

## Churches Together in Farnham's

# Tribute to the Revd Desmond Parsons & his unique contribution to Christian Unity

The Revd Desmond Parsons was co-founder of Churches Together in Farnham in 1962 with a vision to see Christians in Farnham worshipping and serving together in greater unity.

A notable demonstration of this unity was 'Celebrate 2000', the great Christian festival organised by Churches Together in Farnham, when thousands gathered at Waverley Abbey for Pentecost 2000 to celebrate the beginning of a new Millennium. Nicola Mountain, Co-ordinator of the festival, said in remembrance: "Desmond has achieved great things with Churches Together in Farnham - it was a privilege to work with him for 'Celebrate'."

### 'A glimpse of Heaven'

Having retired as Vice-Chairman in 2009, Desmond played a special part in Churches Together in Farnham's Golden Jubilee Service at St Joan's Church in October 2012.

He told a packed congregation from our 26 member churches: "Little did we think 50 years ago that we should become this united body of churches, praising God together and working together in so many different ways; a glimpse of Heaven, each and every one praising God and caring for one another."

Desmond was co-founder and first Secretary of Farnham Christian Council when it came into being on 4<sup>th</sup> October 1962 following months of planning and inter-denominational discussion. Co-founder George Baxter, Headmaster of

Farnham Grammar School, was its first Chairman. At the 1992 AGM the Council of Churches agreed that the name Churches Together in Farnham (CTF) should be adopted.

Over the past half century CTF has continued to progress and develop but there have been occasional setbacks to overcome.

Problems came to a head at the AGM in 2007 when the Chair and Secretary were due to stand down, clergy leaders failed to put forward any candidates and some members were saying that they saw no future for CTF.

Faced with the threat of immediate closure. Desmond, his son, Benedict, Gwen Mansfield and Mary Clarke volunteered to form a steering committee with the serving Treasurer Andy Marriott and the only remaining member of the former committee, Jenny Floyer, who was strongly urging that CTF should continue.

### Desmond was a proactive Vice-Chairman

The new committee swung into action. At the next meeting of the CTF Council in April 2008, the provisional appointments of Jenny as Chair, Desmond as Vice-Chair and Benedict as Secretary, sharing duties with Gwen and Mary, were approved and ratified.

Since then Churches Together in Farnham has continued to flourish. Desmond was a proactive Vice Chairman until his retirement from the committee at the 2009 AGM. A vote of thanks to him for all he had done for Churches Together in

Farnham from its foundation was passed by the meeting with unanimous acclaim.

Desmond continued his support as representative of the Parish of Crondall on the CTF Council until his death, peacefully at his home on 20<sup>th</sup> January, 2014. He was 88.

During more than 50 years he made a truly unique contribution towards Christian unity in Farnham.

### More Memories

**Among further remembrances of Desmond we have received from members of Churches Together in Farnham, present and past:**

From Michael McDonnell, Co-ordinator of the Golden Jubilee Celebration: "I remember his warmth and sincerity".

From Jenny Floyer, former Chair of CTF: "The Thanksgiving for Desmond was such a lovely and uplifting service at St Andrew's and to see the slide show on the wall at Church House made Desmond feel present with us. I shall miss him immensely, but he is, no doubt, alive in Christ and enjoying being with him."

From Canon Dr Alvyn Pettersen, former Chair of CTF, now Canon Theologian at Worcester Cathedral: "Desmond was a very good man; and he had strength and the mind to see through his desire for church unity in the locality. Farnham and the surrounding region have much for which to be thankful."