
DAVID TORRANCE TRIBUTE NEWSLETTER

Pencaitland Parish Church

As we begin to process and come to terms with the death of our Minister David, I know I don't even really need to urge you all to continue to support one another in our grief, not least in prayer, and particularly to support and pray for Ann and David's family. I have learned over the last year that this is just what you do!

But I also know that some minds are beginning to turn to what the future might hold for our parish, in the context of Church closures and the shortage of Ministers we find ourselves in. I can assure you that I have it on good authority that there will be no urgency on the part of the Presbytery to look at our future and in any case the recently agreed Presbytery Plan does not envisage the closure of either Ormiston or Pencaitland Church. What will in due course be considered is how we will be ministered to. But I suspect that even well into the New Year, when this does come up for discussion, the recommendation will be for things here to stay much as they currently are. Also please be assured that nothing at all will happen without us being thoroughly consulted.

Can I also say that I believe Ann is being well looked after by Presbytery and the Church of Scotland.

I hope this will put minds at ease. I genuinely believe we have a bright future. We have weathered some severe storms in the last few years but have come through them showing incredible resilience. I am hopeful now that calmer waters lie ahead.

Yours in Christ

Andrew

PASTORAL CARE

Kathryn Reid (07749 262040) is our pastoral care co-ordinator. The Rev John Hunter (341677) is also available to provide pastoral assistance if the need arises.



www.pencaitlandparishchurch.org.uk

At the service of thanksgiving for David's life a collection was taken for 2 charities, St Columbas Hospice and Maggies. This amounted to £1300 and it was very gratefully received by the charities

Both these places do amazing work and made a difficult journey easier to navigate.

If you wish to donate to either St Columba's Hospice or Maggies please do so using the following links

<https://stcolumbashospice.org.uk/donate/>

<https://www.maggies.org/get-involved/donate-maggies/>

If you were unable to attend the service or would like to listen again you can find a link at <https://www.pencaitlandparishchurch.org.uk/>



David Torrance

25 Oct 1962 – 16 October 2023

‘I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race;

I have kept the faith’

2 Timothy 4:7

It was with great sadness that we learned of the death of our minister, David, on 16th October 2023. David was many things to many people, much loved husband, dad, son, brother, friend minister and colleague, and he will be greatly missed by all.

David was born in Edinburgh in 1962 to David and Elizabeth Torrance. He was a son of the manse and was a middle child, having an older sister Grace and a younger sister Ruth. His school days began at Deans Primary in Livingston and when the family moved to Aberdeen he attended Ashley Road Primary then Aberdeen Grammar. The family moved again, this time to Earlston in the Scottish Borders and his final school years were spent at Earlston High School. David studied theology at Aberdeen from 1980 to 1984, sold life insurance for a while then returned to university to study for a Bachelor of Divinity degree. He was licensed by the Presbytery of Melrose and Peebles in 1988, attached to church in Ayr for a while before being ordained by Glasgow Presbytery in 1993 at Campsie Parish Church. David was called to Pencaitland and Ormiston churches in 2009 and was still minister there until he passed away.

A Service of Thanksgiving for David’s life was held in Pencaitland Church on Monday 30th October and we are grateful to Ann and two of his friends for allowing us to publish the following excerpts from their tributes.

Jim spoke fondly of his lifelong friendship with David.

We studied theology together at Aberdeen University. Many of you here will have known David from his professional life as a minister. That’s not to say you didn’t know the real David – I know he will have been entirely himself in all his interactions professional or otherwise, but I want to give an account of my experience of knowing David as a friend.

David was massively stimulated by the conceptual world. He had a relentless internal dialogue. I remember the very first theological question I casually asked him shortly after we had first met, in the kitchen with other flat mates. I watched a change descend over him, in fact his response was to leave the room for five minutes before returning with a fully formed highly articulate account of the relational nature of the Word of God. It took me several years to come up to speed on that topic...David...five minutes.

For someone who had such deeply held opinions we were surprised at the ease of interaction David had with his three children through their childhood. Without exception his friends agree that he was a lovely father. Frequently we would ask David along on an outing or a camping trip and strangely (we thought) he would want his children to come too.

David, you taught me a lot about theology but what I value the most is you showed me what friendship is.

Another friend, Andrew, also recalled the friendship he had shared with David over a period of 43 years.

I would like to share with you something of what having David as a friend has meant to me.

I knew David over a period of 43years and we did what friends do over that time - we laughed together, played together, grew up and matured together .We went to each other’s weddings, we settled down into our respective careers, we started families at different times, but our families kept in contact and we visited each other on a regular basis. David was obviously a devoted family man, and delighted in his children. We have all lost so much in David; I have lost my oldest and irreplaceable friend, and because of that I started writing this with a heavy heart, but I was soon smiling at my reminiscences as all my memories were full of humour and laughter Some were serious but none sad, and they all started

in 1980.

I first met David in Crombie halls of residence in Aberdeen at the start of a new term. I remember a tall fair haired youth walking confidently round Crombie, smiling chatting and generally making new friends. Being even more unsociable than I am now I studiously avoided him. Then out of the blue I received a surprise visit, I suppose he had seen me in or around the Christian Union. Anyway he knocked on my door and had brought with him, of all things, a small wooden folding bookcase with a broken catch and asked if I could fix it. So after fixing said catch, talking all night and then talking a lot of the next morning David left at 4am.

And this first encounter set a certain pattern for the next 43 years.

1 You never knew what David might ask you to do next.

2 We could talk for hours and frequently did.

3 David had no sense of the passage of time, especially when it involved going to bed

4 That small bookcase was just the start .and over the years I saw David's book cases expand until you needed a ladder to get to the top shelf.

His face suited a smile and he could disarm you with one. He had a rare quality in a man and that was that he was truly kind. I've seen him help strangers in the street when perhaps I would have passed by. He was always concerned. He had a natural way with people and thought nothing of travelling alone to distant lands because he knew he would meet people on the way, befriend them and so he would never travel alone for long.

Not travelling alone for long is a good way of introducing David's faith. This was something to David as natural and unfaked as his smile, his concern and his kindness. It wasn't something he was overtly conscious about, not something he put on or off as the situation demanded because it was a part of him all the time. It was written into his DNA and something he had never been without. It was the prism through which he saw the world and it was the sword and shield that enabled him to bear so bravely over the past years his terrible illness and the tragic loss of his beloved son Daniel.

Ann recalls that the state of the world was like a physical pain for David. His desire was for everyone to know the love and grace of God and that is what motivated his preaching and all that he did as a minister. One of his favourite scriptures was Ephesians 3:14-19

' I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge – that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.'

David's desire was to make both Ormiston and Pencaitland viable in a climate of closure and decline. He was always keen to share his faith with youngsters and loved nothing more than to have them ask him all their difficult questions about God and Christianity.

David was a good listener. I never worried if he was late home from a bereavement visit because I knew that someone was probably pouring out their heart to him. As a family man David shared interests with our children – the outdoors, walks by rivers, hills, swimming in the sea, fishing, skiing and number one for David – campfires! Any excuse he would set fire to something, including at his Dad's 99th birthday when he lit so many candles and sparklers that the smoke alarm went off in the restaurantNot just once but twice!

Life threw many trials at David but by the end his faith was strong and although he didn't want to die, he was not afraid. He knew he would be reunited with his beloved son, Daniel, again.

David will be fondly remembered by Pencaitland church members and also by many people in the community, whose lives he touched in times of great need.

'David was unique; a kind, generous, thoughtful, Godly man, infuriating at times, but then who isn't? I like to think we worked well together and I considered him a friend. I still can't quite believe he's gone.'

'I found David to be a kind approachable gentleman. He was thoughtful and caring and took the time to visit me after I got home following my surgery (where he found me still in my cosy jammies). He always put me at ease. I saw David as a proud father and devoted husband to Ann. I'm so very glad to have had the chance to know him. Safe with God.'

'I was always struck by David's kindness and how caring he was. Even though I'm not a church member, I always felt welcomed and valued by him and his family. If he phoned to speak to Mum and I answered, he would always take time to talk to me, ask how I was and pray with me if needed.'

It is unanimously agreed that David was punctually challenged ... he was always late! How many worshippers made a time adjustment on a Sunday morning knowing that the service would not start until 10.55, or mentally adjusted the time to turn up for a meeting ? His 5 minutes was like no one else's 5 minutes! David lived in a different time zone from everyone else and as most were preparing to start the bedtime lock up routine David would be working his way through his to do list. 'If the phone rang after 9.30 in our house we always knew it would be David. He was a real night owl.' 'David had a knack of knowing when the serving spoon started to dish the tea. I often wondered how many times his own evening meal dried out in the oven while he made some (long) phone calls'. It is very sad to reflect that someone who was always late in this world arrived much too early in the next.

David was a very interesting man and remembered for some of the long discussions that he had. He loved to chat about a wide range of topics from travel to politics, Christianity to his love of the outdoors, beekeeping, fishing and the latest Aberdeen football match he had attended with Samuel.

'I'll always remember him in the Carriage House after church, me in the kitchen, David on the other side of the hatch with a smile on his face and asking about my family and being so genuinely interested in what we were all up to.' 'His knowledge and interests spread further than just his "day job". We spoke on many subjects from politics to world affairs. From the size of his bookcases it was pretty obvious that he was an avid reader! When the family was re-locating to Pencaitland, we were warned that quite a number of books would be moving in too! 'Latterly we would talk about his health and his treatment. He never at any point showed any fear as his strong faith was of great comfort to him.'

'David had an amazing knowledge of the Bible and the history surrounding it along with a voice which was extremely easy to listen to. He always chose wonderful hymns that complemented his sermon. 'He was a truly caring compassionate minister'.

'David was many different things to many different people. He provoked strong feelings in many. Many left but he carried on. I can recall 3 particular times when he had an impact on me (there may have been many more). He was a kind man to his soul. A few months after he came to Pencaitland I remember sitting in the pew while he was preaching and a tremendous feeling of waves washing over me, of peace and calm. Three words came to mind - spirituality, reverence and peace. One watchnight service I came out of church feeling very low and sad (it was a bad time for me). He had one look at me and enveloped me in a massive hug for what seemed like minutes. It was a 'healing hug'. I came home feeling uplifted and ready to face whatever came next.

About 2 years ago I was roped into cleaning the church and had decided to sweep under the pews. David came into the church and found me under the pews in tears. I said to him that I was reduced to being on my knees – there was nowhere else to go – only God knew the pain. He spent ages with me – hugs, more hugs, talk and prayer. Nothing brought home to me so much that when we have nowhere else to go God is waiting and looking over us. That will be my abiding memory of David – God's messenger in time of need.

He was a complex and sometimes difficult man but his kindness and deep faith shone through.'

'Thoughts of David,

Long 'phone calls and, if it were late at night, he always ended the call with "night night, sleep tight"

He gave the warmest hugs ever,

He always made time to talk,

He was such a Godly man and wanted to share his faith with everyone,

He talked so lovingly about his family,

He was never on time,

He loved his food

He hung out Alice's (The Beeches) washing for her when he visited her

With David what you saw, was what you got, honesty, kindness, teaching, a hug, a gentle tap on the shoulder as he came in to Church

David's faith never faltered.'

With grateful thanks to all those who contributed their memories.

David will be fondly remembered by all who knew and loved him.