

## **Testimony to the Grace of God as shown in the life of Michael Yates (05.12.39 – 04.09.2020)**

It has proved unexpectedly difficult to testify to the grace of God as shown in the life of Michael Yates. Not for lack of evidence but from the phraseology. How does one write such a testimony to the life of an avowed non-theist? Not that the use of 'God language' was important to Michael – what was important to him was the way in which life was lived, whatever the inspiration.

It was of course not always thus. In his younger life he took holy orders and was for a period a loved and respected vicar. But a team Ministry environment proved to be less than satisfactory and he and Chris made the fateful move north, partly for family reasons but also at a suitable time for the education of their children. Shortly before they moved he was appointed as party agent, representing the Liberal party in the Ripon constituency. Sadly this did not prosper - with the defeat of the Liberal candidate in the October 1974 election he became jobless. Not for long – for a short time he had no less than five part-time jobs ranging from petrol pump attendant at Whitefriars to Sunday ministry at Rylstone. Such a schedule was unsustainable so he satisfied his determination to serve by taking a PGCE course at Lancaster and becoming a teacher.

As his detachment from the Church of England grew he was moved, in the mid 1980's, to "give up Anglicanism for Lent" and almost never went back having found his own spiritual home, with Chris, in the quiet of a Quaker meeting. All good vicars, when starting a sermon, take a text for inspiration: his was Advice 28 – especially "...attend to what love requires of you...". So he did. The call to serve was insistent and he also took a variety of roles supporting Settle Meeting most prominently as Clerk of the Development Committee as the Meeting House was being improved and modernised. This included carrying out some of their decisions with a pick and shovel! In a wider field he served on the Glenthorne management committee for many years, during a period of severe economic stress, devising new attractions for a much loved facility in order to maintain its viability.

On a lighter note he and his son founded and developed Leeds Spiders Wheelchair Basketball Club where his granddaughters were wont to play. Their inspiration must have been sound - the Club, now part of the Leeds Rhinos RL Foundation, continues to prosper. And he became a skilled and enthusiastic, if unexpected, embroiderer.

However the greatest expression of the grace of God as shown in his life was his quiet ministry to individuals. Yes he was an Elder, charged with the spiritual welfare of the Meeting, a role he fulfilled to a nicety for many years but the tributes we have received almost all came from individuals he had counselled quietly and unobtrusively. The skill with which this was done may have been enhanced by his early theological training. He exuded a solidity and competence in spiritual matters - being able to provoke and challenge without offence,

inviting discussion and new patterns of behaviour without the least taint of preaching. This gift was priceless and will be, like himself, greatly missed.

We should give thanks for his rejection of holy orders and perhaps attend to what love requires of us...

Signed in, and on behalf of, Craven & Keighley Area Meeting on  
13 March 2021

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Chris Skidmore". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Chris Skidmore, clerk