

Last Tuesday, when Shirley rang to tell me the news of Graham's passing, I could not have been more shocked to core. A day when I had two funerals in the morning, and a visit from the Bishop over lunch, the day was already momentous! I journeyed to Wimbledon Avenue with Brett Collins, and there, met with Shirley, Roger and Michelle.

Now, one thing I came to love about Graham was that fact that nothing is left to chance, but all things can be considered on their merits. For a long time, I have advocated that we should prepare our funeral preferences for our families, and although he did not use my form, I was not surprised to have passed over to me two sheets of instructions, and third sheet later in the week as to what I am allowed to say.

Well, like many others who will follow me today, having received their copy of the document entitled "The Event", I've read it, and will consider it carefully.

That will do!

Now, you will notice the two empty chairs at the front of the Church. This was Graham at his finest to solve a problem that, possibly, was his own in making, yet, not quite hitting the mark. The arms on the chair enabled him to rise more easily; and the theory was that Shirley would be able to hear more clearly. For Shirley to hear more clearly, there was a flaw in this plan. Seated there, Shirley was actually in FRONT of the speakers, and, depending on whether the hearing aids were on or misplaced, this arrangement was not necessarily successful.

On one occasion, when Graham was relaying to Shirley what was going on, in what he believed to be a *still and small voice* I had to wait, for him to finish. I looked at him over the top of my glasses and waited. Only a week or so before, the daughters of one his neighbours recalled Graham's 80th birthday when he waited for quiet, and then pronounced "I can still hear people talking." Graham looked at me and burst out laughing. "Bless me Father, for I am a sinner!"

Fitting for someone who holds a Licentiate in Theology, I replied, "Thanks be to God through our Lord Jesus Christ who forgives us all our sins." It hit the spot. The only other thing about Graham and Shirley sitting there is that he was prone to heckling during the sermons. I'm reluctant to compare him to muppet hecklers Statler and Waldorf, because I believe that it would be unfair as to which one was which, but being heckled, I must admit I was up to the challenge. He told me, "I don't mind being your bag guy." I believe I featured in his 3 week letter often!

To be fair to Graham, I will recap his Church service before turning to his choice of readings.

Baptised into the Church of England in England, in Australia, Graham attended St James, Glen Iris Sunday School, where he was confirmed and began his passion of singing as a choir boy. This continued at St Bede's, Elwood where he became a Sunday School teacher, altar boy, continued in the choir and was also sacristan – the one responsible for setting up and putting away after services.

At St. Mary's, Mirboo North, he was a Lay Reader, rostered to take outlying services, and his Vicar, Geoff Turner enrolled me for Licentiate of Theology (GBRE). From there he went to Christ Church South Yarra where he was a youth leader, followed by St Paul's, Warragul where as a lay reader, he was able to wear his academic hood of the Licentiate in Theology. Frequently, his Vicar, Ray Elliot read for him at Evening Prayer.

At St. Dunstan's, Cheam, UK, he led the Scouts' Own services.

In terms of his vocation, it was at St. Stephen's, Belmont (Geelong) under Dick Kainey, he continued as a lay reader, and surprise, in 1971, he married, and Roger was born in 1973. The journey from Geelong was now beginning to head towards Braemar. After a stint at St Paul's Birchip as lay reader, he moved to St Mary's Woodend where he remained a lay reader, member of Vestry until the tragic Ash Wednesday fires in 1983. It was to be here at the Church of the Resurrection that Graham was to make his home with Shirley and Roger, serving as a lay reader, treasurer to Vestry, and a member of the Choir.

For me, he was a valuable member of study groups, and always a source of wisdom. It was in that receiving of wisdom that I saw a different side of Mr Farley. Never did he tell me what I should do. He would comment about his own held position but reflect back the dilemma that I faced, and then supported me unconditionally. He was a most accommodating and encouraging man, even when what was needed to be done was not in agreement to what he would prefer to see. In that, he would appreciate that he, as one, was also part of the many, and at times, this means trying to see the bigger picture, and the best in everyone.

Central to Graham Farley's life was his faith. Some clergy are intimidated by members of the vestry with theological degrees, but Graham was happy to dialogue, suggest a standard, and then help anyone achieve it. As a teacher, I subscribed to the theory that we encourage the best in everyone: if you give your best, then you have achieved greatly. In Graham I never felt measured, but always encouraged and nurtured, even when we disagreed.

The reading from the book of Job is a key part of Graham's understanding of faith. "I know that my redeemer lives." To stand in the presence of God and to take in the reality of the divine presence is something that, for Graham, is the ultimate prize of living this life. The reading does begin interestingly:

‘O that my words were written down!
 O that they were inscribed in a book!
 O that with an iron pen and with lead
 they were engraved on a rock for ever! (Job 19)

In context, this is Job looking to record the great achievements and praise of God, not so much about himself. When it comes to Graham, I think it is the same, but I do believe that his autobiography is almost complete and we will be launching the same on stone tablets here at some future point!

To ‘faint’ in the presence of God is not quite the translation I would suggest for Graham either. In recent times, the concept of ‘swooning’ has returned to vogue. It is a total moving to a state of awe and wonder. I have no doubt that Graham today that singing the praise of God who gives us all life would be very much his vision of heaven.

But for those of us still to aspire to this, central to his understanding of what God requires is at the heart of the second reading he has suggested.

Service and taking our part in the world as Christians formed in the likeness and image of God is at the heart of his understanding. Through his life in the Church, scouting, service to the country, the many community groups that he was a member, and also encouraged, taking your part in the greater community was essential. To be one in the community as well as the person God created was to be part of the Messianic banquet of sharing the communion as one body.

From this understanding of Paul’s first letter to the Corinthians, chapter 10, is a phrase that we say most Sundays as we break the bread and take the cup. “We who are many are one body, for we all share in the one cup.” St Paul goes on to say,

just as I try to please everyone in everything I do,
 not seeking my own advantage,
 but that of many, so that they may be saved.

A life without service is not to be entertained, and it was no surprise that the motto of Braemar was to reflect this point. *Unum Corpus Multi Sumus*. One body, many parts. It is something that he held very much as the core of a foundational Christian understanding of community. Strive to be the best you can be, and in turn, give back to the wider community for the common good.

Today, we meet in this place where Graham ate the bread of life and drank the cup of salvation, and went out, as we are commanded, to *love and serve the Lord*. Many of us, whether long friends and companions, ex-service, scouts, students, colleagues, choristers or wider community have seen this exemplified in Graham’s life, sometimes eccentrically, but always genuinely.

Graham left this Church on his last Sunday laughing. It was a joyful laugh once I understood a technological joke embedded in the sermon. Once explained, he roared. This is the image of Graham I want to hold onto: a man who was faith driven, community focussed, dedicated as a family man, full of joy and of high standards, but above all,

someone who has encouraged me to seek first the Kingdom of God and to take my place in the world that God has created.

We will hear much more as the day goes on. And given the time limits strictly applied to the speakers, it is time that I resist the urge to *go on*.

May the legacy of Graham Farley encourage you in your journey. Aspire high, do your best, and keep your humour. God loves you as much as God loves Graham. May he truly be in the choirs of heaven, listening to direction, not giving it, and swooning in the beautiful knowledge that he is in the place prepared for the faithful. May he rest in peace.