

Keith Manley (1950 – 2016)

For what I am able to share about Keith, I am very much indebted to conversations with Andrea. Also, shortly, Nicola will be giving a tribute to Keith from her and Neale, which will add greatly to this address.

Keith was born in Ludiana in the Indian Punjab on March 22nd 1950. His mother, Manorama, was an Indian Christian and his father, Felix, was British. As Keith's father was in the Indian Police, as Inspector General in the Punjab, the family moved about a lot when Keith and his sister Tina were young. They lived in Ludiana, Chandigarh and Jullundur where Keith attended different day schools. At the age of eight he went to the Lawrence School in Sanawar 'Sirnar', a coeducational boarding school in the foothills of the Himalayas. During this time he enjoyed visits to grandparents both in Simla where his mother's parents lived and back to Guildford in Surrey where his other grandparents were. Keith went on from school to study physics at St Stephen's University in Delhi. It turned out that physics didn't suit him, and he changed course to train as an accountant. The story of Sirnar was not over, however, because the school was the context of Keith first meeting you, Andrea. The school had been both your home with your parents both teachers there, and the place of your own schooling. When Keith was at University in Delhi you were teaching at the British Council School also in Delhi and your friendship blossomed. You were married on 14th April 1973 in Simla. And today we give thanks for the love and companionship that you brought to each other, and for all the blessings of your marriage.... In the early 1970s Keith had made his first visits to Birmingham, during his accountancy training, to a firm Lawrence and Co, near St Faith and St Laurence Church in Gillott Road. One of his cousins was working there already. This was to become his long term workplace. At Lawrence and Co he became chartered, and was later a partner in the firm. During Keith's training, you made the decision together to settle in Britain and your first home was a maisonette in Erdington. Later the family home was in Knightlow Road, before the move to Hamilton Avenue. In 1977 Keith became a father

when Nicola was born, and again when Neale was born in 1980. We will hear more shortly about Keith as a father, but, Andrea, you said that he was a very proud father and felt very strongly that his task was to create the basis from which you Nicola and Neale should be able to make your own lives. He took great pleasure in you Neale gaining a place at Shrewsbury School and was delighted to be present at your wedding Nicola here in church on 26th August 2006 – and the service booklet has a lovely photo of that day.

As husband and father, Keith took his responsibilities very seriously as the traditional breadwinner. He worked very hard and enjoyed his work very much. In partnership with Brian Lawrence he oversaw the firm's move to new premises at Arlington House..... It came, therefore, as a very great life-change to be diagnosed at 40 with multiple sclerosis. You said, Andrea, that it quickly became impossible for Keith to continue working. This was a great loss. His MS was progressive, with successive loss of motor functions and increasing disability. Within a year of diagnosis he could no longer walk and after six years he was unable to continue driving. Yet despite the difficulties, you indicated that Keith was very accepting of his illness. As it became the reality of his life he came to value very highly the friendships he sustained. He enjoyed particularly his regular visits to the Maharajah restaurant, run by his friends Mindi and Nat, also Asha's in Newhall Street. In fact food generally was very important to him. He also loved music and enjoyed playing Abba, the Beatles, Elvis and Elton John – and as we leave the Crematorium later, it will be to the sound of Abba singing 'I have a dream'. And this song which some of you will know, perhaps, includes sentiments that I think may convey to us something about how Keith approached his situation. The opening words of the song are these, "I have a dream, a song to sing, to help me cope with anything". And today we salute Keith's journey through the trials and constraints of a very diminishing and restricting illness, which cannot have been easy, either for him or for those of you close to him. In our scripture reading today from Revelation Ch. 21, the writer speaks of "a new heaven and a new earth" and of how "the sea was no more".

Remembering the unpredictable and harsh realities of the Mediterranean Sea, the

sea was often taken as a symbol of the chaos, disorder and the suffering of life. The vision, therefore, of a time and place where 'the sea is no more', is an expression of a longing for, and a deep confidence in, the final healing, restoring, unfailing love of God. This gift of wholeness beyond suffering is a truth that may be grasped in this life, for "See, the home of God is among mortals. He will dwell with them; they will be his peoples, and God himself will be with them." It is also a truth about our future in God beyond this life, "And the one who was seated on the throne said, 'See, I am making all things new.... To the thirsty I will give water as a gift from the spring of the water of life. ⁷Those who conquer will inherit these things, and I will be their God and they will be my children." *It is our hope in Christ that this gift of wholeness in God is the inheritance that Keith will receive....* of peace and sanctuary in the nearer presence of God after the turbulence and stresses of this life.

There is also another sentiment in the Abba song that tells us something else. For the song continues, "I believe in angels, something good in everything I see". And of course I don't know what this may have meant to Keith, but if you will allow me to speculate on his behalf, I think it points us perhaps to the value he will have placed on those of you who walked alongside him, the first of whom was you, Andrea. And today we salute you most especially for your generous, unceasing love and care in being Keith's foremost companion – that 'something good' that none of us can take for granted, but when it's beside us, we know how lucky we are. Keith was very fortunate, and we register his profound gratitude, and our own admiration and regard.... And what I am touching on here embraces also all of the love and generosity that Keith enjoyed from you Nicola and Neale and all family members and friends.... Also, on behalf of the family, we express deep and sincere thanks for the care, attention and kindness that Keith received from his carers at home. In particular this thanks is to Christine, Amanda, Pauline and Dawn and also to carers from the Three Sisters Agency, Aleesha, Leesa, Eleanor and Kerry for the many days and hours spending time with Keith and attending to his needs. This has been greatly appreciated.

Each of us has our particular memories of Keith, and we will hear now from Nicola and Neale. As we thank God for all our memories, and thank God for Keith and for everything enjoyed with him, we pray for his peace in God where he now is. Amen.

Reverend Julian Francis

February 29th 2016

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