

I'm grateful to Rev Peter Cornick for his welcome today.

Here are some words from the Gospel of John chapter 14.

Jesus is pictured speaking these words :Set your troubled hearts at rest .
Trust in God always. Trust in me.

Those are familiar words to many of us, often used in the context of funerals and memorial services. Let's try and hear them afresh.

The disciples are beginning on some level to realise that it is time to say farewell to Jesus,

Saying goodbye ,facing loss, always brings a confusing mixture of feelings at any time, especially when someone has been through a trying time of frailty and diminishment. There is sadness, relief for them, gratitude, and a feeling of being in unfamiliar territory,particularly when someone has been around for a long time. A previous minister of Hinde Street,Neville Ward, used to speak about bereavement containing an invitation to relate and love in a new way in the mystery of human presence and absence. Jesus, on his way to the full revelation of the Heavenly Father, through Good Friday and Easter Sunday ,invites his friends to trust as he helps them to face the feelings of present and know when to move forward.

And in the verse selected for occasions such as this, did you notice that the passage ends with the near identical words – Set your troubled hearts at rest – and banish your fears (v27).

I start off in this way because I am very conscious that the last time I stood here we were giving thanks for the life and faith of Wendy after many happy years of marriage to David. And going back further I still have vivid memories of the very special service when we were expressing gratitude and remembering Susan,Andrew and Megan's mother and much loved first wife to David from the days of the Lambeth Mission appointment.

As we once again stand together - Set your troubled hearts at rest.

David and the family were concerned that there should not be a long eulogy for him but a sharing of the gospel of Jesus. So as we remember words, and deeds, and above all, all that David was and is, let's ask for the Holy Spirit to help us in our personal remembering both now and in all those times in the future when we need to draw inspiration and courage, and to lead us back to Jesus and the Heavenly Father.

David did in fact write quite a lot especially about his early memories in a very Methodist family in Reigate, much influenced too by his grandfather Rev Eli Jenkins who hoped that David would become a minister. Some of David's ongoing zest for life and humour comes across in his stories including the holiday visits with his sister Jean to Uncle Will's farm in Devon and his friendship with Dick Taylor.. There were the wartime memories of being evacuated to Cheltenham. Another trait,modesty, comes across in his descriptions of academic achievements . David trained to be a lawyer while

he tested a call to ministry after going forward at an altar call . During National service when he was based in Paris the call became clearer and he trained at Richmond College and then had a very significant year at Princeton in the States at the time of the civil rights movement which fostered a commitment to inner city mission. In our reading the disciple Thomas is very much a presence and a spur to clarity and I think it is true that for all his gifts David often felt diffident about his calling and doubts about whether he was good enough especially in situations where he compared himself to others. Ordained in 1964 at the Sheffield Conference David went as an enthusiastic young minister for a year to Peets Wood and Bromley Common churches, and then became a minister at Lambeth Mission and an opportunity to keep open house and be fully immersed in the community. There too he met Susan as – in his own words – I opened the door and there was a stunning redhead and they married 6 months later.

An encounter with a homesick student from Belize opened David's eyes to the World Church. There are people here who remember with affection and gratitude David's ministry with two English speaking churches and later a Bemba speaking congregation in the Zambian copperbelt helping them to become vibrant and multi racial with a care and gracious gentle charm for those on the margins. He used his legal skills to draft the constitution for the United Church of Zambia and helped with the organisation of the initial conferences which drew different groupings together. Andrew and Megan were born at this time.

Return to the UK brought the family to South London and the Plumstead Mission – a church at the crossroads with a youth and community centre surrounded by tower blocks. He brought some of the joy of Zambia to lift the spirits of a weary congregation. It was a busy time where David was in his element offering friendship and support. Special bonds were formed and I hope it is not inappropriate to remember how moved David was by his contact over the years with the Lawrence family as he helped to keep alive the memory of Stephen Lawrence.

Andrew and Megan remember all the trips David went on in his next role as Personnel Secretary for the Methodist Church Overseas Division , which is where I first met him, as we sat at lunch with some avocado and bacon sandwiches purchased by his PA. David excelled in encouraging and affirming mission partners and also continued the habit he had started in letters with Megan and Andrew at boarding school of embellishing his communications with cartoons. This artistic flair flourished when he met the artist David Carr and also came out in some spectacular all age harvest decorations in this place.

I don't think any of us fully realised the range of experience and gifts that David brought with him when he came to be Superintendent of the West London Mission because of his modesty and also a sense of the overwhelming responsibility of leading a team in an amazingly complicated set of relationships and pieces of work and challenges . He worked hard to draw the congregations and staff and differing viewpoints together. At the

same time he was carrying the heavy burden of knowing that Susan was seriously ill. It was an incredibly painful time. He soldiered on after Susan's death and Megan helped him to cope with the domestic tasks at home. Whatever the ups and downs of life here, nobody doubted David's sincerity and goodwill. He made time for people, though he perhaps did not always make time for himself.

I remember coming back to the Mission offices after being at the Overseas Division to find the church hall full of staff from John Lewis. They had to be evacuated in a bomb scare and David was in his element, organising sandwiches, helping people contact anxious relatives, and leading carol singing with gusto. This led to an important chaplaincy link with the store. He met and married Wendy. He established the Hugh Price Hughes theological lectures here. When I left David did a characteristically humorous and heart warming talk when he pretended it was going to be good for my soul if he pointed out my faults but of course went on to praise me with kindness and extravagance. After ten years people were happy that David and Wendy continued to worship here and join in the fellowship groups, and also enjoy some wonderful holidays around the globe. Andrew and Megan also appreciated the friendship with Wendy's family and it is good that they are represented here.

After the stresses and strains of the leadership responsibilities here I think David thoroughly enjoyed being a supernumerary minister who helped out a number of churches around London with half time one year appointments, often bringing his care and positivity into quite difficult situations. A friend of mine remembers an occasion when there was remedial work on a church wall where David seemed to be able to chat with passers by in a warm and engaging manner.

David spoke at the wedding of Andrew and Tania of the ripple effects of kindness and love. Andrew and Megan remember in their childhood David's philosophy of "work hard, play hard". As so often happens when Scarlett and Reuben came along David could relax and play the part of an indulgent and fun grandad, especially at Christmas and Easter and holiday times, silly games, blackberry picking, kite flying, crabbing. I gather the words "Pasta with tomato sauce has special family memories. Megan in her work appreciated David's quiet wisdom and experience.

After David's health deteriorated and Wendy died he relied a lot on the family support, especially Megan's who was closer at hand and after a difficult spell in hospital his time at Kembroke House Care Home gave him a greater measure of calm especially helped by the wonderful friendship of the chaplain and the social activities coordinator. His friends kept precious contacts. When I visited him last summer there were his pictures, all the signs of the family care, the kindness of the staff. I wasn't sure if he would remember me but he was his usual gracious and affirming self even though he was so, so tired. We picked up a David Adams book and I read a prayer.

It has been remarkable, it has been hard, but as look back on all the travels