

Introductory Address : Norman West Funeral. Richard Bailey Celebrant

May I extend a very warm welcome to you all – family and friends – as we gather here today to celebrate and remember Norman’s life; and to bid him farewell – a very heartfelt farewell.

May we begin with a prayer, a prayer for you all – especially Norman’s close family: his widow Eileen, daughters Linda and Tracey, along with grandchildren Karen, Paul and Becky.

Dearest Jesus, who taught that they who mourn shall be comforted
Grant us the comfort of your presence in our loss.
Send your Holy Spirit to direct us.
Send your Spirit to give us courage.
Send your Spirit to bring us your peace and the knowledge
That Norman rests in peace with you.
Amen

Since I moved into this part of Oxfordshire 28 years ago, I’ve worked with 5 rectors (including Harriet), and I’ve worked with 6 pillars of this church. I don’t mean stone pillars but people pillars. You might be able to guess their names: Clive (especially), Jeremy, Kildare, Beryl, Ted, and of course Norman. You’ll hear a lot more about him later but let me say a few words about him from a church perspective because, not being a villager, I barely met him outside this church. Inside the church is another story because until a couple of years ago, when Norman became too ill, I can barely remember a service here that he didn’t attend – and that is merely in the last 28 years! He was totally committed to the church – an absolute rock of steadfastness. He never complained about or argued with what the rectors, all very different people, said or did (at least as far as I know!). His good friend Ted used to describe some modern services as “Mickey Mouse” services. I thought that was hilarious, but I think (correct me if I’m wrong) that Norman’s pragmatic view was to let the clergy just get on with their jobs. He accepted what was served up. His job, as a community-minded Christian was to be there and be involved whether it was the PCC or bell-ringing. He always sat in the same pew at the at the back, he was unfailingly friendly and always had a sort-of half-smile on his face. I suspect underneath there was cheeky sense of humour.....! My evidence for this is a story Michael Roden told me. (He was rector here when I arrived back in 1997.) When he arrived here in his early 30’s he said to Norman one

day, “I need some advice Norman, what can I do , I’ve got maggots in my potato crop?”

Quick as a flash Norman replied “Oh that’s supposed to be very lucky”.

“Really”, said Michael.

“Nope!” said Norman, grinning from ear to ear.

He enjoyed taking the micky out of Michael and Michael had great affection for Norman, who was in fact always very supportive and very loyal. Those are two great qualities and I suspect he displayed them in all aspects of his life. He was a true Christian in action... and that’s what counts. He loved his family, his home , his neighbours and his village. And it’s a testimony to his character that so many of you are here today to bid farewell to one of the pillars of the church and the village.