

Memorial service Address

I suspect that many of you here today were not totally sure whether you wanted to come.

There is the longing to remember, wanting to express your love, but it is also a bit like opening up a wound. Just when you thought you were getting the grief under some kind of control, you are aware that no, it is still raw, there is still that gaping nothingness, an ache in the chest that could, if you allowed it, give rise to a great wail of longing and loss.

How does one move on?

Day to day the chores get done, you can smile, and chat, and everyone thinks you are doing fine, but you know that life will never be the same. The key to moving on is in the recognition of that fact – life will never be the same. But that does not mean it can never be without joy or laughter or meaning. Life can still be beautiful.

We are given the most precious gift of love. And it is a gift that we can give to others too. Each person here has loved someone who has died, a special person with whom they shared not only the big things - hopes and dreams, but the little day to day snippets of conversation about nothing in particular, that comfortable and companionable ease that comes when you know and love someone. When that is taken away, we have memories, lots of them, and photographs, but that is not the same. Memory is unreliable, and for most people there are times when you get worried because the pictures in your brain are fading and you can't quite remember the voice, or the expressions and you become afraid. Those memories are far too precious to lose.

But there is something better than relying upon memory or photographs. Imagine instead that all that love, all that shared time, is not just memories, but a reality that is put somewhere safe until you can revisit it. Like a photograph album that you tie up with ribbon and put in the loft. It is still there, and one day you can open it and look at it. So too with the love we have shared. It does not fade, or decay, it is held by God for us until that time when we can revisit it.

God holds each one of us, he holds our whole world, he holds the whole of time, from beginning to end. A short part of our existence is on this linear path we call life, the rest is with God.

And what is God? God is love. We know how that love can be expressed on earth. We know too, through the example of Christ, that this love can be shared not just with our family or our friends but with all people. And when we have lost someone we love very much, we find that as we practise this

business of loving, by caring for other people , others who are feeling lost, or low for whatever reason, then we become closer to God, closer to his kingdom, and, amazingly and wonderfully, closer to those we miss. And the pain gradually becomes bearable. The loss, although always present, begins to bring more peace than anguish.

For when we trust in God, we know it was not goodbye for ever, but simply waiting, waiting until we are all united in his love. Amen.