

Homily for the Funeral of Len Evans

17 July 2020

Given by the Rev'd Colleen Clayton
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Unlike you, I never had the privilege of meeting Len. What I have had is the privilege of hearing about Len from those who love him. So let me share with you some of the stories I have heard of Len's life of service, faith, and love.

Long-term service was part of who Len was. He volunteered as a 'bed pusher' at the Kingston Centre for 30 years, and on a recent trip there some of the staff still remembered him. I have also been told by a parishioner of the cheerful presence he brought to that role as he pushed their loved one around the corridors.

Len was a keen gardener. He loved African violets, and his worm farm, and served the wider community through his involvement in teaching gardening at the U3A in Mordialloc.

Len's faith was central to his life. His association with St Matthew's stretched over more than fifty years. He was baptised here on the 8th September 1969 and confirmed here a week later on the 14th September that year. Len took his faith seriously and was involved in many aspects of church life, helping to count the collection, serving as secretary to the parish council, welcoming people to church in his role as sidesperson, and acting as Vicar's Warden. He bought honey in bulk, decanting it into smaller containers for sale as a fundraiser and, famously, he made porridge for parish breakfasts.

Another very important part of Len's life that combined his faith and his desire to serve, was his commitment to the Anglican Men's Society. He belonged to the AMS for many years, serving as secretary and treasurer, running book stalls to raise money for the Bill Brady Welfare Organisation and acting as a Trustee for the Tyler House Trust, another AMS welfare organisation. He later became a member of the Diocesan Executive of the AMS and after being elected as their secretary in 1973 continued in that post for the next 35 years. In 1994 he became editor of the AMS Bulletin, published by the Melbourne Executive, producing five issues per year for the next 23 years. And he made porridge for AMS breakfasts too!

Len has been described to me as, "The glue which kept AMS in Victoria running for many years." His extraordinary commitment to AMS was recognized in 1990 when he received a Life Membership of the organization.

The threads of faith and of service have been major parts of the fabric of Len's life. Of course, there was also love. Alongside Len in all that he did was Vivienne, loving and encouraging him. Yesterday she told Jane, "We were always together."

Len was a man of long-term commitments, and his love for Vivienne stood the test of time. Commitment of that kind is not easy, it doesn't just happen, life throws many challenges at it. A life-long love is only possible with hard work and patience, kindness, care and perseverance, and Len offered all this to Vivienne as the practical evidence of his love for her.

I think everyone who has spoken to me about Len has told me about his porridge. I have asked each of them, what was it that made it so special? No one has been able to tell me. It seems that there was no magic ingredient. As I have reflected on Len's life over the last week, I have wondered if it was simply something about Len that made the porridge extra good. Perhaps, he stirred something of his own warmth into it. Perhaps,

he could make people appreciate its wholesome nourishment because he himself was wholesome and he used his life to nourish others through his service. Porridge is a good, sustaining breakfast and perhaps Len could make it special because he knew about sustaining things for the long haul. As Vivienne said last week, “We had a good life. We loved each other for a long time”.

Today we remember Len with joy for a life well lived; a life of service, of faith and of love. In the reading that Greg and Jane chose for today from the Gospel of John, Jesus says to his followers, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life” (John 14:6). This belief was the basis of Len’s life. Len followed Jesus in the costly way of service of others. His kindness and care expressed the truth of a God who offers compassion and hope to everyone. Today, we mourn the loss of Len, but we also rejoice that he lives forever in the hearts of all who love him and in the presence of the God who welcomes him home as a beloved son.