying tips that I still use today in my work as an organist and school music teacher. I remember apologising to Gary for the mess in our piano room that day, to which he replied that he always came to see people, not rooms. My family was pleased to see him when he cheerily brought the monthly hymn sheet to the house in person sometimes. He also took funerals for members of my extended family during his time at All Saints', Fawley.

As I approached eighteen, Gary attended my A-level piano recital at Beaulieu Abbey Church. He encouraged me through exam revision, and was also preparing me for confirmation – just as he received a new posting to Swaythling. As I moved soon afterwards to study at the University of Southampton, I would see Gary at lunchtime concerts on campus. I discussed my research projects with him when these touched on sacred music.

I vividly recall being part of the Fawley Parish Choir visit to Gary's new church at St. Alban's, Swaythling. During this informal performance, hilarious complications with music sheets caused the young choristers – along with Gary himself – to descend into semi-suppressed giggling fits. One piece of music even had to be photocopied next-door whilst the audience waited! The image of this joyful concert still brings a smile to my face.

In recent years, it was a pleasure to come across Gary again when I visited Winchester Cathedral. He has certainly been a friend, and a mentor to me.

Roger Hansford

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Gary started at Breamore the same year as I started as headteacher there. We soon grew into a federation of three small schools: Breamore, Hale and Hyde. He was a constant in the life of all three schools and the children always were pleased to see him. Together we organised a school baptism, prayer spaces, ashing services and Easter workshops all of which were completely child centred.

Christingles were a highlight... So many oranges and candles! He found my request for a risk assessment amusing - but it was a lovely special moment each year.

I also learned much about Winchester Cathedral through the tours he gave me and the Year 6 children on the days of the leavers' services.

He supported all aspects of school life and played an active role in all our projects from the inter generational felt making workshop to fairs, end of year performances, worship and nativities.

Going through a SIAMs inspection with him was a blessing. Having such a close relationship with the church helped us achieve the grade of excellent.

When I moved school and started at Knightwood in 2023 he turned up unexpectedly to see how I was and have a tour of the school. This meant so much.

We often enjoyed trading stories of grandchildren. His sense of humour always brightened governor meetings and his pragmatic view welcomed.

He was never too busy, never unkind or impatient. Just an absolute gentle man. Knots in hankies will always make me smile. I consider myself lucky to have had him in my life. Thank you Gary.

Emma Clark, Former executive headteacher of Breamore, Hale and Hyde (Forest Edge Learning Federation)

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Christian Aid were saddened to hear of Gary's death. He was well known and liked by many colleagues, past and present, who always found him to be warm, welcoming and encouraging. Many spoke of and appreciated the dedication he had to his congregations in Southampton and the New Forest, inspiring them to practical action to care about their global neighbours.

It has been a privilege to work with Gary over many years, sharing a vision of a fairer world free from the inhumanity of poverty. I personally remember preaching in Fordingbridge and Swaythling during Christian Aid Week, and Gary's willingness to get involved in Christian Aid campaigns, championing the causes of climate and tax justice with local MPs. We are grateful for everything he did to bring God's kingdom of peace and justice closer.

Our sincere condolences to all Gary's family this difficult time. You have been in our prayers, and we remembered Gary at our staff prayer meeting this week.

With thoughts and prayers from colleagues at Christian Aid.

Charlotte Scott, British Church Relations Manager and former Regional Coordinator in Hampshire

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One very recent memory with Gary is the amazing way he married my husband and I. He made the day so incredibly special and memorable, especially as we chose a Winnie the Pooh and piglet reading and how his talk mentioned Pooh repeatedly while incorporating I Corinthians 13, not even laughing as he did so. His thoughtfulness of even giving us a copy of it printed for later reflection was so kind. Even without the printout it is not something I will forget.

He even helped with the confetti! He made everyone feel welcomed and relaxed with an ease that embodied his faith and how best to demonstrate it.

Sarah Richardson

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Gary had the amazing ability to comfort you in a difficult time - he always knew the right thing to say - but also managed to help you see your perceived slight or grievance from the perspective of the other party. But he did it in such a kind and gentle way that really helped you to work through whatever frustration or challenge you were dealing with. You could never leave a conversation with him angry. In the weeks since his passing I have reminded myself to be more like Gary on more than one occasion - to show compassion and caring to all, even when I disagree with what they are doing or how they are going about it.

Cathy Laird

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We give love and prayers to the memory of Revd Gary and for his support to the Mothers' Union branches in the Christchurch Deanery.

Christchurch Deanery MU

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I first met Gary at Deanery Synod , he was a great support to us at St Peter's Church, Ashley in the Parish of Milton.

I remember him fondly and will miss his support. God Bless You and Rest In Peace.

Rosemary Bartlett

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Those of us in Alresford Deanery wish to express our gratitude for Gary's knowledge, support, understanding and compassion. Gary was someone who was very approachable and with whom helpful reflection could be had around various church matters. He was known as a kind and prayerful man whose humanity and concern for people was evident in conversations and interactions, whether at Synods or other meetings around the Diocese. We shall miss his pastoral input as well as his Assistant AD role.

Alresford Deanery

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When I think of Gary, I see his beaming smile and hear his hearty laugh. Gary has been a friend for many years and I remember with fondness the gatherings in his various houses over the years. Gary was so hospitable and would always provide enough of his delicious home cooked food and cakes for everyone, even if he was dashing off to a meeting or returning from church. Brian also remembers Gary's kindness when he lodged with Gary, and my mother was well looked after when she stayed with him while my father was in Southampton General.

I enjoyed singing in the Keble Choir and Gary was so positive, patient and calm, even if a piece was going wrong. Gary was always up early during Keble weeks and he would wake us up, bringing our chosen drink to our camp beds every morning. Brian and I first met in the Keble Choir and Gary often reminded us of that! It was so special when he led the choir at our wedding. Our girls knew Gary well and they happily remember Gary playing games with them at his house, camping in the field behind the rectory in Fordingbridge and waking up to a delicious home cooked breakfast made by Gary. More recently, I remember Gary proudly showing us the triple bunk bed he had fitted so his grandchildren could stay with him in the Cathedral Close.

Gary led such an active life and had so many interests and we were always amazed that he had the time to write and fold his Christmas origami letters and visit us every year.

We will all miss Gary so much. We send our love and prayers to Debs and Tony, Craig, Bethany, Florence, Henry and Rose.

Jane, Brian, Martha and Catherine



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We are deeply saddened to hear that Rev. Canon Gary Philbrick has passed away. The Great Friend of the pilgrims. Last year we were able to meet him in the cathedral before our pilgrimage to Canterbury. We talked to him at length, also about his journeys on foot to Santiago and other places. We were impressed by his kindness and dedication. He even asked us to come back after our walk and share our experiences with him over a cup of tea.

Together with our English friends Brian and Brenda we talked to him for over an hour in the tea room at the cathedral. Gary will always have a warm place in our hearts. God rest his soul.

Guus and Riet, pilgrims, The Netherlands

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We moved into our house at 11 The Close in June last year. We were very excited to live in such a historic house in a beautiful location with our family all under one roof after Covid split us between the UK and Singapore. A house becomes a home, and a home requires community. We shared a lovely year at no. 11 with Gary, where we would marvel at our postcard location and laugh over a cup of tea or a glass of wine. His ninja bin moves had me believing the bin men came into the yard to empty the bins. He laughed heartily at my ignorance of him rolling them out and returning them before I noticed they were on the verge. It is always a comfort to know you live alongside people who you can turn to should the need arise. Gary showed us kindness and generosity, and become part of our comfort at living in The Close.

We have latterly come to understand just how far his generosity and kindness extended in the greater community over the years. He was all that most of us aspire to be. Selfless and singular in serving others. It was our gift to have had our time knowing Gary and our house is feeling his loss. He was part of its comfort. On to greater roles no doubt.

To Deb and Tony, Craig, Bethany and children, you were blessed in the wonderful brother and father you had in Gary. Your loss is immense but we hope you take consolation in having had such wonderful person to call your own.

Adie, Gus, Ella, Cate and Ned Mercurio.

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I was Gary's curate from 2014-2018. Most precious memories have to be from our trip to Uganda with the Deanery team in 2015, to mark the centenary of Christianity in Kinkiizi. Particularly special memories include dancing for the President and the Archbishop of Uganda with Gary, in the momentous celebrations, and teaching Gary how to crochet. I made matching stoles for Gary and the Bishop of Kinkiizi.

Other precious times include Gary's openness and willingness to embrace me back to work after hospital, when I suspect other training incumbents would have been more fearful of my diagnoses. Gary's love of life and love of people were immense, and I am glad to have known him. The world is a richer place for Gary's life and ministry.

Revd Rachel Noël

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Gary, we will always remember you
The man who was our priest
The man who was our choir leader
The friend
The adopted family member

May the road rise to meet you
May God hold you in his hands
Till we meet again

Sue and Les

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I was privileged to be an ordinand on placement in the Parish of Maybush, during the incumbency of Canon Ron Diss and shortly after Gary's ordination into the Parish as Curate. Even in those early days of Gary's ordained ministry it was easy to see how deeply loved he was becoming. And he was an inspiration to me as I approached my own ordination. I thank God for him.

Revd Martin Riley

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I was saddened to hear of the passing of Gary Philbrick. Gary played a massive part in our family particularly with my late Grandmother Dora who he enjoyed spending time with. Gary was the most genuine person we have ever come across and my grandmother was very fond of him. I used to go on holiday to the isle of weight with the church when Gary was the vicar at Fawley church. I enjoyed many evening walks with him, teaching me the meaning of life. Gary used to always be around my grandmothers house and he always considered it a privilege, and it was a nice versa situation she enjoyed it too. Gary christened my sister Kimberly although she was very scared of his beard 😂. When my grandmother was dying she had one request to see Gary.

Gary without a thought turned up and it made my Nan so happy so I will always be thankful for that, I remember Gary coming to our school to singing Hymns and being joyful.

Please see a photo of Gary attending my sisters christening party,

Gary you will be so sorely missed. I treasure every experience and lesson you have taught me

Kelly Carthy and Family

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Gary has been Assistant Curate at St Mark's Highcliffe since 2022, and we were delighted that he chose to come to us. He worked with us in so many ways, sharing worship, being encouraging to us all. He most recently led services for us in June, and everyone is grateful to have had this time of worship and fellowship with him. As always enjoying tea and a bacon roll at our breakfast service. We were fortunate recently that was able to marry two of our congregation, it was such a personal, memorable, and joyful occasion to share. His enthusiasm was such a blessing to so many of us. He touched the lives of everyone he met with love and kindness he truly was a kind caring truly gentle man in every sense of the word. He has been such a support to us during our vacancies both as Area Dean and a friend, nothing we asked was too much trouble, he would always find a solution and had interesting ways to solve what we considered difficult. The time, advice and support always given with good humour has been invaluable to Ann, Loma, and myself, just knowing he was there meant so much. He knew us and our church, we have been blessed by his ministry over many years. Gary is such a loss to us all, but we take comfort that he is now with the Lord who he loved and served every day of his life.

Susan Lyonette on behalf of us all at St Mark's Highcliffe



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I first knew Gary when he became the vicar at Fawley church - I grew up in the village and often saw him around, I especially remember him visiting us at Blackfield Middle School, bringing with him his guitar and teaching us wonderful songs. One I'll always remember was an African folk-song, with lyrics going something like 'see-see sutan, umma womba magu...', I'm sure not spelt anything like that, but the words have always stuck with me.

I remember Vicar Gary as a kind, gentle man, who was often dressed in colourful clothes. Although I wasn't by any means a regular church-goer, we always went to the Christmas Eve Christingle Service at Fawley Church, many of which Gary led when I was a child and the magic of Christmas was so prevalent. Another memory that has stuck with me was Gary speaking with my grandma, who used to be a warden at Fawley Church, along with her sister, my great-aunt. Bless them they were very old and frail at the time, but Gary was so lovely with them, telling them how wonderful it was to see the two sisters out and about!

Gary moved on from Fawley and I had no idea what he had gone onto until recent years after I became the headteacher at William Gilpin CE Primary School. I was with my Year 6 pupils at the Winchester Cathedral Leavers Service and saw him there in his role at the cathedral - I went and said hello and told him I remembered him from his Fawley days. It wasn't a long conversation, both of us being very busy, but it was really nice to have seen him again.

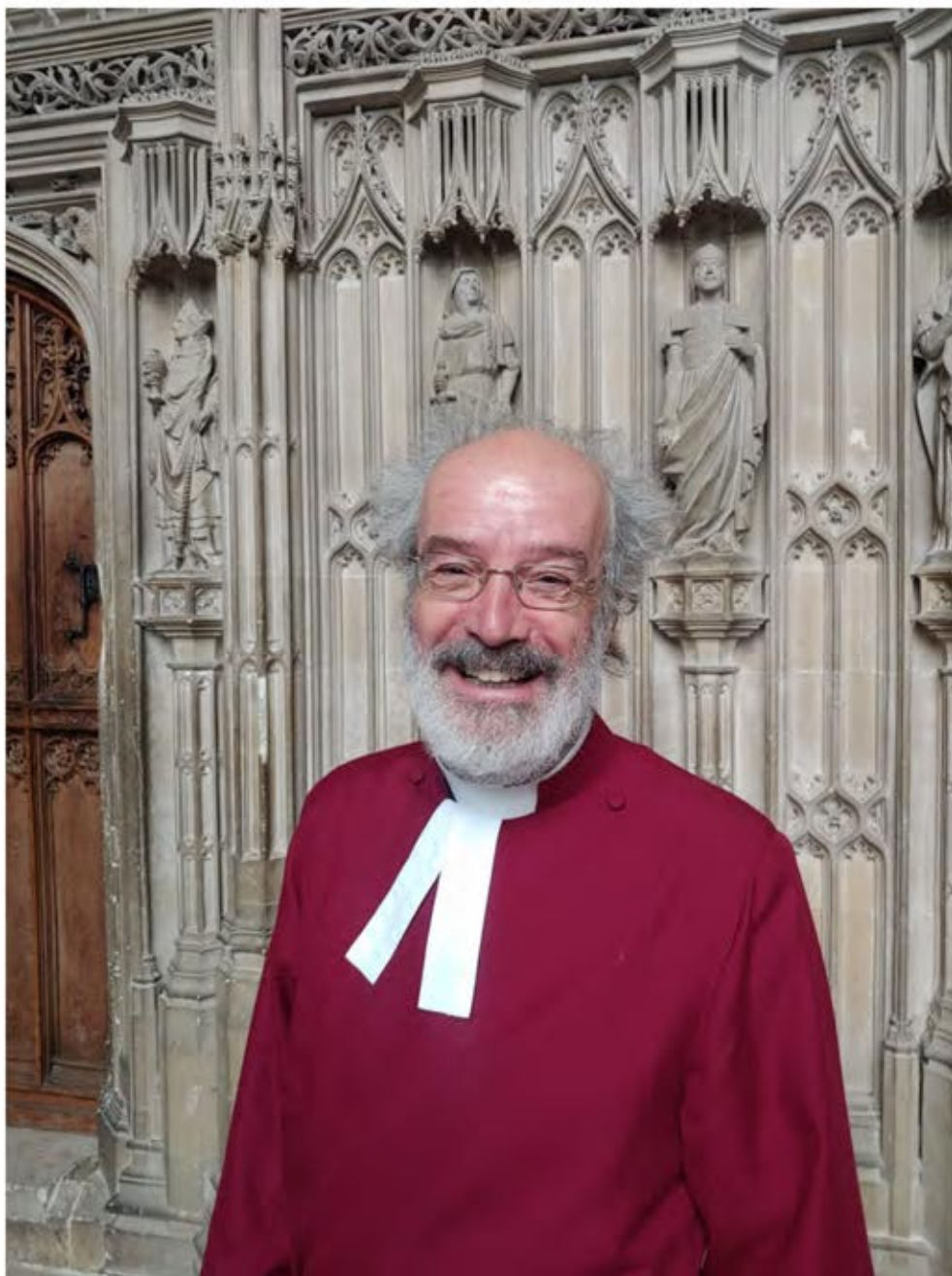
I saw Gary once more just last year at St. Mary's Church in South Baddesley, at the ordination of our new vicar Terence.

It was with great sadness that I heard the news of his passing, but I will always remember his positive impact on my childhood.

Simon Croutear, Headteacher, William Gilpin Church of England VA Primary School

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Never an hour goes past at present that I do not think of Gary, the shock of his sudden death, and the legacy of his wonderful, kind character and deep faith. If ever there was a priest who ‘practiced what he preached’ it was Gary. At the intimate weekday 12:00 eucharist services at the Cathedral he would share his own beliefs and scriptural interpretations and insights in what felt like a one to one conversation, and you left with your own faith emboldened and strengthened, often in ways you did not expect. His lens on life was to see goodness in everyone he met and everything he touched. I can’t think of anyone who, on her/his death would be on such a fast lane direct and immediately to the Lord and to heaven. God bless him.

Mark Byford

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Gary was my training incumbent in Swaythling, Southampton from July 2006 to March 2009. We have kept in touch over the years including his presenting me twice for licensing in Bath & Wells Diocese. I met with Gary nearly every year when we attended the Edington Music Festival and in connection with Open the Book and Kinkiizi Diocese, Uganda. He was a gifted musician, had a wonderful ministry of hospitality - his door was always open to friend and stranger and he was one of the kindest and most modest men I have ever met. I didn't realise until now just how much I valued our friendship and loved him. The world and the church are the poorer for losing him but his eternal life is surely assured! Thank you Gary.

Revd Kate Sax

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I remember Gary as a child: he was always laughing and smiling, in fact it's hard to find a picture where he isn't smiling! As we grew into adults, we saw little of each other however mum always kept me up to date and shared Gary's Christmas newsletters with us. She was very fond of both Gary and Debbie. It was with great sadness that I learned of Gary's untimely death. He enriched and blessed the lives of many, many people in his work and a light has gone out in the world. I love the comment I saw on Facebook that the world would be a better place if we could all "be more Gary". Our heartfelt sympathy goes out to Gary's family.

Kate & Paul Mallatratt

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I first met Gary when he arrived in the Diocese to be a curate in Maybush. He had a full head of black hair, and facial hair to match. Over the years, the colour of his hair changed to grey, and because he rarely cut it, it was rather unruly. He was sometimes mistaken for Archbishop Rowan, which gave him quiet amusement.

Rarely to be seen without his clerical collar, he had a range of very colourful waistcoats, which together with his usual attire of sandals and his interesting braces (always gifts from someone) became his party-going outfit.

Gary loved clocks – in fact he rescued a rather handsome one from a tip just before he died. He never got it to work properly – but it joined the other half dozen or so in his house, most of them telling a different time, and chiming randomly.

He was very good with children – he taught in a first school in Otterbourne before he was ordained, and children followed him rather like a benign Pied Piper. When his foster-son Craig married Bethany and they had children, they adored him as he did them, and it was a joy to see them together.

Music was a big part of Gary's life: a first-class degree in music, and a first in Theology set him on an adult life full of the music which underpinned his ministry. He would break into song spontaneously when presiding at a said Communion service, as well as contributing to sung services. He frequently deputised as Precentor in the Cathedral, Otterbourne provided the name for the Keble Choir, which Gary took to a different Cathedral each year to sing services for a week – singers used to flock to him, as well as children.

When he became a Canon he was given a verse of a Psalm to say each day: *Be exalted O lord in your own might; we will make music and sing of your power. (Ps 21 v 13, Common Worship version.)*

He said that faithfully every day. For as well as music, prayer was at the heart of his life. He was a good preacher – sermons always well researched gave new insights into whatever subject he was exploring.

He was very generous with his time, and hospitality was natural to him. He was a good cook – and he always modified recipes, as the annotations in his large collection of recipe books showed. He had enough china and cutlery to host 20 people – though he would have found it difficult to fit them all into Chaplains Lodge. He found it difficult to say no, though he was learning..

He gave thoughtful attention to people who came to him for help, and touched many lives by his example of faithful service.

Ann Lewin

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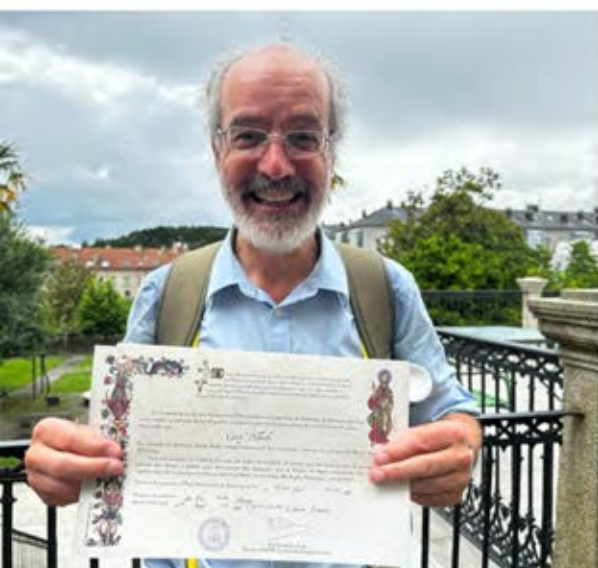
I'm really going to miss Gary not only as our Section Leader for the Chaplains but as a really encouraging, helpful and joyful person who I've got to know a little better over the last couple of years, over many coffees! He always kept us informed and communicated so well, you felt like a valuable member of a team. I'll mostly miss him as a really decent, genuine human being. He leaves big boots to fill and a big hole in all our hearts.

Carol Dale, Chaplain and Welcomer

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I owe so much to this lovely, lovely man. He was the priest who helped me to find my faith again in 2016. Who showed me what Christians should be: loving, kind, nonjudgmental. He oozed acceptance and God's grace and I knew I had at last found a church where I could feel safe enough to find my faith. He then became a friend. Someone to laugh with, share Indian takeaways with, start a film club with, and then last year to walk 270k with along the Camino de Santiago. 15 days of walking, praying, laughing, surprising people with his yellow braces, and playing endless games of Codenames in the evenings! And it was Gary who suggested I prayed about ordination in 2022. He felt sure that was the path I should travel on. And he has been there gently guiding me on, writing my references, praying for me, as I have taken each step. I am so sad that he will not be there to see me complete the journey he put me on. Just as I am so sad that I have lost such a good friend and spiritual counsellor. But I feel so lucky to have known him. And my grief is a sign of the love that Gary had for all of us. God is good. God is faithful. Rest in peace, my friend. Until we meet again.

Alex Sains

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Although I am not religious, my memories of the Reverend Gary Philbrick are very dear and I know I speak for many friends too.

I was a pupil at Blackfield junior school 1989-1993, Gary would visit and tell us his stories from his missionaries in Africa and taught us all the song, Armen siakudumisa. When we went on to Hardley school, we found friends from Holbury junior school also knew the song and, still being friends now, we'll occasionally sing it, it's like our anthem. I sang it to my children as babies too.

In 1999 my boyfriend passed away. Gary performed his funeral beautifully. It was a very cold 10th of December and at the grave side I noticed Gary was wearing his socks and sandals and it made my smile, a moment of light relief on one of my darkest days.

I know he was well loved by all in the parish of Fawley and surrounding area.

May he rest in peace 🙏

Sarah Brett

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I am desperately sad that we have lost a dear friend and colleague. Gary has also been a significant role model for me: as priest, worshipper, area dean, and pastor.

I got to know Gary soon after my arrival in Winchester in 2016 when he was on my table at the Diocesan Conference in Swanwick, I was table host. I observed him leading music and liturgy, with confidence holding a variety of worship styles with energy and enjoyment. I also learned how to lead people, as I watched him gently guide and encourage, without any evident stress, and with kindness. He shared his views on many topics about our Diocesan vision, with so much respect for different views. He has continued so consistently throughout his ministry while I have known him.

Over the years I received a personal card from him when I became an Honorary Canon of Winchester Cathedral in 2020, I consulted him about holidays near Fordingbridge for my Ruby Wedding, he guided liturgy in many Clergy Breakfast Briefings and other services, at Area Dean breakfasts he listened to all of us with interest and enthused about our different news items, at Church Warden Visitations in Hartley Wintney he led us in singing in 2021 with so much joy, and suggested cartwheels to me in 2024! We discussed the ministry of the Cathedral and the unusual ministry and opportunity of outreach after amazing conversations at the 'Ashes to Go' on Ash Weds. At the most recent Deacon Ordination service in 2024 he even took time to come to make his way to the very back of the ramped seating to give his handshake and peace to the three of us clergy supporting one of our Deacons. What a kindness amidst so much activity. He was so well known very fondly as 'Gary, you know, the one with the sandals under his robes'.

Gary kindly came up to our Odiham Deanery at my request from a year ago. We finally got a date this July 2024, and he led a brilliant lunchtime session with his usual gentle bonhomie, inclusive and wise, helping us all to learn a little bit more about worship, why and who for, and what we can do to enrich it for ourselves and others. Jesus at the centre.

And at that lunch, Weds 17th July, he said that he had collapsed at Morning prayer that very same day. Gosh we were anxious for him then, and not knowing what was to come. Afterwards Gary still took the time to send me three emails – the liturgy and prayer resources twice to ensure I had them – and a separate one for me personally about Cathedral ministry.

He really has been a wonderful disciple of Jesus, an exceptionally kind leader and pastor, non-judgmental, alongside with a warm smile, a wise friend and counsellor. He deserves a rest and time in glory. But, O, we do and shall miss him so much.

Prayers for his family and for all the Cathedral staff and for the Diocesan team who will be diminished without him.

The Revd Canon Marion de Quidt







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On behalf of the fellowship at Swaythling Baptist Church, who knew Gary during his ministry at St Albans Church, and are deeply saddened at his sudden death.

Sincere sympathy is sent to the family at this most difficult of times.

At SBC Gary will be remembered for his great commitment to the work of the local Covenant of Churches, his boundless energy, unwavering cheerfulness and wisdom.

When thinking about Gary we must also mention his colourful braces, the sight of him pedalling to church or round the neighbourhood and his love of sandals as footwear- in all weathers.

All these will be lasting fond memories for people here at Swaythling.

Gary is now with his Lord and Saviour, who he has long served, and although he will be missed by so many, memories will ensure that he is not forgotten by those who have known him and held him in high esteem.

May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace, as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit - Romans 15:13

Swaythling Baptist Church

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Gary was the most fun, intuitive, intelligent and wise cleric, colleague and friend. Having known him for 24 years he was my 'go-to' person for any unanswered questions I had when we were Area Deans together and in future roles. His inspiration, enthusiasm, passion, dedication, commitment and hard work for the sake of the Gospel was second to none. He shone brightly, and was outstanding in all he set his mind to. Gary was also known for his amazing sticky toffee puddings we indulged in during our Southern Area Team meetings - it became a request - especially as he always produced an abundance of sauce! It was only the week before he died we were planning what to do for our new students during Welcome Week at the University - somewhere he had a big impact. We will miss him at our graduations, and life will never quite be the same again without our dear Gary, with his braces and socks and sandals (unless it was very hot!), and his respectful clergy wear.

His death has come as a shock, he will be sorely missed, but the hope of resurrection is what I, along with many others, are clinging on to. Gary, may you rest in peace and rise in Glory.

Fiona Gibbs





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I have many memories of Gary from his time with us in the Bishop's Office and all of them are fond and of a man who lifted the spirits of everyone around him. Gary shared so much with those he came into contact with – joy, wisdom, gifts, biscuits, cakes, vodka, and always had a tale to tell of his recent adventures to make us laugh.

We all cared immensely for Gary and will miss him enormously. What a wonderful man to have shared so much time with.

Thank you, Gary, for all the gifts you gave.

Rhiannon Balme

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Gary influenced my life in Winchester in such a positive way. As a new cathedral chaplain he encouraged me to connect with the cathedral and widen my experience with visitors. His ministry as an counsellor in my parish has been gentle and wise. I remember his welcoming smile and his singing and leading worship at clergy breakfasts. Lord thank you for Gary and our love and prayers from Sway parish in the New Forest for his family.

Revd Jane Mitchell. Vicar of Sway

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The Diocese of Kinkiizi in the province of the church of Uganda extends heartfelt condolences to the bishop and all folks in the Diocese of Winchester upon the passing on of our dear brother now late Revd Canon Gary.

He fought a good fight and finished the earthly race with dignity (2Timothy 4:7-8).

He was dear to all of us but more dear to his creator God. He is now at peace with God To live is Christ, and to die is gain. (Philippians 1:21).

May God rest his soul in eternal life. For none of us lives for ourselves alone, and none of us dies for ourselves alone. If we live, we live for the Lord; and if we die, we die for the Lord. (Romans 14:7-8).

*Rt. Rev. Dan Zoreka
Bishop, Diocese of Kinkiizi (Uganda)*

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I knew Gary for almost 30 years, joining the Keble Choir when I was 18. Little did I know back then how important he was to become in my life. Indeed, it's hard to put into words what Gary meant to me. He was, and continues to be, the heart of the Keble Choir. On our cathedral singing weeks, he would wake us up each morning by placing a cup of tea by our beds - in later years, he gave up this habit as we would invariably lie in and let the tea grow cold! Rehearsals with Gary were always enormous fun. We'd always end up laughing at something. In all those years, I only saw Gary get cross once - that was when one of the basses threw a shoe across the stalls during the psalm verse, 'Over Moab will I cast out my shoe'. In 30 years of rehearsals, that's pretty good going!

Gary accepted everyone and always gave his time to each of us. He was always so incredibly accepting of children in the church, never expecting them to be quiet and sit still, but just to be children. He baptised all three of my children in Bristol Cathedral and is the godfather of my youngest, Taliesin. Now, whenever it rains or the sun shines, Taliesin is sure it's Gary looking down on him.

Gary was intelligent, caring, funny, and kind, a unique human being (he told me I remind him of Jar Jar Binks). In our twenties, we'd often turn up at his house to sing around the piano on a Saturday evening as it was much more fun than going to the pub. He had a spirit of adventure, and somewhere, in the archives, I even have a video of him learning to do the floss. It's incredibly difficult to believe he is no longer with us - I have so many more things I want to talk to him about, but I guess that will just have to wait a while. Much love to all his family.

Carly Reagon

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I first met Gary when he became our Area Dean here in Christchurch. His pastoral care of all of the clergy within the chapter has been exemplary. He was always available to us, had wisdom in abundance, especially with regard to difficulties being experienced within the parish, and always seemed to have the quality time to offer to each one of us when we most needed it. Gary kept us fully updated on all matters relating to diocesan life and the reasons behind decisions that had been taken, and was never afraid to feed back concerns that we as a chapter had. But above all, the real quality that I admired so much in Gary was his integrity and faithfulness to the people whom he served, over the years I have confided in him details that I have not felt comfortable sharing with others. I will miss Gary enormously and I send my love and prayers to the person who was most special in his life, his son Craig.

Richard Partridge

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A friend of mine died a couple of weeks ago. He was a friend for a very short time and I'm not even sure if he would have remembered me. But I counted the Reverend Canon Gary Philbrick among my friends. He served God and showed love to the people of Winchester.

I make it a habit of scoping out old cathedrals. And whenever I'm in the UK, I like to attend Morning Prayer. The rain drizzled lightly (as it seems to do a lot in Southern England) as I walked the old stone streets of Winchester. Morning Prayer began at 9:00 and I wanted to be early. I made my way to the designated chapel. A few others sat in chairs dotted with Books of Common Prayer. A handful of candles burned and smoked. And in walked a smiling priest. Tufts of mostly white hair surrounds his mostly balding head. But a darker moustache gives him youth. His wire-rimmed glasses frame piercing eyes.

“Oh Lord, open our lips,” he prays. “And our mouth shall proclaim your praise,” we all respond. And Morning Prayer begins. It's a call and response of prayer and Scripture reading. It's contemplative and beautiful.

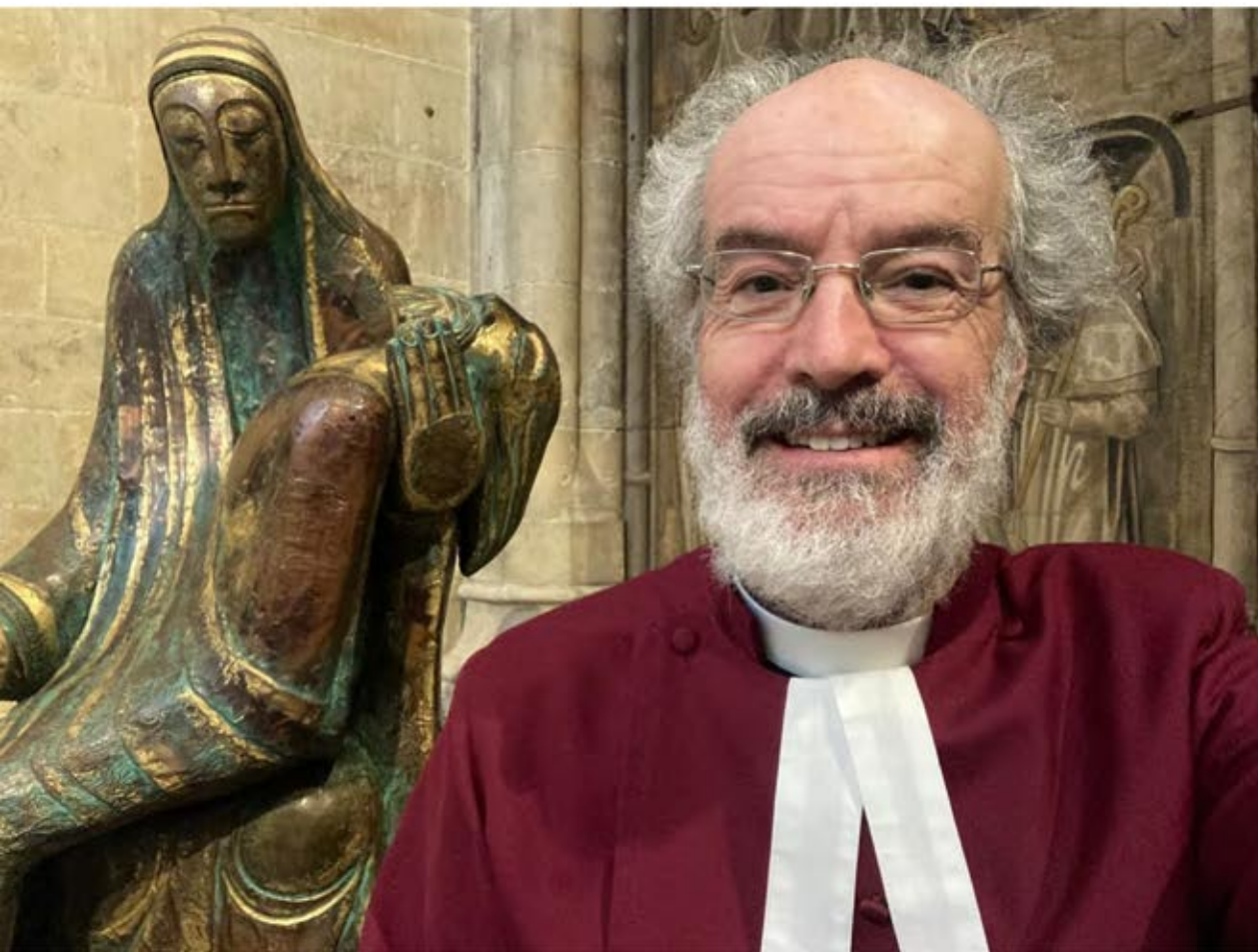
When the service ended, I was greeted by Canon Gary. We chatted about where I was from, what brings me to Winchester. He spoke of the Cathedral and the goings on here in southern England. I was struck by his kindness. He took the time to greet a visiting American. And it was like talking to an old friend. He invited me and Christina to the Sunday service. I assured him we'd be there. He saw us sitting in the middle of a row of chairs next day and made a point to smile and give a little wave while he walked toward the front of the sanctuary. That was almost a year ago.

The littlest kindness reaches farther than we know. Our Beloved Savior says that even a cup of water given in his name is a loving act and service to God himself. My combined time with Canon Gary amounts to no more than 2 hours. I hadn't talked to him since then. But his friendship was dear to me. He went into hospital last month. He died after a short stay. It came as a shock to all. But he is now in the presence of our Lord.

He will be missed and his reach will last for years to come. One day I'll make it back to Winchester and go to Morning Prayer in the Epiphany Chapel. I'll look up from my prayer book. But Canon Gary won't be there.

Anthony Forrest

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We remember Gary from watching many Winchester Cathedral online services, particularly on Fridays when our son Alasdair was depping in the choir.

We remember Gary's wonderful singing, his smile and his incredible eyebrows. He will be much missed.

Thinking of all of Gary's family at this sad time.

Jeremy & Eleri Kirk

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I loved working with Gary as a Foundation Governor at the Forest Edge Learning Federation and St Mary's Fordingbridge. He was also our faith leader and travel companion, but ultimately he became a good friend, each of us doing each other little favours to grease the wheels of life in our community, knowing they would get done effectively and unknowingly in the background. He got through so much work with such a joyful attitude. In our last communication he was delighted to know that his introduction of the Pimms and Lemonade at the after school Governor's Summer thank you to staff was being continued. Thank you Gary.

Richard Farr

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Gary on Holiday in Germany & Austria 2022 where he learned the delights of the film "The Sound of Music" and purchased copious quantities of Mozartkugel to bring back as a gift for the Bishop!





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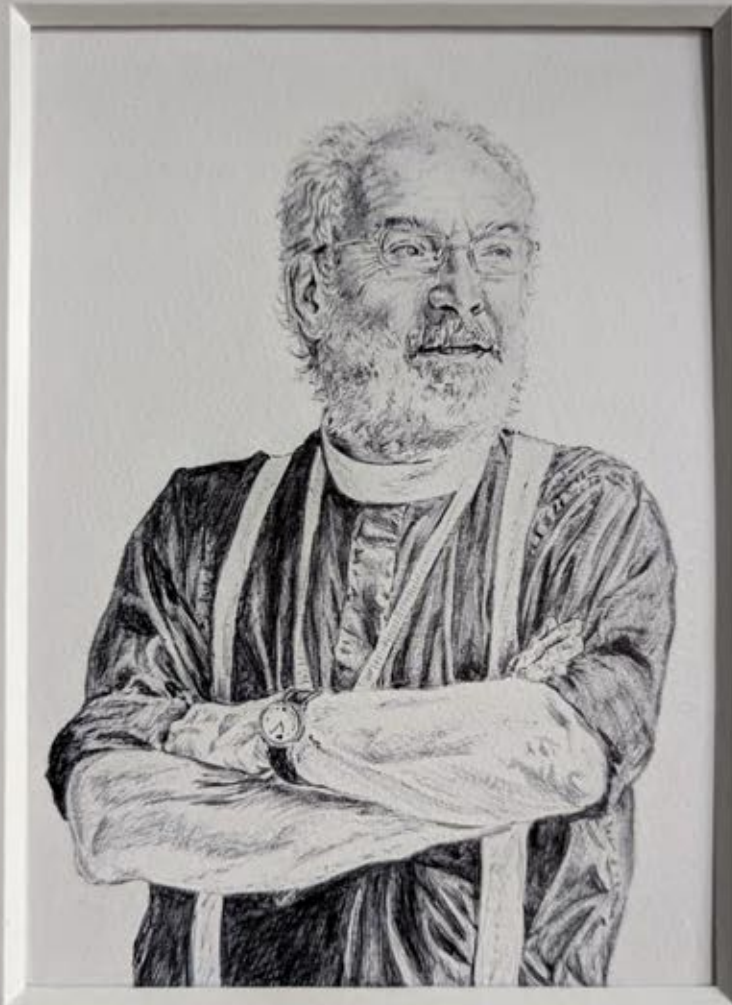
The first time I saw Gary was at the Winchester Clergy Chapter meeting. I was a young up-start ordinand and, to my shame, my first impression was one of skepticism – I thought ‘Who is this fella in his sandals and braces? Is this the face of the contemporary Church of England?’ And then Gary opened his mouth and I realized pretty quickly that he was in fact the gentlest, kindest, wisest, humblest, most loving and lovable priest I may ever encounter – and exactly what the Church should be.

There was a rare, undefinable, timeless quality about Gary – comfortable with all people, of all ages, in all church traditions and settings, over a glass of red wine or a cup of tea. He would literally chat to anyone, not just small talk but really listening and telling jolly stories. Among his many gifts was music and leading worship – I think of him smiling and strumming away at Clergy Breakfast Briefings, always managing to get us reluctant clergy singing hymns and Taizé harmonies with more gusto than we came in the room with!

There are too many things to say about how wonderful Gary was. But it seems fitting that one of Gary’s final acts of ministry was on the Sunday he was taken ill, speaking to Radio Solent (at my request – he was always so willing to help!), all about St Swithun whose feast day we had just celebrated. In the interview Gary spoke of a “humble and holy priest” who was “well known for his acts of kindness”, including the “building and mending of churches” and who had a “great concern for the poor and for ordinary people.” Listening back (which I have done many times since Gary died) all I can think is that he could just as well have been describing himself. Dear Gary – we will miss him terribly.

Jemima Lewis, Head of Communications

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I first met Gary when I'd been working for the diocese for about a week. We'd been invited to a marquee BBQ in the gardens of Wolvesey, and I happened to be sat next to Gary. He told me about a recent pilgrimage he'd been on, and he certainly looked the part, with his flyaway hair and dependable sandals! From that single conversation, it became clear that I had the privilege to work with one of the finest people I'd ever meet. Gary's passing was heartbreaking, as he epitomised the best of humanity. He was such an inspiration in life, and while we remember him, he will continue to be so.

Hannah Melvin

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Our family's memories of Gary's Southampton days begin when he was a curate at Maybush. He experimented on our son's skateboard whilst still in cassock. It did not end well.

A holy fool in the best sense of that tradition.

Nigel and Rhoda Coates

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Thank you Gary for demonstrating the love, patience, care and encouragement of God. Your smile warmed my heart.

Revd Mo Pimenta

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My brothers' and my church journey started at St. Albans in Swaythling, where we met Christine and Dave. They took us through Bible study, which eventually led us to Gary. Gary took all of us and every family member under his wing, making us a part of his family as we made him a part of ours. He treated my brother Craig as his own and brought him up for the last 23 years. He built my brother up to become the man he is today. I miss Gary, and I will also miss Christmas with him as he always made it feel special for us all.

Shelley Wooldridge

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Remembering Gary from Fawley Church and I believe Ships Padre at Calshot. Also at Otterbourne where my mother worshipped.

RIP to a real gentleman.

Bryan Laughlin

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The day we arrived at the Vicarage in Brockenhurst in September 1999, and were just trying to sort ourselves out, Gary arrived on the doorstep with a bottle of wine and a box of homemade luxury chocolates. It was so good for us to stop and have some time to start getting to know this wonderfully warm and generous man. For us, it was enormously encouraging to find Gary was a fellow priest who cared for everyone he met. He truly was an example to us all.

Francis and Tina Cumberlege

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A great loss of such a very special and deeply committed Christian soul. Gary touched all our hearts. His love for God he wanted to share with all he met, supported, nurturing, guiding them on their faith journey. His enthusiasm for kingdom work, his love of music and life. His genuine care, supporting others with his heart warming, beaming smile. His selflessness, putting others first. A true and faithful disciple of Christ. May the love of God our saviour, surround his family and friends at his very sad time.

Christina Cutler

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I have only lived in Winchester for just over two years and I don't think I ever really spoke to Gary but I saw him all the time inside and outside the Cathedral and we always said hello and smiled at each other. He had such a lovely friendly warm face. I saw him the Monday before he died and once again we said hello and smiled and I noticed his Jesus sandals. It was shocking to hear he had died - he was very much part of my Winchester.

I send my deepest condolences to his family and friends. I shall miss his smile and the warmth behind it.

Beth Bluck

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Gary will be greatly missed. I remember the Friday fun night at the vicarage at St Albans, giving all the children extra nights of fun.

Marie Tasha Kerry and Lee xxx

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I have very fond memories of Gary from Christchurch Deanery days. I was so thankful for the warmth of his welcome to the Deanery when I joined Highcliffe in 2016 and his encouragement when I ministered alongside him as assistant area Dean. Gary was my referee and flew over to Guernsey when I changed roles - attending my licensing in his characteristic sandals! RIP Gary.

Revd Gill Nobes, Vicar St Matthew's Cobo

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Revd Gary was the type of vicar you would expect to see in a children's story book, and everything a vicar should be. We first met Gary through the "Holiday at Home" and "Boost" groups run at St Mary's Church, Fordingbridge. He was part of a dedicated team running them. We were new to Fordingbridge and these groups helped us feel really welcome in the community. There were bonfires, pancake evenings and Christmas meals together. This is a picture of him in St Mary's Church in May 2018. After a service, he took a group of us up the bell tower. We got an amazing view. On the way up, he demonstrated how the bells work, which was fascinating. This was one of many happy memories Gary has given us. Thank you, Gary.

The Jones Family, Fordingbridge

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I met Gary over 34 years ago, he was the curate at St Peter's in Maybush. We were due to be married there by the Vicar Ron Diss, however Ron couldn't do it (I can't remember why) and Gary stepped in. I can still picture him stood at the altar with his then jet-black beard ready to welcome me as I walked down the aisle with my Dad. Gary had not had chance to get to know us, but it was a lovely service and he made 26th May 1990 a very special day for us.

Kim Woods

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We met Gary, many times of the years, he was always very pleasant and so easy to talk to and he listened. Also such a very down to earth person, when he was at Swaythling, we used to see him regularly on his bike, wearing his trademark braces. It was such shock to hear of his passing.

Christine and Stephen Beal, Members of St Christophers Church, Thornhill, Southampton

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Somehow all Gary's talents and rich personality were encapsulated in the fact that he seemed so at peace with himself and the world. True godliness—he will be much missed.

Nigel Cumming

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We give love and prayers to the memory of Revd Gary and for his support to the Mothers' Union branches in the Christchurch Deanery.

Christine Clode

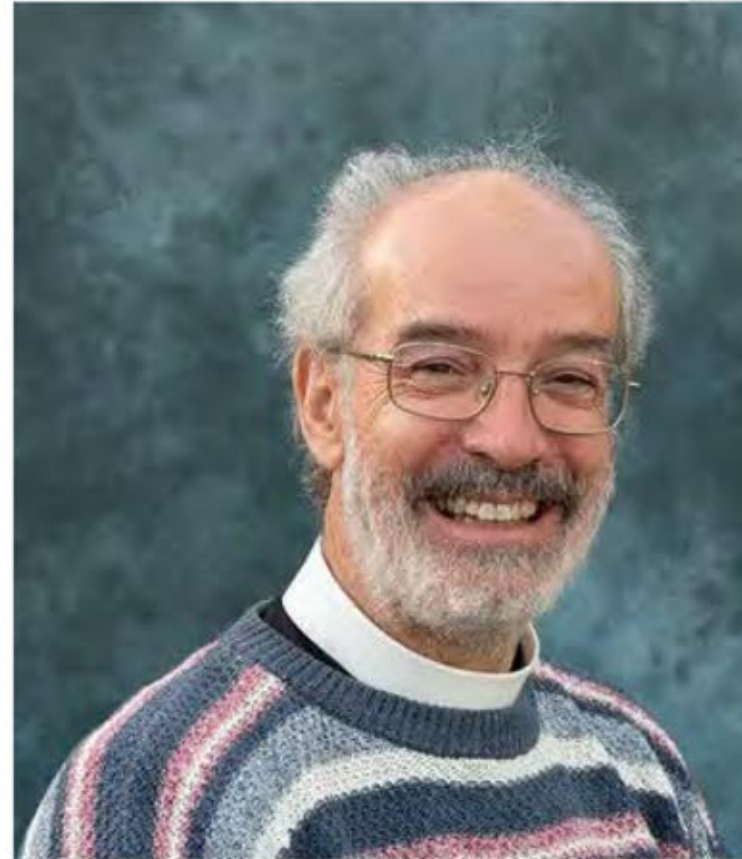
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Gary has been a constant during my time working for the diocesan office. Over the years he has been unfailingly kind, encouraging and excited to learn of how God was working in people's lives. He was generous with his time and his hospitality (who can forget his amazing home-made Mulberry vodka) and he delighted in being with people. I shall remember Gary as someone who radiated God's love in so many ways. I feel privileged to have known him, and my love and prayers are with his family and close friends who will feel his loss so keenly.

Frances Ter Haar

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Gary, we will remember your patience and kindness and will make sure that Allegra hears all about you. You will be missed, but certainly not forgotten.

The Prices

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Soon after Gary arrived in what was, at the time, the Avon Valley Partnership, he came to one of our Fair Trade Coffee Mornings. Somehow the conversation got around to the window above the door needing cleaning. Gary, promptly got the ladder, climbed onto the ledge above the porch and cleaned the window! So impressive, in so many ways. He was a regular at our coffee mornings, always making sure he moved from table to table, talking to everyone. He initiated the Grave Talks at Woodgreen and it was poignant to remember these sessions at his funeral. As usual, such a good example for us all.

On his sartorial fashion, I remember along with the braces and sandals, his ‘Columbo’ raincoat, but not if it was worn with the sandals???

It was a great privilege to have known, spent time with and learnt from Gary.

Beverly Judd

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