



The Rev Carol Stone with Royal British Legion members at the re-dedication of a war memorial at St Peter's Church in Penhill Drive

Sex-Change Priest Was Loved By Congregation

The Bishop of Swindon, Dr Lee Rayfield, has paid tribute to the Rev Carol Stone. The Rev Stone, who served as vicar of St Philip's Church, in Upper Stratton and St Peter's Church, in Penhill, died on Saturday, December 27 in Prospect Hospice after a short fight with pancreatic cancer. She was the first Church of England priest to undergo a sex change and return to the pulpit.

First of all, Carol faced her diagnosis of pancreatic cancer really courageously. It was very sudden, said Dr Rayfield. She acted very courageously and made a wise decision based around her quality of life, rather than quantity. She knew it was going to be terminal and made a conscious decision to not try and extend her life by chemotherapy and other treatments which were going to make it hard for her. That was a wise decision and a courageous one. The Diocese of Bristol minister said he had first come across the Rev Stone when she decided to undergo gender reassignment surgery in 2000. She was ordained as Peter Stone in 1978 and served in Bradford-on-Avon, as well as taking a role as chaplain at Dautsey's School in West Lavington. In 1996, she took up her post in Upper Stratton, before making the decision to change sex. That divided opinion, but she got through it with the remarkable support from her congregation, said Dr Rayfield. The church authorities decided it was right to support her. It wasn't an easy journey for her and her courage in choosing what she wanted earned people's respect. It was that she was determined with what she felt was the right thing and that helped her tremendously. She had a lot of warmth, love and support from the congregation at St Philip's, which was part of how she managed to overcome the adversity. She was an amazingly hardworking person and probably she perhaps worked too hard, as many clergy do. One particular thing I remember was a relentless series of vandalism at the church (St Philip's) and it was incredible how she and her colleagues came through that because it would have sent anybody else into deep depression. It was hard, but she had tremendous determination and she wasn't somebody who easily gave up. She always found more reserves of energy and hope. That was really impressive. I remember Carol as somebody who wasn't afraid to speak her mind. She told you what she thought and bishops weren't immune from that. I'm going to miss her and I

know many other people will. It's very sad this happened to her, but she faced it with courage and with faith.

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