

Marcus Brown – Rest in Peace. A tribute by the Reverend Geoff Daw

We know how much the church of St. Peter in Rodmell and the village communities in this Ouse Valley of Iford Kingston and Southease meant to Marcus.

It is especially appropriate that his final journey and resting place was there, not just because he lived in Rodmell, but because this is where he began that new and to many people unexpected phase of his life as an ordained priest in the Church of England. It was here that he celebrated his first Holy Communion, and the occasion just over ten years ago was followed by one of Jenny and Marcus's characteristically generous meals at Abergavenny House.

Marcus had had very successful career in Insurance, working his way up to be CEO and with clients such as Boeing, the New York Twin Towers, the Golden Gate Bridge in San Francisco and many others. He was recognised for this by being given the freedom of London.

Yet in many ways the time after he retired early was his happiest, living in Rodmell with family, friends, horses dogs and cats. He worked voluntarily for a number of societies and organisations: Raystede Animal Rescue Centre, St Peter and St James Hospice as a voluntary chaplain, Coastwatch, and as a governor at Northease Manor School. He was often asked to play Father Christmas for different children's groups, and he was also a very active Rotarian.

His son Henry, put it so well in his tribute to his Dad at his funeral: "he always said the happiest and proudest days of his life were the day he married my Mum and the day he was ordained. What a wonderful vicar he was! This vocation truly brought out the best in all of his attributes. Even patience - who would have thought?"

Marcus discovered that faith here in Rodmell. I had an interesting discussion with him 14 years ago, when I was hoping he would become churchwarden. He agreed but said that now retired from Insurance he wanted to do more in the Church, perhaps as a Lay Reader. I said have you considered being priested? He said, "Yes, but thought it would sound cocky to say so..." There began a journey through the rigours of Church of England selection and training, which we smiled, "ummed" and wended our way through until his ordination day which began over ten years of parochial ministry here in this Benefice.

I had the immense privilege of sharing ministry with him. We talked, we laughed, and on Wednesday mornings along with others here in Rodmell, we prayed regularly together.

There are three things about Marcus faith that I want to say.

Firstly it was, to use the jargon, "incarnational" or lived in the real world. He was for several years a voluntary chaplain at St. Peter and St. James hospice. Early on there I remember him telling me about a lady who had been told she hadn't long to live, he said to her in his gentle pastoral manner "that's a real bugger". She responded by saying "Thank you, at last someone said it the way it is." It was an incarnational faith.

Secondly, it was a universal faith, we shared the very basic belief that all human beings were made in the likeness of God, what used be termed as "having a divine spark in them". Marcus and I believed it was our task to help people find that spark and respond to it. It didn't matter what their background, gender, sexuality or cultural situation was: we are all equal before God.

Thirdly it was a joyful faith: he couldn't understand miserable Christians. Every year he and I journeyed together down to Chichester cathedral for the Blessing of Oils and renewal by over 400 clergy of our ministerial commitment. We enjoyed it, we laughed at it and we rejoiced to see ministerial colleagues whom we hadn't seen since last year. Here, in these

parishes, he brought real faith and joy into the lives of so many people as he baptised their babies, officiated at their weddings, visited them in need and helped them in their final journey, leading people in prayer, worship and reflection.

Finally I want to say a personal thank you to Marcus for his friendship, incarnational, universal and above all joyful faith.

I will miss you immensely.