

## Lawrence Spicer RIP

Lawrence had the rare gift of satire with no underlying bitterness. He would make fun of human absurdities and pomposities – with a wicked sense of humour! He could be very funny – and clever with it! He sent up absurdities because they obscured the view of the trustworthy realities behind everything. And for Lawrence the ultimate totally trustworthy reality is God, in whose arms of love he now rests.

Lawrence was a marvellous satirist, musician and ‘man of God’ – who had been a Warden of St Stephen’s Church – and the inclusiveness and integrity of the church, generally, mattered to him hugely.

So much of his unique character came from his family:

Lawrence was born in Brighton, where his father’s family ran a grocer’s shop. Whilst he was still very young they moved to Leicester, and it was a massive lifelong influence on Lawrence that his father directed the Songsters at the Castle Salvation Army Hall where they all worshipped. They were a musical family, and Lawrence played the trumpet and piano and sang with the Songsters. Latterly, in these past few months, he was delighted when Salvationists made contact, and sent good wishes and prayers, and visited him.

He was also a very keen football supporter and was regularly taken to see Leicester City play by his older brother, Richard, who was 8 years his senior.

It was a big and important move for Lawrence when he went up to St Chad's College, Durham University, where he studied economics, politics and music.

Whilst in Durham he was baptised and confirmed into the Church of England in the college chapel. He took a full part in College life. He conducted the Durham Rehearsal Orchestra and was a founder member of the College Chamber Music Society.

Also whilst at Durham, Lawrence met Ian, a fellow Chadsman, who was to become his life long partner.

He qualified as a music teacher, and his first teaching job was at Hardly School in Hythe, where he enjoyed staging the annual musicals. He also spent 5 years as Organist of Beaulieu Abbey and was a founder member of the 'Music at Beaulieu' concert series.

He started to worship at St Stephen's Church, Bournemouth, in the late '70s and quickly made this his spiritual home. He also moved to Hordle House Prep School as Director of Music.

Sadly, a serious back problem caused his early retirement from teaching, but he threw himself into

administering each year the May Festival weekend at St Stephen's, which was massively successful, due to his and Ian's hard work and musical flair, for 24 years.

Quite simply – Lawrence loved music! - particularly singing (with St Stephen's Choir), and playing the piano and trumpet. He also retained a love of football.

A few years ago Lawrence and Ian retired to Boscombe, where Lawrence thoroughly enjoyed life by the sea – particularly plenty of sun-bathing, - the beach hut ('the best on the beach' his facebook post proclaimed just a few weeks ago) – indulging his taste for the odd beer or three along with a bit of banter with the ever-friendly staff in Urban Reef, and latterly, the inevitable selfies for 'his public' on facebook. Oh – and (Ian adds in) 'he had, of course, a rather wicked sense of humour.' Indeed!

And so, I am convinced, does God. Not only is humour, and satire that hurts no-one, fundamental to 'life in all it's fullness', which Jesus tells us (John 10:10) is God's fervent desire for **all** humankind – but the cosmos-changing focus of God's humour lies before us this coming Sunday (and every second of our lives) in Jesus' resurrection. What a superb joker God is! - death and destruction turned upside-down. So that the New Heaven and the New Earth, where there will be no

more tears, are the ultimate places of laughter, good humour – and if they can be given gallons of wine for the wedding feast at Cana, then I'm sure that Lawrence *stands* (note the Elton John – I'm still standing – well, he is, for sure!) in Heaven now raising a decent beer to us.

I am reminded, as we give heartfelt thanks for Lawrence, and commend him to God's loving care, of the prayer of St Thomas More:

'Pray for me, as I shall for thee,  
That we may merrily meet in Heaven.'

May it be so.

May he rest in peace,

And rise in glory.

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