

Memories & Tributes



In Loving Memory of Lilian Petch

22nd May 1936 to 28th January 2021

“Be still and know that I am God”

Psalm 46v10

Lilian

The home call of our dear sister Lilian is one of the most significant events in the life and history of Trinity Grace Church. Having known and served the Lord with Lilian for nearly 60 years, I feel I should give a brief account to the church on how much we are indebted to the vital role Lilian played in the life and history of our Fellowship.

The value of Lilian's ministry in the life and work of Trinity Grace Church cannot be overestimated. Lilian's role in the survival of the Fellowship, especially in the lean years, was absolutely vital, and I can honestly say that without Lilian's faithful service, the church would have struggled to survive. Lilian was a true pillar, and had she not been involved in the work and service of the Lord she loved; the structure would have soon crumbled.

Lilian was unassuming and did not suffer fools gladly. On the subject of immature Christians parading and boasting about their gifts, she turned to me one day and said, 'we don't put everything on display in the shop window'
I salutary lesson on the subject of humility.

In the days when we had no Pastor and no building, Lilian's home became the focal point of the life and ministry of the church. But this was only one of the vital contributions Lilian's family made. I cannot remember one service where Lilian was not present to play the piano. She was totally reliable on all occasions and an assuring presence in all the meetings we held. I only hope that Lilian will have strong neck muscles on the day when we receive our crowns of glory because Lilian's crown will be mighty heavy.

Having said all this about Lilian, the most important thing she would really want us to say is that it was all of grace and that all the glory be given to her precious Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Thank you, Lord, for the life and ministry of our dear sister. May you continue to bless Trinity Grace Church with faithful servants with the same love and devotion as our dear sister Lilian Petch.

Many may be wondering why Lilian never married. On that subject, though I don't remember the exact words, the gist of what Lilian once said to me was: 'God will provide a husband when and if it is His will.' Before Colin met Jean, Lilian and Colin spent a lot of time together, and though many thought it was the beginning of a happy romance, it was not to be.

Raymond and Muriel were very much concerned about Lilian being left on the shelf and in 1965/6 arranged for Raymond, Muriel, Lilian and me to attend the well-known film of the day 'The Sound of Music', which was showing at a cinema in Manchester. Nothing was said about matchmaking at the time, but I think Ray and Muriel's intention was fairly obvious. Though Lilian would have been a good catch for anyone, for me, there were no romantic inclinations.

I mention this to outline again the sacrifice Lilian made in her service for the Lord. Lilian was married to Christ first and foremost, and anything else took second place. If it meant remaining single for the rest of her days, as far as Lilian was concerned, that was how it had to be. Lilian was very supportive of those who did find their life long soul mates and was the first to rejoice with them.

We thank God for Lilian and for her dedication and commitment to Christ, and for her faithful service in helping to preserve the work and witness of the local church in Summerseat and Ramsbottom.

Les and Ann Yates.



We have such wonderful memories of our dear sister Lilian. The warmth of her smile, her enthusiastic laugh and her generous hugs. She was always so welcoming and bright. This to us reflected her lovely relationship with her Saviour. For me particularly she was a fervent prayer warrior.

She prayed for me all through my studies and during Sorrelle's leukaemia she could always be relied upon to pray.

Our abiding memory of Lilian is her sat at the piano so often playing "Turn your eyes upon Jesus" - she is now looking into His wonderful face. Praise God for her lovely life and faithful witness.

The photo was taken at a restaurant in Darwen celebrating Maurice's 50th birthday
Lesley & Clive Olive.



Lovely Lilian was so special to all of us, she was certainly a rock to the fellowship.

I remember her playing the piano during every offering and singing "Turn your eyes upon Jesus".

Such a inspirational lady who spoke her mind and was never shy of speaking up about her Lord and Saviour. All the ladies who would come to mums and tots were so fond of Lilian.

Whenever I would speak to her to see how she was getting on to encourage her, I would come away

feeling so much more encouraged. We will all miss her dearly.

What a comfort to know that she is with many of the other loved saints from Ramsbottom in heaven.

Rachel Larham.



She was a lovely , nice person. She put her arm around me when we entered in the church . She encouraged me since the beginning , always smiled at me. She is in the right place now . Good Bless you dear Lilian.

Robert Kiss.



Peter Johnston.

We are so sad to hear of the passing of dear Auntie Lilian. She was a great example of a sister in Christ remaining faithful, committed and steadfast. I remember her being ever present at Church growing up, sharing her musical gifts with us, always greeting others with her infectious smile and laughter and had just the perfect level of a stern enough glance to keep us boisterous kids in line when we needed it! She will be missed greatly and remembered fondly.

With our love to all friends and family.

Andy, Victoria, Sophie, James, Hayden & Eric Wild.



Auntie Lillian was always more than just a family friend, my siblings and I always considered her close family. She fit in well with us, she was loud, never afraid to say what she was thinking and enjoyed having a laugh but was also loving and extremely kind. I know she loved us like family and we loved her too. Going to miss you Auntie Lillian xxx

Anthony Blezard.



We have never known a time in the life of the Church, when Lilian was not there. She was a lady who truly loved The Lord and would serve him in any way she could. 'Only the best for God', she would say, and she meant it.

"Auntie Lilian" was a part of our family and a blessing to us and our children, constantly praying for us and available in any situation. She would always say to us "if you are up a tree - send for me, if you're in a jam - here I am". We have lots of happy memories of Sunday lunches, days out, shopping trips, holidays and even being a valuable staff member at Lighting Design Centre.

Life was difficult in the last few months, but she never lost her faith and trust in Jesus. He was her Saviour and Lord. Now her faith has become sight and she will be forever singing his praises in glory (no doubt loudly) . .

Maurice & Louise Blezard.

Lilian's love for her Lord was evident in her life. She was faithful in her service, and her obedience to God's Word was there for all to see.

You always knew when Lilian was present, she was a larger than life character, who always brought a smile to my face. Another thing that stood out to me in her life was her thankfulness for everything. I spent many times with her at her flat, having a cup of coffee, and a shortbread biscuit - she enjoyed her shortbread.

She was a lady blessed with so many gifts, and another of those gifts was empathy. She knew exactly how I was feeling when my mum was taken home. She knew the commitment, emotions and everything that goes with looking after a parent at home, and her hugs always made me feel better, and those hugs I will never forget.

Thank you Lilian. Thank you Lord, for Lilian's life and witness.

Linda Hough.



I have many happy memories of spending time with Lillian. We served together in the kitchen at Mums and Tots group, where we laughed and sometimes sang choruses from our childhood of which Lillian knew many.

We also loved to have lunch at Owens and spent happy hours there often discussing of how the Lord worked in our lives.

I loved how Lillian would relate stories of happenings in the early beginnings of the church. How she and her friends would trudge through the snow to get to the building in Summerseat. The Lord showered His Blessings upon them to get where we are today. How glorious is our God.

A well deserved Crown of Glory is Lillian's from her beloved Lord and Saviour.

Maureen Fleming.



In December 1961, I was invited to a Bible study in Summerseat! The meeting was held in a little garage in Robin Road and I remember Pastor Gregory, his wife Muriel, Ernie Westwell and a young lady pianist were present. The pianist I recall was wearing mittens, it was so cold! The pianist was Lilian. This evening was the prelude to me joining the church. I was constrained with the preaching and the hymns - it all seemed personal to me!

To sum up from 1 John 4:19, "We love Him, because He first loved us." And Lilian's hymn - 509 in Christian Hymns - "and can it be that I should gain an interest in the Saviour's blood?"

During our time in Summerseat, we moved location 3 times, and each time we took Lilian's piano with us. I remember pushing and pulling the piano over the cobbles of Summerseat as it rang out its strings in complaint!! Our last move of location was a Victorian Co-op store, which we rented for several years.

But -- the only way to get the piano into the building was by a Victorian HOIST!!

The Co-op was a three storey building and the River Irwell was nearby.

A tentative decision was made, and we started to hoist the piano up! The wind caught it a couple of times, but eventually we reached the third floor and willing hands hauled the piano in safely! I don't remember Lilian being there, but she was happy to see her piano suitably placed in the Sunday School room.

Unfortunately we had to leave the Co-op and Summerseat - the River Irwell undercut our foundations, after 110 years of business.

So we worshipped in each others' homes before eventually moving to our location in Ramsbottom, acquiring the premises in three instalments. We didn't take Lilian's original piano, but acquired another one for her. She soon settled in with it and Praise to God continued in preaching and melody.

Ray Gregory eventually retired and Oliver and family arrived, then Tony and family, and we also have several pianists.

So for being the church's pianist for over 60 years, Lilian made music to the PRAISE of her Lord, and as Geoff said "singing in Glory" now!

So the Lord has blessed us and as we see all that lies before us, locally, nationally and internationally, we remember all our past congregations who helped to establish a work for the Lord by His redeeming love.

Jim Hoyle.



No words could describe what Auntie Lillian has meant to our family. Always a word of kindly encouragement and godly wisdom. 'God knows . . .' and a wink of caring concern was all that was needed to fill your heart with peace. 'He is on my list' was all that

was needed to know my Dad was being faithfully prayed for. What a blessing to know that Daniel and Katy were safe in the arms of Auntie Lillian and Louise Blezard whilst Revelation prison visits and practice nights went on to late, and now to know, she is in the presence and singing the praise of Him whom she served so well for so long.

Love Gary, Christine, Daniel, Katy, Amy, Molly and Ben xxx

5 loves of Lilian

Lilian loved biscuits! Despite her diabetes, she couldn't resist a digestive biscuit or 2 or...! The good thing was, that when I visited, she loved to share a biscuit or 2 or... with me!

Lilian loved to talk. Although the conversation would be rather loud, there was never a quiet moment with her. She always loved to share in a wide-ranging conversation when I visited. There was never a dull moment.

Lilian loved the Lord. Even when she was struggling with pain, or other aspects of her health, she would always be cheered by speaking of her Saviour. We loved to meditate on heaven together and looking forward to the bliss of glory in Christ's presence.

Lilian loved her hymns. When phoning through the hymn numbers to her, and being unsure of what would be the best tune, I would get the dulcet tones of Lilian singing down the phone! It was a real sadness to her, when she could no longer play her beloved hymns.

Lilian loved the church – especially Trinity Grace Church. She enjoyed sharing happy memories of the church, and great history lessons were learnt. However, one thing she couldn't get over, was the fact that our little church, which had such humble beginnings, was now having a good influence in our region and in various parts of the world. She was so thankful to God for what He was doing.

Tony Flanders.



“Lillian loved the Lord with all her heart, body and soul. When I was unemployed Lillian was there for us, to help us have a really great Christmas. This caring, faithful lady served the Lord with her whole self. When a new preacher would come, she was there to encourage and support. When her eyesight became poor, she became very sad that she could not play the piano. It was lovely to see Jeff coming to her and comforting her and making special arrangements so that she could continue to play. This dear Lady did not want to stop serving but wanted always to continue in the Lord's work. Dear Lillian your work in the Church Militant is over, and now you are in the Church Triumphant.

Linda was much encourage by the work Lillian did in Mums and Tots and could not do without her.”

Nicholas & Linda Boardman.



We have so many wonderful memories of Lillian.... She was so full of the joy of the Lord and always had a smile for everyone.

She was a woman of prayer and greatly encouraged us when she told us she was praying for us. She also really appreciated it when you prayed for her and was so pleased to let you know when God had answered our requests and was keen to give Him All the glory.

Lillian loved to tell of God's faithfulness and it was so encouraging to hear of the early life of the church.

When my mum first came to Ramsbottom Lillian stood out, she had such a big smile and hearty laugh and was very kind and friendly. They became very close over the years and always loved a big hug especially at the end of “Mums and Tots”. She loved this work and all the mums loved her, she was a real presence and was very committed and completely dependable, she always enjoyed being in the kitchen.

When we visited her recently we sang together the chorus “ Turn your eyes upon Jesus” which was one of her favourites, what a blessing to know she is face to face with Her Saviour and Lord now.

Our overall memory of Lillian is that she loved the Lord and His people and was a great encouragement. We will miss her very much...

Patricia, Martin, Beth, Hannah, Jenny and Joshua Lee.



Mrs Duncan



Auntie Lilian's favourite mode of transport, the spitfire



Her mother

The Lord My Life

The Lord is my life and my vitality,
he makes me walk tall.
He gives me peace of mind and body,
he refreshes tired limbs
and worried thoughts.
He invigorates me!
He gives me the determination
to follow his directions
to please him.
Even though I feel my life ebbing away
I will not fear annihilation.
You are with me.
Your promise of new life beyond the grave
will give me strength.
You prepare new delights for me to sample,
even as I feel the force of evil all around.
You welcome me to share your life,
your enthusiasm knows no bounds.
I know that your deep-down goodness,
your purity of love,
will flow through my life,
and I will revel in your company
now and in eternity.
Based on Psalm 23

© Hilary Creed Kevin Mayhew

The psalm we found in her purse



This is her dog Cindy, who used to sit by her feet while she played the piano at church.



Mrs. Duncan

Mrs. Duncan was one of the original members of Primitive Methodist Church, which later became Summerseat Gospel Mission and in 1961 joined the FIEC changing the church title to Summerseat Independent Evangelical Church. Mrs. Duncan remained a member throughout those changes living well into her late nineties. The first time I attended the meetings, which happened to be an evangelistic meeting, Mrs. Duncan gave her testimony; she was then in her early nineties.

One of the many lasting memories of Mrs. Duncan was her gracious spirit. She would often invite church members to her home, and out would come the best china and, best of all, her home-made cake. In my early days, it was usually a weekly visit where I learned a lot from this dear lady, much of it through her radiant Christian faith. Mrs. Duncan was one of the group of ladies who prayed for young men to be converted and added to their struggling fellowship, which prayers were gloriously answered in the early sixties. Below is a photo of Mrs. Duncan and also Mrs. Duncan opening her home to Lilian and Dougy Kyme. Dougy is just about to enjoy a piece of delicious cake.

Les Yates.



Auntie Lilian wasn't actually my auntie, but she was part of our family in every way that mattered and we loved and treated her as such. She gave me more love and kindness than I could ever repay and I will miss her dearly."

John Blezard.



I will always remember Lilian for the genuineness of her faith and the undeniable love she had for her Saviour. For the many years I knew her, this love grew stronger and deeper as time went by.

It was always enjoyable, often funny and most of all encouraging to hear her tell stories from the "olden days of the church" which for many revealed the true character of her faith.

So it was not surprising to see how often she was affected by the word of God and especially the preaching, she was always an encouragement to the preacher and often shared how the message had challenged her in her walk with the Lord.

She had a great love for the church and often shared how she was praying for you and also your family, she would often stop me and ask how my father was doing when he was in a nursing home and how she had been praying for him.

Lilian had a character as big as her faith and she will be missed, her contribution to the life of the church is beyond measure and I am sure her reward in glory

will be great.

Jeff Kinsley.

When I think of Lilian, I think of bright clothes, bright lipstick, bright twinkly eyes and a bright laugh. I think of the bright smiles on the faces of the children when they received the goody bags of treats that she donated for them at the Sunday school party for so many years. Above all, I think of her bright hope of a future with the Saviour she loved and to whom she dedicated her life.

She was a faithful servant in so many ways and I am so thankful for her loving concern and prayers over so many years.

“Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.” Matthew 5: 16.

Yvonne Kinsley.



How I always think of Lilian is described by the word steadfast. I first met Lilian at the church in Summerseat in January 1967. She was playing the piano for the bible study and the sing a long afterwards. She was always there to play the piano and to make sure everything was done decently and in order. She helped me a lot as a young and very green new convert and over the years. When we moved to Rhosneigr and came back to Ramsbottom on a visit there was always a loving welcome. Such a heart for the Lord and so fierce for everyone to respect and honour Him. Lilian made such a loving impact upon all who knew her and she will be sorely missed.

Heather Westwell.



An hour at Lilian's was such a blessing, to hear stories of God's faithfulness to the church from its beginnings in Summerseat. She was a member of the "ready for anything gang" just waiting for a job to do.

She recalled an incident from Campaigners with great laughter, explaining that there was a tug of war, boys against girls, the girls couldn't budge the boys at all and they seemed very relaxed. Then it was revealed that my dad Ernie had tied the rope at the boys end to the legs of the piano!

I arrived once to be told that she had just been shouting at the tv, "read your bible if you want the answer!" On another occasion she couldn't wait to tell me how the Lord had blessed her in the fact that her sins were gone, never to be remembered again.

I will miss the Friday night fish and chips delivery through the window during the pandemic. Anyone who knew Lilian would know that she belonged to Him.

A faithful lady, very much loved and missed.

Graham & Louise Westwell.

*‘The thing is Joanne,
I’m selfish.
I get so much pleasure
from giving, it’s all for
me really’
(Lilian Petch 2020)*

This sums Auntie Lilian up - generous, stubborn and full to the brim with kindness. She took joy from making people happy. There was little point arguing with her when it came to paying for coffees but absolutely no point when it came to treating ‘our girl’ Betty.

Auntie Lilian has been a fixture in our family since I can remember – She was our family. Every Sunday

she would come for lunch (to shout at the football on the TV before falling asleep!) and she never missed a big family occasion. She had a ‘Summerseat saying’ for everything and always an opinion to match! A formidable force of nature but with a heart of gold.

In the past few years, we’ve grown especially close, mainly due to the arrival of my daughter Betty or ‘Our Ladyship’, as Auntie Lilian would call her. They had a firm friendship and Betty could do no wrong in Lilian’s eyes. She thought everything Betty did was equal to genius and repeatedly said ‘she’s been here before that girl’. We were lucky to have all spent lots of precious time together and I feel very blessed that Betty had such a wonderful experience of Auntie Lilian’s love and kindness. We will miss her very much and I will ensure that Betty never forgets her very special friend.

Love from Joanne, Christopher and Betty xx



“If ya talkin to ya-self, ya talkin to a good’n” - was one of the many quirky Lancastrian sayings that Lilian had rolled up her sleeve. It was my privilege to work with Lilian for a number of years whilst we worked at Lighting Design Centre. As well as taking a second, more puzzled look after Lilian had let one of these sayings trip off her tongue, I often chuckled, usually just to my self. She had a big character and was one of those people that “called a spade a spade” which, for all I know, is a saying that could have originated from Lilian herself.

Never was there one day working with her, were we did not laugh together. And never was there one day working with her, were we didn’t pray together. Her heart for the Lord and His work was huge. She had a particular big heart for Joaquina, one of the children she sponsored in Mozambique, who had a life shortening blood disorder and would give generously to her medical needs.

She often told me she prayed for Joaquina every day. She will probably be remembered most for her consistent piano playing at church - and particularly for the single introductory note played before every verse of every hymn she played. Lilian has been one of the most faithful people I’ve known and her faithful testimony to the Lord and His church will remain dear in the hearts of us all. As one of its founder members, the church is certainly indebted to Lilian in ways too numerous to mention. The only thing bigger than her character on earth, will be her crown in heaven.

Rob Stredder.



“Loving memories of Lilian, dear sister and Aunt. Will be sadly missed.”
John, Pat, Andrew, Ruth and family.



“Promoted to Glory” lovely Lilian was my Dad Gordon Stacey’s cousin but he loved her like a sister. She has been a wonderful ambassador for The Lord who she is now with in Heaven with my Dad and my sister Gill who was her Chinese meal buddy”

Lots of love from Amanda, Joan and family.



My wonderful Auntie Lillian, you will remain as that for me always.

Growing up with you by my side involved spending every Saturday in your home, which is fondly remembered as 'the land as do as you please.' What really pleased me was to be inspired by a kind, loving and strong woman who I hung on every word of often using the phrase 'well Auntie Lillian says'.

As the years have gone by you have remained the same loyal and selfless constant in my life, never failing to have a famous saying for any occasion which I will continue the legacy of I promise.

This week your piano famous tune 'turn your eyes upon Jesus' has reminded me of what you held dear in your heart and it wasn't this world, although you lived your life with spirit and vibrance spending as much time as you could with those who you held dear. I will feel a special Auntie Lillian hug around me always.

No one can hug like you. I love you with all of my heart.

Your precious darling Rachel x



My memories of Lillian was her commitment & faithfulness to her Lord, this was demonstrated when she literally kept the church doors opened by allowing the meetings to be held in her own home, as the previous place of worship in Summerseat was coming to an end.

I first met Lillian in 1972 when I started to attend the church, and one of the jobs she gave me was to transport big wooden benches from her garden shed into her living room, so the congregation could meet in her home. Lillian also allowed the church to use her bedrooms so that the Sunday school could take place which I was a part of.

I know for my family Angela, Laura and Richard that we have been so blessed over the years by Lillian's joy in the Lord and her love for music, where each Sunday morning & evening she would faithfully play the piano. I know it has already been said before, that if it was not for Lillian the Church doors might not be open today. However we know that through Gods providence and Grace, that the Church has been so blessed by Lillian's faithfulness and commitment in paving the way, that the church continues and grows to this very day.

Praise the Lord for Lillian's faithfulness and that one day we will all meet again.

Gary Hilton and family.

I first met Lillian in 1997 when Ramsbottom Independent Evangelical Church was looking for a new pastor. Many people stepped forwards in those early encounters with the "young man" (yes I was very young then) to make themselves known and "test out" the new candidate, but Lillian Petch was not amongst them. Not that she didn't care, because Lillian loved her church with all her heart, but because she was trusting in the Lord of the church to guide in all things, and she was confident that he had already heard her prayers.

But do not think for a moment that Lillian's presence was not felt - far from it! Lillian was "the life and soul" of every church gathering, perpetually present and never quiet. She was heard in the playing of the piano, which was a constant of every church meeting for many decades; she was "heard" in her warm smile, colourful skirts, bright tops and big hugs; she was heard in her enthusiastic appreciation of the preaching of God's word, both during and after the sermon; and she was heard in the rustle of a wrapper as she unfurled her favourite sweet.

In all my time as pastor here, one of the most valuable and encouraging things has been the assurance of the prayers of godly women. From the very start, Lillian made it known to me that she was praying for me, and I do believe that she prayed every day since I commenced my ministry right through to the last. God has heard and answered Lillian's prayers, and if there is any good done through any of the preaching at Trinity Grace Church, thank the Lord for the prayers of Lillian Petch and other godly women who have never ceased to pray. May the head of the church raise up others to carry forwards this prayerfulness that Lillian took from those ladies at the Primitive Methodist Church in Summerseat seven decades ago!

Although Lillian loved to play the piano, and it was a great sadness to her when she was no longer able to do so, she was never "jealous" of the position and was glad when Alison, Neil and others began to take over. She rejoiced that the worship of God was continuing even though she had to step aside. For a person whose very identity was tied up in this service, such a spirit is very commendable and an example to us all.

We have missed Lillian over these past months as she has been unable to join us for gathered worship, and we will miss her even more now that she has gone to glory. She has shown us the way and passed us the torch: let us all persevere and honour the memory of this godly woman. Above all things, she loved her Saviour, and now she is in his presence filled with joy. Amen!

Oliver and family.

In Loving Memory of Lilian Petch

22nd May 1936 to 28th January 2021

*Lilian's Favourite Hymn, played during the collection
almost every week.*

O soul, are you weary and troubled?
No light in the darkness you see?
There's light for a look at the Saviour,
And life more abundant and free.

*Turn your eyes upon Jesus,
Look full in His wonderful face,
And the things of earth will grow strangely dim,
In the light of His glory and grace.*

Through death into life everlasting
He passed, and we follow Him there;
O'er us sin no more hath dominion
For more than conqu'rors we are!
Turn your eyes.....

His Word shall not fail you, He promised;
Believe Him and all will be well;
Then go to a world that is dying,
His perfect salvation to tell!
Turn your eyes.....
