

OBITUARY

REVEREND PETER SPENCER (1940–2022)

Teacher, parish priest, historian, entertainer, cricketer, devoted husband and family man, activist for social justice, man of his local neighbourhood, ecumenist, Bible scholar, Man of the People, poultry keeper, lanternist ... and so it goes on.

Peter's first encounter with a magic lantern took place in a Peterborough junk shop in 1970. In a battered cardboard box was a black tin object and what looked like broken glass. He bought the lot for ten bob (ten shillings). After careful restoration, there emerged a simple magic lantern, complete with chimney and lenses, and some wooden framed hand-painted slides. So it all began.

He had hardly time to try out his new hobby in the classroom when his life took a new turn. In 1972 he 'got the Call' and events seemed to be pointing in a certain direction. He left the teaching profession and after due process began training for Holy Orders in the Anglican Church. Ordained priest in 1975, he served the next 33 years as vicar in three busy urban parishes, taking on as extra part-time ministries an industrial mission as well as chaplaincies in drug rehabilitation and the local

hospice. Little time was left for hobbies, but the lantern did make occasional appearances in the church halls. And in two of the inner-city parishes, he even kept a few hens!

Then, in the 1990s, enter the Gilbert family – Ray, Pat, and Martin – as they presented one of their impressive shows in Birmingham. Membership of the Magic Lantern Society quickly followed, but it was not until Peter actually retired from full parish work that he had time to orchestrate the flowering of the lantern in the presentation of shows, mainly in the West Midlands area, assisted by his wife Pat, two of their sons (Michael and Andrew) and, a few years back, the three grandchildren.

Peter was loved and respected, not only for his open, joyous, friendly personality, but for his integrity, for the faith that fired his values, his commitment to social justice and his courage in speaking out when it was needed. He feared nobody and encouraged many. He was not afraid to speak politically, pinpointing the values behind certain ways of thinking. Many, many people have said, "Peter always made



The Spencer family performing at the MLS October 2019 Meeting in Birmingham

you think." At least three of our lanternists have departed the scene this year and we shall continue to miss them, especially those who were closest to us. But we are not without hope, as the Bible, and Peter, might say:

*'The light shines on in the darkness,
and the darkness has never overcome it ...'*



Pat Spencer