

21 November 2016

A Pastoral Letter to the Churches and Friends of the National Synod of Scotland

Dear Friends

I write following the sad news of the death of the Revd John LI Humphreys after a short illness. John died peacefully at home in Invergowrie with his partner John and sister Gweno with him. Sadly John's plans for retirement to his homeland of Wales were not fulfilled.

The following arrangements have now been made to give thanks to God for John's life:

A Private Funeral at All Souls Episcopal Church, Invergowrie on Monday 28th November 2016.

A Public Service of Thanksgiving Service at St John's Episcopal Church, Princes Street, Edinburgh EH2 4BJ on Tuesday 13th December 2016 at 2.00pm.

The news has come as a great shock to us all in our Synod, across the United Reformed Church and ecumenical church communities. I have received a number of moving tributes to John and expressions of sympathy from far and wide.

One such tribute to John came from Rt Rev Dr Russell Barr, Moderator of the Church of Scotland, who wrote of John in a letter of condolence to friends and colleagues in the United Reformed Church:

God blessed John with such a kindly personality and also with considerable gifts of wisdom, leadership and faith and John put these gifts to such good use in the service of Christ and the church.

There have been many expressions of condolence for our Synod family, mindful of our many losses this year. The Revd Nigel Uden, former Synod Moderator and colleague of John, who is currently serving a URC pastorate in Cambridge, and who is Moderator Elect of the General Assembly of the United Reformed Church, wrote:

Viewed from afar, but nonetheless from within the family, this feels to have been a punishing year for the Synod with so many fine people dying. Known to me, there is John Arthur, Stephen Brown and Zam Walker and I am sure there will have been others. And now dear John. I can imagine what a body blow this must be to the synod's fellowship, and I just wanted to tell you of my prayers with and for you all.

Nigel is right, this year our Synod has lost many faithful servants, fine ministers and good friends, and we've also been holding in our prayers Revd Nick Brindley who collapsed whilst leading a service and is seriously ill in hospital. Nick was called to the ministry from Morningside United and trained at The Scottish College before being inducted in 2012 to his first pastorate in Hertfordshire.

This coming Sunday, 27th November is the first Sunday in Advent, a time when in churches around our nation and further afield people will light a candle remembering the one who came as a light in darkness, and which no darkness could overcome. As we light advent candles this year, may we be mindful that our God knows at first hand the heartache of losing a loved one, and remember too that the light of Christ still shines.

I offer a prayer for your use or which may be adapted and used in worship:

Dear God

As the year turns to the season of Advent
and we light a candle in the darkness
we pray that the light of Christ
may be known by all those experiencing loss and heartache.

We give thanks for John's life and ministry,
and pray comfort for John's partner John,
John's Mum, and his sister Gweno and her family.

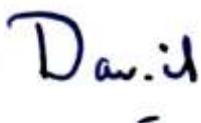
We give thanks for the lives and ministries
of other dear friends and faithful servants from our Synod
who have died this year,
and pray for comfort for their loved ones and churches.

We remember those who are ill, and pray for healing.

And we hold before you the family of our Synod,
may we sense
your presence supporting,
your love comforting,
and your light shining. Amen

Please feel welcome to share this letter and prayer with your fellowships as you feel appropriate.

Yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "David". Below the signature is a short horizontal line.

David A Pickering
Moderator, National Synod of Scotland