



Eulogy and Address

Funeral of The Revd Jeremy Allum

readings: Exodus 3 1-8a; Isaiah 6 1-8; John 13 1-13.

6 February 2026

I wear this stole with pride today: commissioned in 2025 to mark my 25 years in ordained ministry, its design by Leonard Childs inspired by the carvings on the coffin of Saint Alkmund in Derby Museum, its pattern of circles each linked by and containing a cross embroidered by Mary Allum, and the striking result much admired by Jeremy, he of the flamboyant taste in colourful bow ties, clashing check shirts, bright braces and fancy waistcoats, some of the latter wilfully worn with a black clerical shirt and collar (and there are photos to prove it!).

And by a remarkable coincidence, I find that the pattern on this stole bears similarities to the design of circles and crosses engraved on Jeremy's wedding ring from 64 years ago. So this pattern provides me with a template for this address. For I hope it is not too fanciful to see these as 'circles of influence', the many and various arenas in which Jeremy lived out his faith, each one linked by the Cross which stands for the Christian belief system of service and mission which characterised his work, his outreach, his relationships, his actions.

The first of those circles of influence must rightly be his *family*: Mary his wife, his daughters Clare, Tamsin, Ruth, to whom, with Petronella his sister, I am indebted for the cornucopia of collective memories they have shared of a deeply spiritual, creative, and zanily adventurous man, one who encouraged adventurousness in his daughters by showing them how to embrace it and offering personal challenge and loving support, his grandchildren whom he cherished and latterly a great granddaughter for whom he held a special affection.

It was Petronella, a fellow languages student with Mary at Oxford who in 1960 first introduced them at a punt party to celebrate the end of final exams, at which Jeremy, fooling around, fell into the river! "There must be more to him than this" Mary thought, knowing him to be an ordinand at Wycliffe Theological College, and 64 years of subsequent married life was to prove it. Throughout their lives, they formed what in education leadership parlance we would describe as a "complementary team". As Mary Ellis, a university friend memorably put it: "Mary the stable presence, and Jeremy spinning round, full of energy, full of ideas, full of thoughtfulness".

That thoughtfulness extended into the 2nd circle of influence: the *church*. Thoughtfully, Jeremy has made life easier for us in pre-preparing this funeral service and specifying the readings. It is no coincidence that they are all on the same theme of call and transformation. For Jeremy believed that the spiritual and mystical aspects of faith were only fully validated when they resulted in practical actions which had the power to transform lives and turn worlds upside down. Moses was called and transformed by his spiritual experience at a burning bush and accepted God's call to lead his people out of slavery: to turn their world upside down. Isaiah was called in a mystical vision and was personally transformed by the experience to accept the call to bring his errant people back to the way of the Lord: to turn their world upside down. Jesus, defying all convention and orthodoxy, washed his disciples' feet, the practical action of a servant not a master, and by so doing established for them and for us a call to "servant leadership" which has the power to transform lives and turn worlds upside down today.

Jeremy was born in India, educated there and in South Africa, and then at what is now Loughborough University. He followed in his father's footsteps and initially trained and briefly practiced as a civil engineer.

But he soon felt God's call to full-time ministry in the Church of England and to acceptance of its transforming impact on his life. He was ordained on Trinity Sunday 1962. He served a 5-year curacy at Hornchurch St Andrew's in Essex before becoming for 8 years Vicar of St Luke's in West Derby on Merseyside, serving a large area of social housing. The vicarage was burgled 5 times in that period. Jeremy was not renowned for his tidiness. On one occasion when the police attended and offered their condolences for the consequent chaotic state of his study, he had to explain that actually the burglars hadn't been in there!

He moved on to the calmer waters of Boulton St Mary's, a large suburban parish in Derby where he was vicar for 15 years until 1990 and latterly also Rural Dean of Melbourne, before finally becoming Vicar of Hathersage until 1998. In "so-called retirement" to Mickleover he offered ministerial support to surrounding country churches and then, after "properly" retiring, became a much-loved member of the congregation at the Cathedral, presiding at his last Eucharist here on the 60th anniversary of his ordination, just a few months shy of his 90th birthday (and putting a mere stripling in ministry like me to shame).

Jeremy always saw the priestly role as being involved in arenas far wider than what went on in church, important though that was to him. One such highly significant area was work with *young people*: a 3rd circle of influence. At Hornchurch he was chaplain to the church youth club whose members were known as "Thresholders": standing on the threshold of faith. Stan and his wife met at Thresholders more than 60 years ago and he still recalls "the joyous ministry that Jeremy provided during those formative years – one which offered laughter and fun underpinned by a sure and certain trust in the Lord".

At West Derby with its deprived youth, many of whom had never been into the countryside before, he organised choir trips to the mountains of North Wales, most memorably to Tryfan, renowned for its distinctive rocky ridge and challenging scrambles, up which he encouraged his young charges with the possibility of there being a café at the summit, as on Snowdon (spoiler alert: there is *not*!). However, there *is* there the opportunity to celebrate sumitting by leaping between two adjacent rock pillars, in what is famously known as the "Leap of Faith". And many young people were encouraged by Jeremy's adventurous ministry to make their own far greater "leap of faith".

At Boulton St Mary's, he worked with the local comprehensive, Noel Baker School, which his two elder daughters attended, and at which there was also a young Chemistry teacher (*moi*). There he took memorable assemblies and school services, accompanied by his guitar and assisted by his hand-puppet Samson which he had sewn himself, arriving unconventionally on his motorbike with his guitar on his back and his cassock tucked under his belt, all of course highly mortifying for his teenage daughters.

How in such a limited time can one sum up such a full and varied life in such few words?

Indeed, if hard pressed, "what 3 words" to choose? People-centred, pyrotechnic, polymath.

People-centred: a deeply spiritual man, always making time for people, willing to talk to anyone at any time, day or night, about anything, with the same genuine interest, friendliness, and respect... and making them feel special by asking them lots of questions about themselves. Right to the end, he continued offering unobtrusive spiritual support and staunch pastoral care to those experiencing difficult times on their own life journeys.

Pyrotechnic: a powerhouse of creativity, spinning round, full of energy, shooting ideas out in all directions like sparks from a firework, some destined to fizzle out, but some capable of setting worlds on fire. Yet he never lost sight of the people at the heart of this process, for they remained dear to his heart.

Polymath: a life-long learner with a wide range of interests pursued in retirement, including art (at which he was a dab hand himself), and music (from Byrd and Tallis to Florence and the Machine) as well as immersing himself in the more arcane thickets of abstruse theology. He loved discussing with his daughters and, where mutual interest ended, he would seek out one of his grandchildren to discuss mathematics, philosophy, history, or technology.

After a life of loving service well lived, Jeremy had the blessing of a peaceful if sudden death at 93, with Mary at his side. He left strict instructions to the priest officiating at his funeral that as his coffin entered the Cathedral, the traditional words “I am the resurrection and the life says the Lord” should be intoned loudly and clearly, for they succinctly summed up his faith. However he left no such instructions to the preacher on how to end his address! But conscious of the ‘love most bright’ that Jeremy bore for his Lord and for all his people, and for the enduring love we all have for him, a love which binds us together strongly in mutual support like twigs in a nest, I can do no better than end with words from the Song of Songs married to a phrase from the poet Philip Larkin:

*Many waters cannot quench love
Neither can the floods drown it
For love is as strong as death....¹*

What will survive of us is love. ²

Amen

**The Revd Dr Alan Flintham
Cathedral Chaplain Emeritus**

1. Song of Solomon (Song of Songs) 8 6-7a

2. Philip Larkin “An Arundel Tomb” (1956)