

A Thanksgiving for the Life of: Michael John Brain
Sutton Coldfield Crematorium 10th July 2019

Address on the Christian Hope: Revd Nick Nicholas

Mick was born in Wilnecote on New Year's Day 1947 to Harry and Violet Brain, in one of the worst winters for years, when the snow was so deep he couldn't be taken out of the house for weeks. When he was three the family moved to Hermitage Hill, where the motorway bridge now is. When he was five a second brother was born, but very sadly he did not survive, dying at 7 months old, which must have been very distressing to Mick as well as his parents.

Mick went to school at the Old Nethersole Primary and later to Polesworth High School. His father, Harry was a coal miner, who encouraged Mick not to go down the pits. As there were no above ground jobs going when Mick left school he took his dad's advice and apprenticed as a Mechanical Engineer with Foseca Chemicals, with day release at Birmingham College.

Qualifying as a Mechanical Engineer Mick worked with Foseca and Tamworth Council and Cincinnati Milicross Engineering Company.

In September 1969 he married Gaynor Dorica, a union that was blessed with two sons, Gary and then Paul, but which ended in divorce in 1982. Later Mick was able to make a lasting friendship with Sue Feenan. When he was 51 Cincinnati Engineering offered its workers voluntary redundancy which Mick was happy to take. This enabled him to become semi-retired, for he got a job with what is now the Dobbies Garden Centre, as their delivery man. It was a job he really loved - while the Centre was still under its original family ownership. But the joy went out of the work when it was taken over by Dobbies, and after giving it some 6 months or so he finally retired in May 2011.

Mick was a man of sport and creation. He loved gardening and birdwatching, which he took up when a boy and re-discovered when he was retired, often combining it with his love of walking in such as Hopwas woods. He was a man who wore out many boots. And a man who was known to grand-daughter, Meghan as the grandad with the bird-book.

Mick's mum and dad attended Polesworth Baptist Church where he joined the Church's Boys Brigade, & entered the Duke of Edinburgh awards scheme which aims at developing self-improvement among young people, and in which Mick achieved the Gold Medal award.

He was also a talented club level cricketer, at both opening bat and wicket-keeper, playing for the school and for Birch Coppice. a batsman he scored a century on 3 occasions, qualifying on his 1st century for an MCC tie, which he proudly wore at various cricket grounds, including his regular visits to watch Yorkshire County Cricket Club.

He took up golf after retiring as a cricketer, although he rather gave up that game after, in the company of two mates, he got his hole-in-one. Celebrating the achievement by keeping the golf ball. He was also a lifelong fan of Wolverhampton Wanderers, so he was greatly pleased at their recent premier league return. Ever a participant as much as the fan, he also played football for a local team and even once went with them to Germany to play - which was about the limit of his desire to go abroad. And, of course he was delighted to be a grandad to Gary and Kate's children, Meghan and Grace and to Paul & Hilary's children, Ameila, Harry and Ed.

As a person he was very quiet, and private, with an engineer's in-built desire to find out how things worked. He took his time about things. He was thoughtful and didn't like a fuss. He was sociable and committed across his interests, being willing to do his part, such as being treasurer for his cricket club. And many found him, in the family's words, to be a lovely man.

Perhaps Mick as he walked the woods and watched the birds saw a sense of God's great power and His divine nature which Psalm 8 celebrates as being revealed in creation, especially in people. God's creation is designed with light and earth, water and life in amazing variety and abundance to be a home for us. Every-one needs a home. A place you belong to, a base of security, a resting place from stress, a nesting place for nurture and nourishment and above all a family place of love.

Scott Holland in his poem speaks of death being nothing at all, with life being an unbroken continuity in time and relationship with those we love. The poem expresses the truth he knew as a Christian, as a

bishop. It rests on Jesus comforting last words to his disciples the night before he was betrayed to death: Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God, trust also in me. In my Father's house are many rooms ... I am going there to prepare a place for you. These words speak of God the Father's love for us, offering us an eternal home, a perpetual place of safety and shelter from the perils of life, a family of people forever dwelling in God's love and joy and peace.

Everyone's death is an anticipation of our own & every Christian funeral is an invitation to trust Jesus in our lives and through Him to come home to God our heavenly Father. If you know Jesus already this is a day for joy amid your tears for Jesus is preparing a room for you in His Father's house. But if Christ is perhaps still a stranger to you, this is day to look beyond our present suffering and seek Christ, humbling your heart, asking to know Him. He promises to welcome everyone who turns to Him and to be with you now in this life and in the everlasting new creation so that it may be true as Scot Holland wrote that death is nothing at all. In the name of the One God, the Holy Trinity, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.