

Venerable Dennis Ede (8th July 1931 – 23rd Jan 2021) - Biography

Dennis was born in Portsmouth in 1931, the youngest of seven children, to Gladys & Wilfred Ede who divorced during his childhood. Aged eight he gained a music scholarship to the Prebendal School, Sussex where he was a chorister at Chichester Cathedral. This is where Dennis' love of music and singing was nurtured, and his journey of faith began. He loved to tell the story of one mischievous misdemeanor as a choir boy when he and a few others snuck out one night to climb up the Cathedral tower, carving their initials on the stone wall then creeping back without being caught.

Dennis continued his secondary education at Ardingly College before joining the RAF to do his military service. Since he was a very keen sportsman, he was given the task during this time of organising daily PE and team sports which he was delighted to do. The fact that he never got to fly never bothered him. He spent holidays with his eldest sister Joan (who died 3 years ago aged 100) and her two daughters, Mollie and Anne, who Dennis remained close to all his life.

Dennis and Angela met during their time at Nottingham University. Dennis went on to complete his theological training at Ripon Hall, Oxford. In 1957 they started married life in Sheldon, Birmingham where Dennis was Curate at St Giles. Daughters Clare and Andrea came along in 1959 and 1960. Then Dennis was appointed as priest-in-charge at St Philips & St James, Hodge Hill, Birmingham. David, their son was born in 1964.

In 1966 the wooden structure church building at Hodge Hill was burnt down. This led to the ambitious rebuilding of a new multi purpose-built church centre, way ahead of its time, which was used seven days a week. Dennis threw himself energetically into life and ministry here and the centre provided a wide range of activities and clubs for the whole community, from children and youth to the elderly. Dennis was also hospital chaplain at East Birmingham hospital where he was a keen and regular squash player. During this period, he managed also to complete an MA in Social Sciences with Birmingham University.

After sixteen years in Birmingham, Dennis became Rector at All Saints West Bromwich, and then Rural Dean. This provided a very different setting with a constant flow of funerals and weddings and the responsibility of being chaplain at Sandwell District Hospital. Again, Dennis set about reordering the building to provide facilities and beautiful meeting spaces, with the provision of a carpark. His pragmatism, energy and leadership ensured things got done. In 1983 he became a Prebendary of Lichfield Cathedral.

In 1989 Dennis and Angela moved to Newcastle-under-Lyme following Dennis' appointment as Archdeacon of Stoke, giving him the task of overseeing a multitude of parishes across Staffordshire, working alongside Bishop Michael Scott-Joynt. Lou his wife recalls:

“He was unbelievably energetic – and I thought Michael was until I met Dennis – and an early riser, though we discovered after some time that he was not quite such an early bird as his 4.30/5.00 am emails gave us to believe. It transpired that the clock on his computer was wrongly set!

Every Monday morning at 7.30am Dennis would join my husband Michael and myself and we’d say Morning Prayer together in the glorified cupboard space off Michael’s study, which served as our chapel in the Bishop’s house in Barlaston, after which we would share breakfast together, before Michael and Dennis held their weekly meeting in the study.

He became affectionately known for a while across the archdeaconry as ‘The Ven. Den.’, after he joined Michael and others in the diocese for a 4-day quasi-pilgrimage, walking about 70 miles of the Staffordshire Way, which went from Mow Cop in the north to Kinver Edge in the south of the county. Dennis turned up in a splendid cap marked ‘Ven Den’ and the name stuck.”

In 1997, Dennis and Angela ‘retired’ to the tiny, picturesque village of Tilford near Farnham where Dennis took a ‘house for duty’ role at All Saints. Life taken at a slightly slower pace enabled them now to enjoy more holidays, and time with the family, having their grandsons to stay regularly and daily walks in the woods just behind the vicarage.

After 5 years, in 2002 they made their final move to Carshalton to be close to Andrea, Julian and their sons. His son David bought the house next door when it came on the market and they loved living in the little cul-de-sac next to the park, thankful for the friendly, caring neighbours around them. Their church family became St Michael’s where they found welcome, fellowship and a spiritual home. Dennis had for many years been a tertiary Fransiscan (member of the Fransiscan Third Order) and joined with the Croydon group as and when he was able to.

Sadly, they lost their daughter Clare to serious illness in 2009. Dennis increasingly devoted his life to caring for his beloved wife Angela with dementia until she died in 2016. After that he adapted to life on his own but never felt lonely.

He was proud of his family and always expressed thanks for their help and support; the weekly Sunday roast dinners with Dave, Sam and Paul followed by football on TV, regular holidays with the Belgian Edes, and weekly visits from Andrea. He was energised by lively and regular discussions with Paul and Tas. He was looking forward to Dave and Tash moving in next door. Up until two weeks before his death Dennis was still making his daily walks around the park where he so enjoyed meeting local folk and stopping to chat with them. Sadly, he didn’t win the last courageous battle with cancer in his leg (which he never once complained about) but he blessed his family in his last conversation to us all, giving thanks to God for his life and all God’s wonderful blessings.