

Maurice Bernard Johnson (1948-2014)

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Maurice was born in Southport on 24 June 1948 and lived in Marshside during his childhood and his years at KGV (1959-66). After leaving school he attended Dudley College of Education, where he met his future wife Pauline. They married in 1971 and both taught in Leicestershire primary schools until 1976, but Maurice had another life, having been part of the strong Methodist community in Marshside and become a local preacher at the age of 16. Even then it was suggested to him that he should become a minister and in 1974 he felt called to do so. Maurice and Pauline moved to Queen's College, Birmingham in 1976, and were posted to the Forest of Dean in 1979, where Maurice had pastoral charge of seven churches. After a probationary period he was Ordained in 1981. A period of ministry on the Isle of Man from 1986 to 1994 followed that in the Forest of Dean.

Maurice and Pauline had no children by birth, but bravely adopted Andrew, a baby with multiple disabilities caused by rubella, from 1985. Bringing him up involved learning and teaching him British Sign Language among many other complications. By 1993 Andrew needed mainland schooling and after a year of him commuting by air to Derby School for the Deaf each week the family left the Isle of Man for Derbyshire. For health reasons Maurice had to take early retirement soon afterwards and from 1997 home for the Johnsons and Pauline's mother was in the Derbyshire village of Swanwick. Although he had given up the more onerous responsibilities of ministry Maurice remained a very active member of the Methodist church until his death. He and Pauline also became Companions of the Northumbria Community, combining their religious and Celtic cultural interests.

Maurice had a third life, being passionately interested in trams, and for a while worked as a volunteer at the National Tramway Museum at Crich, a few miles from Swanwick. He has left three very thick lever-arch files of research into the Amsterdam tramway system carried out over three decades and more, plus other equally intense studies. His other interests were too numerous for justice to be done to them here but included languages, from New Testament Greek through Dutch to Manx Gaelic, and a wide range of music as well as travel.

Unfortunately, Maurice was found to have some pre-cancerous tissue a few years ago. After removal of this he was duly monitored annually until for some reason possibly connected with NHS pennies he was told he did not need to be seen for another three years. You can guess the rest (and please take heed from this story): during those years

he developed actual cancer and by the time it was detected it had become terminal. For a brief period it went into remission and he was able to enjoy final visits to places he loved. Somehow Pauline, herself somewhat disabled, found the strength to drive him to Norway and back in May 2014, in spite of the cancer being by then "terminally terminal". By June Maurice was housebound and could only cope with being visited for an hour so. He passed away on 31 July after a few days in a hospice. Tragically his mother-in-law Barbara, who had lived with him and Pauline for over twenty years, died during the same month, so that Pauline was doubly bereaved by his death.

In spite of many misfortunes down the years Maurice and Pauline refused to complain of anything life brought them and obtained great strength from a religious faith which is difficult for many of us to comprehend. My last visits to Maurice in the weeks before his death were an inspiration and a lesson to me and I can only admire the way Pauline has coped and is coping. I am sure the sympathies of all who knew Maurice at KGV will go out to her and to Andrew, who now lives semi-independently not far away.

David M. Suffolk (Sp. 1959-66)