

Annie, Duncan, John and all the family, thank you for sharing your beloved Jimmy, husband, dad, Gramps with us all. I like so many, either connected to this town, to Lancashire, the football world, both those who played or spectated have been truly blessed by “Mr Blackpool.”

Whilst my childhood encounters were via the radio and his insightful comments during broadcast games. Like many bishops, archdeacons, vicars and clergy involved in the church in Lancashire it was Jimmy’s faith in God, his ease of sharing it, in words, music and action, and especially his service here at St Peter’s as organist, choirmaster, treasurer and warden that I had the privilege of knowing him personally and benefitting from his mentoring, coaching and encouragement. The next verse on from our reading from Paul’s letter to the Colossians to me sums up the role Jimmy had in terms of his faith, he was one who lived out Paul’s instruction to:

“Let the word of Christ in all its richness find a home with you. Teach each other and advise each other in all wisdom”

It was right that he was one of the first honorary lay canons of our county’s cathedral in Blackburn.

If ever I have met a man who embodied the reading we had, it was Jimmy. He showed the same commitment to Jesus when he daily put on his shirt, as he did putting on the tangerine of Blackpool or the white of an England jersey, or indeed his long padded coaching coat of more recent years.

There have been universal comments about his character that rightly can cause those connected to him and especially the family to be “bursting with pride” as Jimmy allowed himself to be “clothed in heartfelt compassion, generosity, humility, gentleness and patience.”

By the very nature of being a “right back,” and one shaped in his duties by Stanley Matthews to focus on his place and role in the team. Even the “best right back in the world” does not grab the headlines. They enable others to do so, they ensure that the team plays well, that others and the teams flourish and shine. (This is equally true for a good church organist and choirmaster, accompanying others and together enabling a joyful and harmonious sound to be made.)

Jimmy did not limit this facilitating and enabling to the football world or church music. He did this for Blackpool as a town, especially for the forgotten areas and those who were at risk. He truly lived out his faith, caring for other, whether they be family, friends and colleagues like the late Sir Tom Finney, or the old and young of this part of Blackpool and those whom this church of St Peter’s serves. With Jimmy there was an over-whelming dynamic of love from which came loyalty, commitment and a striving for a better world, which as a committed Christian Jimmy saw as his playing his part in the body of Christ in bringing in the kingdom of God. In terms of his playing career, Jimmy was a “one team man,” and he was in all areas of his life one who was a member of Christ’s body, Christ’s team, he showed us what it is to have

“the peace of Christ reign in your hearts, because it is for this that you were called together in one body. Always be thankful”

We are thankful to God for Jimmy, to Annie and all the family for sharing him with us. To Jimmy himself for his character, his fun, his talents and for his dedication. (He applied a similar approach to all situations as he did to learning the game. He perfected his football skills with a tennis ball, to enable him to shine with a full-size ball. Equally he ensured that the smallest part of his life was worked on to be the best it could be, then the larger followed. Talent is one thing, but without dedication and application it does not amount to much.

We are grateful for all he shared with us all and we pray that the God whom he knew, loved and served will have welcomed him. To join both a celestial choir and a heavenly team. For it is that God who has given to Jimmy not simply an earthly cup or a worldly medal but in Christ has given to him the fulness of eternal life. May we like Jimmy be ones who strive for that is Godly and put on love and

“may the peace of Christ reign in your hearts, because it is for this that you were called together in one body. Always be thankful” Amen