St Matthew’s

Westminster



The Funeral of

Elizabeth Harris Aitken

*May 1st 1936 – April 15th 2022*

Tuesday 3rd May, 2022

at 10.30 am

*Please ensure mobile telephones are switched off for the duration of the service.*

*For those who are hard of hearing the church has an inductive loop system. Please set your hearing aid to the T position during the service.*



*From The Times obituary of Elizabeth Harris Aitken, 18 April 2022*

It was a highlight of the wedding of Elizabeth Harris to Jonathan Aitken at St Matthew’s Westminster in 2003 that when Fr Philip Chester asked, ‘Who gives this woman in marriage?’ her three sons, Damian, Jared and Jamie, shouted in robust unity ‘we do.’

Nuptials featured prominently in the narrative of the bride’s life, and this wedding was her fourth. It opened with John Greenleaf Whittier’s poignant hymn *Dear Lord and Father of mankind, forgive our foolish ways*.

Elizabeth considered herself an expert in the stormy dynamics of matrimony. Fr Philip Chester, officiating at her last wedding to Jonathan Aitken, called it a ‘love rooted in the reality of life’. In the congregation were Tory ministers, actors, bishops, ex-offenders, the bride and groom’s seven adult children.

On their honeymoon Aitken worked on his book, *Psalms for People Under Pressure*. ’The first time I took her into a prison,’ he wrote, ‘she was understandably nervous. But before the end of the chapel service, no fewer than three inmates of Wormwood Scrubs had told her, ‘I was a mate of your ex-husband Richard Harris’. Ex-offenders with names like Les the Big Face were guests at their home in Earls Court, where her old friends, from Marlon Brando to Rupert Everett, might also be found.

Ten years into their marriage, aged 77, she suffered a near-fatal brain haemorrhage. After her recovery her husband wrote in praise of the NHS brain surgeons who had saved her life. In subsequent years she suffered a second stroke, heart failure and two tumours.

Family life remained her priority. She was a matriarch to Damian, a film director; Jared and Jamie, both actors. During lockdown she held court on Zoom with three generations of family, down to the latest, her great-grandson Marlon Harris, aged four months.

ORDER OF SERVICE

*When the bell rings, please stand.*

*The Choir sings*

Lead me, Lord, lead me in thy righteousness,

Make thy way plain before my face.

For it is thou, Lord, thou, Lord, only

That makest me dwell in safety.

*Words: verses from Psalms 4 & 5*

*Music: Samuel Sebastian Wesley (1810-1876)*

*Please remain standing for*

The Introduction

& Bidding Prayer

*The Reverend Philip Chester*

*Vicar of St Matthew’s, Westminster*

We have come here today to remember before God our sister Elizabeth, to give thanks for her life and all she means to us, to commend her to God’s merciful care and

to commit her body to the earth.

We recall Elizabeth’s loving kindness, her personal courage, her strong faith and the many lives she touched for good, and we commend her to the everlasting love

and mercy of God.

O Father of all, we pray to thee for those whom we love

but see no longer. Grant them thy peace; let light perpetual shine upon them; and in thy loving wisdom and almighty power, work in them the good purpose of thy perfect will, through Jesus Christ Our Lord. Amen.

Hymn

Guide me, O thou great Redeemer,

Pilgrim through this barren land;

I am weak, but thou art mighty;

Hold me with thy powerful hand:

 Bread of heaven,

Feed me till I want no more.

Open now the crystal fountain

Whence the healing stream doth flow;

Let the fire and cloudy pillar

Lead me all my journey through:

 Strong deliverer,

Be thou still my strength and shield.

When I tread the verge of Jordan,

Bid my anxious fears subside;

Death of death, and hell’s destruction,

Land me safe on Canaan’s side:

 Songs of praises

I will ever give to thee.

Words: William Williams (1717-91), Tr Peter Williams (1727-96)

Music: Cwm Rhondda (CP 455), John Hughes (1873-1932)

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| *Please sit* | Reading |  |

1 Corinthians 13

*read by*

Marlowe Harris-Wilson *(grandson)*

If I speak in the tongues of mortals and of angels, but do not

have love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. And if I

have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains,

but do not have love, I am nothing. If I give away all my possessions, and if I hand over my body so that I may boast,

but do not have love, I gain nothing.

Love is patient; love is kind; love is not envious or boastful or arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice in wrongdoing, but rejoices in the truth. It bears all things, believes all things,

hopes all things, endures all things.

Love never ends. But as for prophecies, they will come to an end; as for tongues, they will cease; as for knowledge, it will come to an end. For we know only in part, and we prophesy only in part; but when the complete comes, the partial will come to an end. When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child,

I reasoned like a child; when I became an adult, I put an end to childish ways. For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then we will see face to face. Now I know only in part; then I will know fully, even as I have been fully known. And now faith, hope,

and love abide, these three; and the greatest of these is love.

Psalm 121

*sung to the setting by*

*Sir Henry Walford Davies (1869-1941)*

*I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills,*

*from whence cometh my help.*

*My help cometh even from the Lord,*

*who hath made heaven and earth.*

*He will not suffer thy foot to be moved,*

*and he that keepeth thee will not sleep.*

*Behold, he that keepeth Israel*

*shall neither slumber nor sleep.*

*The Lord himself is thy keeper,*

*the Lord is thy defence upon thy right hand;*

*So that the sun shall not burn thee by day*

*neither the moon by night.*

*The Lord shall preserve thee from all evil*

*yea, it is even he that shall keep thy soul.*

*The Lord shall preserve thy going out,*

*and thy coming in,*

*from this time forth for evermore.*

*Glory be to the Father, and to the Son,*

*and to the Holy Ghost.*

*As it was in the beginning, is now,*

*and ever shall be,*

*world without end. Amen.*

Reading

Sonnet 18

*William Shakespeare (1564-1616)*

*read by*

*Ella Harris (granddaughter)*

Shall I compare thee to a summer’s day?

Thou art more lovely and more temperate:

Rough winds do shake the darling buds of May,

And summer’s lease hath all too short a date;

Sometime too hot the eye of heaven shines,

And often is his gold complexion dimm’d;

And every fair from fair sometime declines,

By chance or nature’s changing course untrimm’d;

But thy eternal summer shall not fade,

Nor lose possession of that fair thou ow’st;

Nor shall death brag thou wander’st in his shade,

When in eternal lines to time thou grow’st:

So long as men can breathe or eyes can see,

So long lives this, and this gives life to thee.

Reading

St John 14. 1-3

*read by*

*Lord Ogmore (nephew)*

Jesus said: Do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father’s house there are many dwelling-places. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, so that where I am, there you may be also.

Hymn

Love Divine, all loves excelling,

Joy of heaven, to earth come down,

Fix in us thy humble dwelling,

All thy faithful mercies crown.

Jesu, thou art all compassion,

Pure unbounded love thou art;

Visit us with thy salvation,

Enter every trembling heart.

Come, almighty to deliver,

Let us all thy life receive;

Suddenly return, and never,

Never more thy temples leave.

Thee we would be always blessing,

Serve thee as thy hosts above,

Pray, and praise thee, without ceasing,

Glory in thy perfect love.

Finish then thy new creation,

Pure and spotless let us be;

Let us see thy great salvation,

Perfectly restored in thee,

Changed from glory into glory,

Till in heaven we take our place,

Till we cast our crowns before thee,

Lost in wonder, love, and praise!

Words: Charles Wesley (1707-88)

Music: Blaenwern (CP 516), William Rowlands (1860-1937)

The Homily

Fr Philip Chester

Anthem

All we like sheep have gone astray

*from Messiah (1741)*

*George Frederic Handel (1685-1759)*

*All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.*

*Isaiah 53.6*

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|  | Family Tributes |  |

*Jonathan Aitken*

*Damian, Jared and Jamie Harris*

The Prayers

*led by*

Fr Peter Bradley

Hymn

Glorious things of thee are spoken,

Sion, city of our God;

He whose word cannot be broken

Formed thee for his own abode:

On the Rock of Ages founded,

What can shake thy sure repose?

With salvation’s walls surrounded,

Thou may’st smile at all thy foes.

See, the streams of living waters,

Springing from eternal love,

Well supply thy sons and daughters,

And all fear of want remove:

Who can faint, while such a river

Ever flows their thirst to assuage?

Grace, which like the Lord the giver,

Never fails from age to age.

Saviour, if of Sion’s city

I through grace a member am,

Let the world deride or pity,

I will glory in thy name:

Fading is the worldling’s pleasure,

All his boasted pomp and show;

Solid joys and lasting treasure

None but Sion’s children know.

*Words: John Newton (1725-1807)*

*Music: Austria (CP 435), Joseph Haydn (1732-1809)*

*Please be seated for*

The Commendation

& Farewell

Give rest, O Christ, to your servant with your saints,

where sorrow and pain are no more, neither sighing,

but life everlasting.

You only are immortal, the creator and maker of all;

and we are mortal, formed of the earth, and to earth shall we return. For so did you ordain when you created me, saying, ‘You are dust, and to dust you shall return.’ All of us go down to the dust; yet even at the grave we make our song: Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia.

Give rest, O Christ, to your servant with your saints,

where sorrow and pain are no more, neither sighing,

but life everlasting.

*The priest, facing the body, says*

Into your hands, O merciful Saviour, we commend

your servant Elizabeth. Acknowledge, we humbly

beseech you, a sheep of your own fold, a lamb of your

own flock, a sinner of your own redeeming.

Receive her into the arms of your mercy, into the blessed rest of everlasting peace, and into the glorious company

of the saints in light. Amen.

*The coffin is sprinkled with holy water, and blessed with incense in preparation for burial, during which the Choir sings*

In Paradisum

*In Paradisum deducant te Angeli*

*in tuo adventu suscipiant te Martyres*

*et perducant te in civitatem sanctam Jerusalem.*

*Chorus Angelorum te suscipiant*

*et cum Lazaro quondam paupere*

*aeternam habeas requiem.*

*May the angels lead you into paradise;*

*may the martyrs greet you at your arrival*

*and lead you into the holy City of Jerusalem.*

*May the choir of Angels greet you*

*and like Lazarus, who once was a poor man,*

*may you have eternal rest.*

*Gabriel Fauré (1845-1924)*

*Please stand for*

The Proficiscere

Go forth upon thy journey from this world, O Christian soul.

Go in the name of God the Father Almighty who created thee,

In the name of Jesus Christ, his Son, who suffered for thee,

In the name of the Holy Spirit who strengthened thee.

In communion with the blessed saints and accompanied by angels and archangels and all the armies of the heavenly host.

May thy portion this day be in peace, and thy dwelling in the heavenly Jerusalem. Amen.

*Please remain standing for the*

Nunc Dimittis

*during which the Cortège leaves the church*

Lord now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace,

according to thy word. For mine eyes have seen thy salvation,

which thou hast prepared before the face of all people.

To be a light to lighten the Gentiles,

and to be the glory of thy people Israel.

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost:

as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be,

world without end. Amen.

*Charles Villiers Stanford (1852-1924)*

*Evening Canticles in A*

Organ Voluntary

Con moto maestoso

*Felix Mendelssohn (1809-1847)*

*Please remain in church as the family leave for the*

*Interment at Brompton Cemetery.*

*Everyone is invited to the Trevelyan Hall*

*& Garden for lunch after the service.*

*As you leave church please sign the*

*Book of Attendance.*

*The family will return following the Interment.*