

## **Testimony to the Grace Of God as shown in the life of our Friend**

### **Geoffrey Malcolm Morris 1933-2017**

Geoff was born in Paisley but within a few weeks of his birth his family moved south over the border. His father was a Methodist Minister and Geoff's early years involved many changes of address and many different schools. Despite this disadvantage, Geoff thrived and gained a place at Nottingham University to study History. Whilst there, he became involved in the Methodist Society, where he met his first wife. He stayed on and completed a MA on the History of Primitive Methodism. Leaving University, Geoff was required to complete National Service but he had become convinced of the merits of Pacifism. This fundamental belief never wavered throughout the rest of his life and, following a demanding official process, resulted in him becoming exempt from National Service as a Conscientious Objector. He agreed to commit himself to two years of public service, working on a farm and in a hospital.

Geoff taught secondary History in Nottingham and Birmingham, where he and his wife adopted a son. In a short time, (as is so often the case,) their own son was born. A move to a teacher training college at Stoke followed, with a subsequent position at Doncaster teacher training college, from where he eventually retired as Vice Principal.

Geoff's life was turned upside down in 1995 when he lost his wife to cancer, leaving him devastated. He remarried two years later and he and Dorothy moved to Scarborough and joined Westborough Methodists. Methodism had been the bedrock of his life and Geoff had for many years been a lay preacher. His personal loss and subsequent studies and reflection made him question some of his earlier certainties. He was disappointed with Methodism's failure to wholeheartedly embrace Pacifism and became troubled with the church's doctrine of the Trinity. He attended, and sometimes led, services at the Unitarian Church and attended some Quaker Meetings. After much soul-searching, Geoff decided Quakerism was the best fit for his new beliefs. His spiritual journey is summarized in the title of a paper he wrote for a Quaker journal - 'Belief, Unbelief and New Belief'. In it he asks many questions about the nature of God. He concludes:

'For me, sufficient to say and believe that God exists through love, loving and the lovely, and in goodness. I am happy to commit myself to worship true love and true goodness.'

Throughout the rest of his life, Geoff was interested in any new spiritual insight and read voraciously. Many of us benefitted from the wisdom, depth and quality of his ministry. The main themes were taken from the

everyday world and often focused on the goodness he encountered in people and situations.

Whilst being a committed member and taking on several positions within the Society, Geoff had a deep respect and interest in all religions. He set up an interfaith group in Scarborough, represented the Meeting in the 'Churches Together' group and for a time was involved with the United Nations, only resigning on the issue of the UN countenance of armed conflict albeit as a last resort. His interest in politics was a seamless extension of his spiritual views. Perhaps Geoff's active involvement in Amnesty International was influenced by his commitment to peace.

Most of all, Geoff was loved for being a kind and warm loving friend to all. For people with problems he was a rock, providing calm wisdom and support. He sought out and made welcome new Attenders and Friends, quietly providing deeply appreciated spiritual guidance.

Geoff continued to support Dorothy by attending social activities and some services at Westborough. He was a family man who enjoyed holidays and sport, particularly supporting Yorkshire Cricket Club. His son wrote:

'He was a pacifist, humanist, internationalist, whose green socialism carried him through his life. A man of integrity, a man of principle, something to aspire to.'