

**A eulogy and address at the funeral of Enid Barber, RIP, 30th June 2021,
The Revd. Sally Lynch, St. Luke's Church, Maidenhead**

The eulogy

Enid was born 87 years ago in Highams Park. She was a sister in the middle of two brothers – Don, sadly no longer with us, and Robin.

Enid's whole family was involved in Scouting and Guiding, and she was one of four generations to earn the Kings Guide (or, in Mary's case, Queens Guide) award.

She trained as a teacher at Brighton College, and it was whilst there that she met Tony at Cecil Sharp House – through the English Folk Dance and Song Society. It was not just English dancing that they did and over the years they travelled all over Europe finding out more about different dances – hence some of the music played before this service.

Enid and Tony were married at Highams Park on 15th February 1958, and enjoyed 63 years of marriage – living in a variety of places, moving with Tony's RAF career, before settling in Maidenhead in 1972.

Enid had started teaching at a school for the deaf on the Old Kent Road where she threw chalk to get the attention of the children – in those days you could do that! She then taught in Yarmouth, just as she met Tony and so that was a short lived appointment as she followed him, doing some supply teaching before and after the arrivals of Mary, Bill, Ann, Steven and John. Enid never forgot Ann, who died at just ten days and sometimes spoke to us about her.

The family moved to Waddington, Grimsby and then to Cyprus which is where Enid met their firm friends Beryl and Brian McDevitt godparents to John. There were more moves back in the UK before Tony left the RAF in 1972 and the family moved to Maidenhead... and became firm members of St. Luke's church family. Enid taught in a few schools, primarily at Furze Platt Infants School, retiring from there in 1994.

Enid has written a series for our occasional parish magazine about the various churches that she belonged to. Unfortunately, she owes us the last one in the series, about this church – that may be fortuitous! She clearly had a tale to tell of this church community – she was so well versed in our life. Over the years Enid served as a helper with all ages of children from creche to teens. She led prayers, read, organised quiet days, cleaned this beautiful space (indeed she was the cleaners key holder), she served, administered the chalice, and introduced baptism anniversary cards. Enid was a champion of the various charities that we support and an amazing pray-er for many of them. Crucially, she served with Roger Clarke as churchwarden through a challenging time in our story.

As a church we owe Enid a huge debt of gratitude. She is one of those firm foundation stones on which this church is built – not just the building but the people, who remember her contribution with deep love and affection.

Of course, that is all important, but at her heart Enid was quite simply a teacher (and she never stopped being a teacher) who became a mother and loved and nurtured her whole – growing – family with deep, sacrificial love and patience, pride and joy.

The address

'See, the home of God is among mortals.
He will dwell with them;
they will be his peoples,
and God himself will be with them;
he will wipe every tear from their eyes.
Death will be no more;
mourning and crying and pain will be no more,

We have heard a very brief potted history of Enid's long life and also about the series she wrote about the churches she has been a part of. Faith has always played a key part in Enid's life, alongside her family.

We come today to thank God for Enid and of course to mourn her – to be sad for ourselves and comfort each other in the shock of her sudden passing.

But Enid herself was quite clear that when the end of this life came, it would mark the beginning of eternity and a full, complete life with her Lord, in far better place than this and for a blissful eternity. She was also clear that today, whenever it came, was to be a celebration. On one level we rail against that, and yet we know that for Enid, although her manner of death was sudden and somewhat unexpected, it was for her the entry to the fulness of eternal life that she believed in so strongly.

The reading we heard from the book of Revelation is very familiar to many of us and there is a danger that we take it for granted. Enid did not. She knew, deep down inside, that God was with her and would bring her to his holy place. For her there are no more tears. She cannot die again. She is alive, very much alive and vibrant in that place that we call heaven because we have not yet experienced it and have no other words for it.

In the New Testament St. Paul writes of Jesus' promise of a new, recognisable, perfect, whole resurrection body and I suspect that Enid was rather looking forward to that. We know that in recent years she has slowed up a little. She has struggled with a body that was wearing out – through jolly good use! And the social distancing of the pandemic allowed her the comfort of a blue 'bucket chair' as she called them rather than the hard pews in church. Yes, Enid now knows and enjoys the lightness and freedom of her resurrection body – able to dance once again in the heavenly country dances - and what a host of them there will be to choose from and participate in – as she joins the dance of Father, Son and Holy Spirit – intertwined in love.

Enid knew in this life the love of the whole Trinity: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. She shared that love with others – family, church family and neighbours. We knew Enid – each of us in different ways and at different times – through her *doing* for God. But we also knew her in her *being* for God. Enid revelled in Quiet days, in silence and in taking time with God. Her active service for God was fuelled by that underlying prayer and gentle faith. She offers us a model for a good foundation in Christian discipleship.

Enid is in a good place now. She is with her Lord, and ours. All is well.

The vision in Revelation of a new heaven and earth is of the end of time. for Enid that has come and so she can fully embrace that lack of tears and being wholly with God.

We who are left are not there yet and so for us there will be tears. I don't think that the message that we should take from this beautiful Bible passage is that we should not cry and mourn for Enid. Of course we should! We loved her. We love now, and we will continue to love her, until that time when we see her again with our Lord face to face. Jesus himself wept at the death of his friend Lazarus. He expects us to weep for ourselves at the loss of our wife, mother, sister, aunt, friend, companion on the way.

But as St. Paul suggests, we not weep as those with no hope – for through our tears we can glimpse eternity – which Enid now fully inhabits and which is offered to each one of us too.

So we give thanks to God for Enid, we comfort each other in our grief, but we rejoice that she has taken her heavenly place for ever.

May she rest in peace, and rise in glory. Amen.