

Malcolm Graham Smart – 1943 to 2010.

Malcolm Smart was Rector of Holy Cross Church from 1975 until 1982.

I first met Malcolm Smart when I visited Holy Cross in 1976. I recall that, on my first visit, the layout of the seating etc., in the New Church was in the rather, “traditional”, fashion and that the congregation faced the stone altar at the North end of the Church. I was looking for a church to attend at that time and when I visited Holy Cross again, several weeks later, I noticed that the church seating etc., was organized, “in the round”, which I judged to be much better as one could see the faces of many in the congregation and was, for me, a much more, “friendly”, arrangement. Therefore I thought that there was, “something interesting going on here”, and I decided to attend Holy Cross Church on a regular basis.

This was a time of great change at Holy Cross. Plans were being devised to construct a Parish Room from the, “rabbit warren” of small rooms behind the wall at the Northern end of the New Church, moving the Sacristy from the Northern end to the Southern end of the New Church and making a kitchen in the Western end of the New Church. The construction of the kitchen involved moving the staircase, which gave access to the gallery, from the Western end to its present position in the Eastern end of the Church. Also, plans to construct the Garden of Rest were devised. Extensive consultation with the congregation was conducted in order to get a consensus for these proposed changes. Unhappily it proved impossible to get everyone to agree to these proposals and seven members of the congregation objected to these plans such that a Consistory Court hearing had to be held in front of the Chancellor in the New Church on 13th December 1977.

Malcolm, of course, “fronted”, these proposals and, as such, dealt with all the matters concerning the pastoral implications of dealing with the objectors and their supporters. I could see, for myself, that he endured much pain at this time although we never discussed such matters.

I always saw Malcolm as a great, “encourager”, of people. He wanted people to really, “live”, and be themselves. I believe that I too benefited from his extensive encouragement.

Malcolm was an enthusiastic member of the Holy Cross Morris Men side. Together, we danced at various venues throughout the Borough and beyond!

I recall various, “Friday nights at the Bridge”, when many members of the congregation, and others, would meet and have a few drinks together. We would often resume the discussion(s), after closing time, at a home of one of the participants inevitably returning home at an early hour in the morning!

Malcolm was a man with great vision. I believe that he could have made a living as an Interior Designer had he not joined the ministry. I was always very impressed by his sophisticated taste in furniture, paintings, books and other fine works. In particular, I admired his use of colours in his decorations.

Malcolm’s incumbency was a time of great social and political upheaval in the country. Nationally, there were Nuclear and disarmament issues, unemployment and strikes. Locally, the proposal to establish a C of E high School in the Borough of Ealing and the agreement of the Council with the National Front holding an election meeting in Southall Town Hall which resulted in a riot and many injuries and the inevitable court cases. The death of a protestor, Blair Peach, was one unfortunate result of this protest.

Malcolm dealt with many of these day-to-day events in his sermons which I found made the word of God come alive for me.

I had found, as I’m sure that others will testify, that Malcolm could be mischievous and very, “challenging”. However, he was never nasty, spiteful or vindictive.

I was extremely saddened when he told me that he was leaving Holy Cross and resigning his holy orders in order to contest the Erith and Crayford parliamentary seat for the Labour Party. I thought, and still believe, that the Church desperately needed people like Malcolm if it is to move forward in the modern age. However, he did not want to resign his orders but the rule, at that time, was that a Clerk in Holy Orders could not contest a parliamentary seat. Unfortunately Malcolm was not successful in the election and did not become an M.P.

Malcolm then obtained a job as Chief Executive of the, "Opportunities for Volunteering Project" which was established to give government grants to church based voluntary groups. Malcolm carried out this job, in a highly professional manner, for about eighteen years. I know that his management of the Project was very highly commended by the various audits that were conducted from time to time.

Malcolm and I did not have an, "intensive", friendship. We did not feel it necessary to be constantly in contact with each other. Maybe I would see him once a year and we might meet up and have dinner together. Malcolm and I believe that a friendship, if it exists, is always there no matter what happens in life!

Malcolm retired in 2000 but he continued to be active in the voluntary sector almost up to the time of his death. Malcolm died at 13.00hours on Friday 23rd July 2010 in Darlington Memorial Hospital from complications initiated by cancer of the Oesophagus.

Malcolm's funeral took place on Friday 6th August 2010 at 14.30hours in the church of St. James the Great in Albert Hill, Darlington. He gave me the great honour of participating in his funeral service by reading the, "Prayers of the People", that he wrote for me.

If you wish to see a memorial to Malcolm Smart then just look around you at Holy Cross Church.....

Malcolm Ede.

