

*Memories
of*



Ken Bennett

In Ken's instructions for his funeral he requested five contributions under the title of 'In thanksgiving for Love of ...'

Family

Extended Family and Friends

Nigeria and People from Overseas

Church and His People

The greatest of all – His Love

(for we can only love because he first loved us)

The Crematorium Service does not allow for long tributes and so we are producing this booklet with the unabridged text of the five contributions.

Family

Phyll: Ken and I were on a platform waiting for an underground train and when the train arrived Ken got on the train and left me standing on the platform. Eventually he came back for me! And in spite of that almost 76 years on we were still together!

Jenny: One of my memories is of dad taking me shopping to Brighton when I was in my late teens to buy a dress for me!

I saw a dress in the first shop but then walked the length of the street in case I found something better but ended up buying the first one. I tried his patience that day! But his love was always evident.

Rachel: What can I say? I will always be grateful to Dad for patiently showing me how to do small DIY tasks. But most of all for his encouragement, love and prayers during my training and especially since I have been a Hospital Chaplain. He was always interested and supportive.

Paul: Would you put in the four minutes from family about Dad putting his hand to any trade mechanic, electrician, plumber, builder plus many more. He and I enjoyed our trips to the Royal Albert Hall to Classical Musical.

Susannah: In the days after grandad died, I'm sure like many of us, I found many fond memories of him popping into my head and bringing a smile to my face:

On my 10th birthday when he surprised me by turning up on our doorstep in Aberdeen.

How he had to ask mum to translate our Aberdeen accents as children;

Summers at 117 Banbury Road and watching him joyfully and tirelessly look after the building and residents;

And the many times him and nanny came to stay in Manchester when I bought my first house and how he ably painted and tiled the kitchen at the grand old age of 80-something. Grandad could often be found up a ladder or involved in some DIY task even well into old age.

People and family were so important to grandad. He always made time to spend time with you. And he made so many welcome and feel like family. Even strangers were given the Ken Bennett touch. I remember on one of his visits up to Manchester when we popped into Asda and he stopped to greet the Nigerian security guard in Yoruba. He made his day!

I can't remember grandad well without reflecting on his faith in God and how this defined his life. Grandad is a great example to me of someone who chose to entrust his life to Jesus. The fruit of that decision and his love for God shines out in how he selflessly served others; in his happy step and smile; in his friendly nature; in his love for people; and in his long and fruitful life. He put God first and his life was so rich and full as a result. The way grandad lived encourages me to live the same way - to put God first and put the needs of others ahead of my own.

Grandad will be greatly missed in each of our lives and while I mourn his passing from this life, it's also a joy to know that he is in that promised heavenly home, now with his Lord and Saviour face to face.

Tim and Izzy: Izzy and I were visiting grandad and nanny. Just as we were about to leave, Grandad suddenly exclaimed "oooh" and says to Izzy "I've just remembered, I want to give you something". Off he pops and brings back a trifle dish and bowls that passed down by his

parents and says to Izzy "I'm giving this to you because I want to keep this in the family". That sounds pretty normal now, but this was before we were even engaged! Although pretty funny, it's a memory that reminds me of the unconditional love Grandad had for people, even when he hadn't known them for that long.

The other memory isn't really a memory: it's his hugs. Apart from often backbreaking , you just felt so much love and warmth when he hugged you. I'll miss that so much.

Naomi: One of my earliest memories of grandad was climbing up his legs and doing backward twirls. I'd say "again again" and he'd entertain me until I became tired. Looking back now I'm sure he'd have been tired long before I was. But that was grandad...always making others laugh and putting others before him. I will always remember him as the happy, jestful and selfless grandad that he was. He'd often tease and wind us up which almost always led to Nanny telling him off. That was Grandad's cheeky side that I loved and always brought a smile to my face. I will hold fond memories of how welcoming he was of Brian into our family. So much so that Brian called him Grandad, just like many others he met over the years. We all enjoyed our regular treat at the Ashvale every time he and Nanny were in Aberdeen, fish and chips and a half lager shandy every time!

Ashley: Grandad, thank you for all the lovely memories you have left us all. Will always be thankful for the chats we have had and the stories you have told. Thank you for your kind words during your speech at our wedding party, it meant a lot to us both. Love you always and will be forever in our thoughts.

Ellie-Rose: Those that knew Grandad will be familiar with his three C's. In my honour to Grandad I'd like to sum him up with my own 3 C's; caring, cheerful and compassionate. Grandad was nothing but a role model, always seeing the good things in life and being truly

invested in those he loved. I'll never forget his perseverance at trying to fly to Singapore at the height of Covid. You are a true inspiration to me Grandad and I thank you for all you have taught me. Love you always.

Extended Family and Friends

Ken's love for his many extended families and countless friends in three minutes? Impossible! Three days would be inadequate! He was, for the Parratt clan, just that – family. He called me his 'little brother' and he really was the older brother I never had. Ken took my mother's funeral, spoke at our daughter's wedding, drove the white bridal car at our elder son's wedding in St Andrews, welcomed my own younger brother to Nigeria and knew and loved all our children and interacted with them. He was, quite simply, family. And, as a family, we have survived so many of Ken's bear hugs. Just!

We first met Ken in Nigeria almost sixty years ago where, among so many other things, he was involved in Christian witness among students. Our final few days in Nigeria were spent in their home at the African Challenge. He helped us pack our loads, saw them through customs (of course he knew the Customs Officer) and in Britain we met together in many places and on many occasions: wedding anniversaries, birthdays (including my 70th and 80th; his 90th). Our last meeting was on the shores of Loch Lomond. Now he has taken the High Road.

When I think of Ken - which I do often – it is with a smile. So many fun times, from torn shirts at Apapa docks, attempts to start an egg business in Ibadan, an ability to sit on the dagger at Cluedo, cricket matches with our sons, an unique gift for showing films back to front.

God carried Ken along. Maybe slowly physically but still picking up the pace spiritually. We were glad the Lord took him home peacefully and quietly. Surely though a noisier welcome on the other side, and in several languages, from the many he helped and who had gone home before him. Why? Because Ken carried with him an aroma of the Jesus he loved. That always helpful, practical agape love and that

spiritual wisdom were from the Lord himself. For me and for so many others, it has been one of the most blessed experiences of life's journey to have known and loved Ken Bennett. We thank the Lord for every remembrance of our dear friend and brother.

And, may that same wonderful Lord continue to help and strengthen Phyllis, Jenny, Rachel, Paul and the whole family. God bless you all.

Jim Parratt

Ken & Phyllis Bennett went out to Nigeria with SIM in 1954 and left active service with SIM in 1972. During the time they were in Nigeria they were stationed at Omu Aran, Okene, Shao (10 miles outside Ilorin), Ibadan and Lagos. They both learned Yoruba very well and spoke as natives.

From what I remember, prior to joining SIM Ken had been in the Royal Navy during WWII and married Phyllis after that stint of service. They were blessed with three children – Jenny, Rachel and Paul.

I am not certain exactly when I first met Ken, but it may have been when working at Challenge in distribution. I was sent to Oro Agor for Yoruba Language study - to learn basic greetings, not the full language (Yoruba is a difficult language to master). I remember getting stuck in a deep rut on the road to Oro. I wasn't too far from Omu Aran so walked back there to ask for help. Ken and Phyllis were at Omu Aran at that time and Ken came with me to assist in getting the car out of the rut. We tried various things without much success. There was long high grass at the side of the road so we finally decided I would steer as far to the left in the high grass as I could and gun the car. This worked and I got through the huge rut - so with gratitude to Ken I continued on my way to Oro Agor.

Sometime later when I had learned a few Yoruba phrases I was on my way to Egbe for a break. When I got to Omu Aran, I knocked on the Bennetts' door and shouted, "Mu Omi Tutu Wa" which translates as, "Bring me cold water". Ken came rushing to the door to indicate that I should be quiet as they were in the midst of a prayer meeting! After the prayer meeting was over this newly learned Yoruba phrase (with my accompanying Scottish accent) brought much laughter. Even very recently Ken would begin our phone conversations with, 'Mu Omi Tutu Wa' to get us laughing before we caught up with each other's lives. As I left Omu Aran at that time I passed the place where I had got the car stuck in the rut. The high grass had been cut back to reveal a huge boulder which I must have just missed by inches. The car I was driving at that time was being loaned (through Dr Helser) from a nurse in Ibadan who was on home leave. In subsequent phone calls with Ken this story was often mentioned, and it always brought chills down my spine – and gratitude to God for His protection.

I was stationed in Ilorin for a short time with Ken and Phyllis and we continued to build on our friendship there.

On one occasion when the Bennetts were running the guest house in Ibadan, I was part of a group of five men who passed through (I can't remember who all the other men were except for Alistair Bradley). After Phyllis and Ken fed us there was no water that night so we went to bed without showers. At about 1:00 am heavy rain came, and all five men went out in our birthday suits and showered under the eaves. The Bennetts only found out about this at breakfast the following morning!

When the Bennetts moved to Lagos they, and their lovely kids, were our neighbours on the Challenge compound in Mushin for a few years where we grew to love them even more. Ken and Phyllis were a great match – Ken was the extrovert who was always busy here, there and

everywhere. Phyllis was quieter but provided a steady anchor and an open home and heart. Ken loved people and got deep satisfaction out of helping them in any way he could. His assignment in Lagos was perfectly suited to his personality as his main task was procuring supplies and meeting the hugely varied requests of SIMers from all over Nigeria – Egbe, Jos, and further afield. Many items were dispatched via SIMAIR.

Ken and I would often meet at the Bristol Hotel round the corner from the downtown Lagos Challenge bookshop and have a club sandwich for lunch. When Ken would get home, he would tell Phyllis that he had only had a sandwich all day – and she would feel sorry for him. This went on for some time until one day Ken managed to get Phyllis to accompany him to downtown Lagos. He took her for a club sandwich at the Bristol Hotel - and of course the sandwich was so delicious and generously-sized that she never felt sorry for him on an ‘only a sandwich’ day after that!

When the Bennetts left active service with SIM in 1972, they became wardens at the North Oxford Overseas Centre in Oxford for 17 years. (NOOC has a Christian foundation and provides a ‘home away from home’ for international post-graduate students from all over the world.) Ken and Phyllis did a sterling job in their years at NOOC. They were greatly loved and appreciated by many international students (and their families) and became ‘honorary adopted family members’ of several. Ken and Phyllis moved into retirement in Minster Lovell, Oxfordshire after this long-lasting assignment and remained active in their church and community.

During the 1980s and the 1990s I frequently passed through the UK on my travels and met up with Ken at every opportunity. He would take the bus from Oxford to London and we would often meet for some hours during the day and an evening meal at the Cumberland

Hotel at Marble Arch. On one occasion (around 1987 probably) I made a trip to the UK from Ghana. Ken suggested that we take a road trip to Aberdeen to visit with his daughter, Jenny, and her husband, Steve. I gladly accepted and we had a wonderful trip together that was refreshing for my weary body but also spiritually restoring too. It was just what my soul needed at that time. Ken was certainly a 'Barnabas' to me – a 'son of encouragement'.

Ken and Phyllis returned to Nigeria to help with Pastors' Book Set (PBS) conferences and distributions in 1997 and were stationed at the Challenge compound in Mushin, Lagos. Ken was responsible for receiving containers of books from overseas and distributing and sharing them with the conference organizers in Jos and Owerri. He also organized five conferences in Lagos and Ibadan – with 1,000 attending each conference.

Ken was always available to go to the port if he could be of help. The Nigerian man tasked with clearing the containers through the port requested that Ken accompany him for the last two containers. They got to the port before 8am. When the customs personnel arrived Ken greeted them in Yoruba. This surprised them – especially coming from an 'old' white man. They replied to Ken in Yoruba and then Ken replied in 'deeper' Yoruba. Ken also prostrated himself on the floor before them (in the traditional customary Yoruba greeting showing deep respect). When he got up, Ken again spoke to them in even 'deeper' Yoruba. At this they called him 'Oga' (or Master), asked what he wanted and promised they would do it for him. All the papers were signed and a lorry was transporting the containers out of the dock within an hour! The customs personnel were so impressed by Ken's ability to communicate in their language – and also by his humility. As he was able to do so often, he 'opened doors' that sometimes were

shut to others. (It should be noted that at this time it was not unusual for a container to take 2-3 months to clear the docks.)

Ken was a very special and enduring friend to me over many decades – and across the miles. He was godly, fun-loving, loyal, responsible, reliable, a man of his word, humble, encouraging, kind, compassionate, caring, generous – and more. There is a Nigerian proverb that goes like this, ‘Hold a true friend with both hands.’ Ken was a true friend to me – through good times and harder times - and our shared faith in God added another dimension. I am so grateful and privileged to have known him.

You enriched our lives, Ken! We will miss you but we will see you again in the much better life beyond!

Jim Mason

Nigeria and People from Overseas

Dear family and friends,

I am honoured to be addressing you all to share the wonderful memories that I personally had with Dad.

Although not biologically related, but, from my days as a student in Oxford, both “Dad and Mum” have played a big part in my life and that of my family. Until his passing on 18th September, the sense of love radiating from him was very palpable. Now physically departed, his presence is very much reflected in the life of the many people whom he touched.

My path crossed with Mum and Dad when I was a resident in what is the mini United Nations in Oxford, the North Oxford Overseas Centre (NOOC) along Banbury Road.

For many of the residents NOOC was “Home away from Home”. Irrespective of where we were from, we were all welcomed with open arms. Dad always found time to find out more about us as individuals. His interest in us even extended to our friends that visited us at the centre. I have many fond memories of Dad joining a group of us for a game of table tennis in the 117 Banbury Road Communal Room.

I can still clearly remember the big smile on Dad’s face when he walked down the aisle, as the father of the bride, with my then wife to be, on the occasion of our wedding on 3rd January 1987 at the Lancaster Baptist Church.

After their retirement, Mum and Dad were regular visitors to our home in Garstang. Even after our return to Singapore, Mum and Dad visited and on a couple of their trips extended their time with us with some wonderful family bonding in Malaysia and Australia.

Birthdays would not be complete without a phone call from Mum and Dad and with Dad's rendition of Happy Birthday. Receiving e-mails from him telling us how much they miss and love us are and Birthday and Christmas cards are little events which brightens our day thousands of miles away.

Our regular trips to the UK would not be complete without a trip to Minster Lovell. Both my daughters loved spending time with their Grandpa and Grandma and cherish the many moments spending time with them.

With love abounding, both Mum and Dad readily accepted into the family my sister in law, Kwee Yong, who moved to the UK for work. My niece, Joanne, who was in Bristol to pursue her studies was always looking forward to the monthly visit by her Grandpa and Grandma where the meals they had together and the many day trips enjoyed with them are memories which she holds very close to her heart

I could be saying a lot more about Dad but I hope in this short time, I have been able to give you all a glimpse of the measure of what Dad meant to the former residents at NOOC and to me personally.

Dad, you have indeed fought the good fight, you ran and finished a great God filled race and your faith in God is certainly a great testimony to all who knew, loved and were loved by you.

Finally, I would like to say, Dad, a big thank you for teaching us, by example, to love and live as Jesus did. Will miss you much.

Colin Lian

Church and His People

The first chapter of Genesis gives us a beautiful story of creation. God tells us at the end of each day that his creation is good, but God doesn't say this at the end of day 6. On day 6 God created humanity, and God changes his words and now calls his creation very good.

This story also includes the first instruction ever given to humanity, and that instruction is to join in with creation. To grow community and to look after all things. From page one of the bible God has always worked through people. Humanity therefore should really not have been surprised when the greatest of all works was achieved when God himself became human. Genesis 1 also tells us that God made us in his own image. But what does this mean? Well sadly it isn't a declaration of how good looking we all are, but instead it is a declaration of the authority and responsibility we carry as stewards of the created world. Being made in God's image is an invitation to move beyond being a spectator, and instead to be a gardener of creation, sowing and tending to all that is good.

God has always chosen to do his greatest work through people. And in Ken, we proclaim the truth that God did great work in a great person.

Collectively we call this group of people who recognise their divine image and calling to do God's good work, church. Now many of us churchgoers actually play it quite safe. We tend to stay where we feel comfortable, but we know that there is so much more to be done. So in prayer we ask God to look after all those other places and to make sure that there are other gardeners of creation in those places who can take care of all the really difficult stuff. It is the rare and special few who just shrug their shoulders and accept the call to be church where church is needed most.

I've been asked to speak of God's and Ken's love of church. But you see Ken was church. He lived and breathed being church. When Ken was around church wasn't just an institution, but it was a way of living that literally made the world a better place.

Now I have only known Ken for one year, but already I miss him and I am so sad that I will not get to spend more time with my friend until I join him in heaven. I shall miss Ken because since the first time I met him, I could feel his love, his encouragement, his prayer.....When I preached, it would be his face with the biggest smile, the most encouraging nods. Church without Ken will not be the same as church with Ken. In 1 Corinthians 12 Paul tells us that the church is a body, and that that body is made up of many different parts. So which part was Ken? Truly, I think he was many of the parts in one. But Ken wasn't just a body part, he was an action of the body. And that action was a hug. A hug that told you that you were loved. The action that so many of us at his church will miss so very very much. I offer all the family today my condolences. But today I represent church. So I say that many of us join you in that grief, because Ken was our brother.

A brother truly made in the image of God.

Jason Cooke

The greatest of all – His Love

(for we can only love because he first loved us)

In writing down this sentiment Ken Bennett was quoting from one whom many consider to be the most influential writer of all time. I speak of course of Saul of Tarsus, or the Apostle Paul as most Christians know him. Perhaps the part of Paul's extensive writing that is most well-known and most often-quoted is his homily on love, found in the thirteenth chapter of his first letter to the Corinthians. Three things remain, he said, as he concluded this homily: when everything else is stripped away, when even life itself is slipping from our grasp like sand through an hour glass, three things are there to sustain us and hold us up – faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these, he said, is love. Love never fails.

An essential aspect of love is that it needs at least two people in order to function. As a coal needs the fire to enable it to burn, so we need another in order to receive and give love. How much I am reminded of this when watching parents with a baby. There is a fire of love burning in the parent's hearts that awakes the same fire in the heart of their offspring.

I wrote about this once in a song, inspired by my own newly-born offspring as they each lay in my arms gazing at me in some kind of fascination and wonder. The last verse and chorus says:-

Well I've watched you while small, and I've seen you grow tall,
And I'm proud of your grace and your love.
And I know, when I go, it will always be so
With your eyes on our Father above.

Oh, your eyes brightly shine as they gaze deep in mine;
And my joy overflows as our souls entwine.
And I'll strive and pray until the day
When I'll hold you the very last time.

Some may consider this a sad song, focusing as it does on passing and final embraces. But instead I see love and joy that lasts for eternity, for the fire of love does not originate in our hearts but in the heart of our Father in heaven. Our dear Ken knew this. Although the love of his earthly family supported him in his final hours, it was the love of his heavenly Father that increasingly embraced him and finally welcomed him home. I know that Ken would encourage each one of us to fix our eyes on our Father in heaven and embrace His love.

Steve Townsend

The Last Words are Ken's

'Thank you my God and King for your redeeming love in Christ and for loving one so unlovely. My hearts desire has always been that my children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren would experience that same love and walk with Him. Our extended family have been so special to us and we thank God for you and for the joy and richness you have brought into our lives. My life was so enriched by so many friendships,, from people across the world.

I could never find words to express my thanks to God that He gave me Phyll. She knew me better than anyone, thank you my love for all the days and all the ways we shared together. My loved ones take care of her. I will still stop and hug you and say I love you.'

Ken and Phyll's 60th Anniversary

