



## **Vicar's last farewell at Gorse Hill church he served for 35 years**

Canon Raymond John Harris led St Barnabus church in Gorse Hill until retiring, aged 65, to Fairford in 1994. He said at the time; "I shall miss being here but am looking forward to a good rest.

"I have been here so long that I know most of the people who live in Gorse Hill. I sometimes take the weddings of girls I christened, and whose parents I married."

During his tenure, he often spoke out on behalf of the vulnerable and in favour of Christian compassion. He was a frequent contributor of letters and articles to the Swindon Advertiser.

Canon Harris was born in 1929 and in 1951 graduated with a BA degree from Leeds University. He went on to study at the College of the Resurrection in Mirfield, West Yorkshire, an Anglican theological college. His first role after ordination was as curate of St. Michael's in Workington, Cumbria.

In December 1958, it was announced in the Adver that he had been appointed Vicar of St. Barnabus, and he was installed there the following month in a ceremony attended by the Bishop of Malmesbury.

He soon established himself not just as vicar but as a commentator on social and religious issues. In an article written for the Adver in 1960, for example, he asked what was the most valuable in life, and added: "Money? The pools promoters would like us to think so, but if you really think of the really happy people you know, you will find that they are not by any means all rich and all living the good things that money can buy."

Subsequent articles covered many issues. In 1964, as president of Swindon Council of Churches, he called for nuclear powers to begin a mutual programme to scale down weapon numbers.

In 1973, as treasurer of Gorse Hill Resident's Association, he called on planners to put people first when building new buildings and roads.

Canon Harris was also a founder member of Paraguay Committee for Human Rights, which in the 1980's began highlighting the murderous behaviour of the South American country's then leader, Alfredo Stroessner, towards his people.

The funeral service will take place at St. Barnabus Church on Wednesday, April 10, at noon followed by a committal at Fairford Cemetery at 2pm.

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