

THANKSGIVING SERVICE FOR THE REVD DESMOND PARSONS

Co-founder of Churches Together in Farnham

& Peacemaker in Northern Ireland

Despite storms and floods, St Andrews Parish Church in Farnham hosted a well attended Thanksgiving Service for the life of the Revd Desmond Parsons on 31st January. Around half the congregation had travelled one hundred miles or more to pay their respects.

The service was followed by refreshments at the Vineyard Centre, Church House, where a sequence of pictures of scenes from Desmond's life and multifaceted Christian ministry were shown, bringing back many memories.

At the family's request, a retiring collection at the service and other memorial donations are going to Churches Together in Farnham, of which Desmond was co-founder and former Vice Chairman.

The Revd Tara Hellings, Vicar of Crondall and Ewshot, led the worship. Friends had gathered from far and near to fondly give thanks for Desmond's life and work in a service of great beauty - enriched with

sublime music, hymns, prayers, and readings, some by members of the family. Past and present members of Churches Together in Farnham were strongly represented.

In addition to his dedication to Christian unity, we learnt the remarkable story of Desmond's involvement in peacemaking in Northern Ireland - personally building bridges between communities.

In his address, Padre Barry Burbidge told of Desmond's life as a much-loved parish priest - Curate to St Mark's, Purley, Vicar of All Saints, West Dulwich, and St Peter's, Limpsfield, and, in retirement, Honorary Assistant Priest at All Saints, Crondall - and warm tributes from some of his former parishioners were read.

Throughout his ministry Desmond sought to promote greater Christian unity. He co-founded Farnham Christian Council (later re-named Churches Together in Farnham) more than half a century ago. Unfailing in support,

he stepped in at a time of crisis in 2007 to save it from closure, helping as Vice-Chairman to ensure that CTF and its work continued to thrive.

In the post-war years, Desmond's father, Canon Richard Edward Parsons, formerly Director of Religious Education for the Central Council of the Church of England, rescued historic Moor Park House, near Farnham, from demolition and set it up as a College of Christian Education. The educational work continued through the Moor Park Trust after the college closed and we heard about Desmond's major role in this from the Chairman of the Trust, Professor David James. A number of those associated with the Trust were present.

Desmond died peacefully in his sleep at his home in Crondall on 20th January, aged 88.

Churches Together in Farnham offer Thea, Benedict and Francesca our deepest condolences and prayers.