

# Brother Colin Wilfred SSF - Obituaries

**Obituary from the three archbishops of Aotearoa, New Zealand and Polynesia.**

Dear Friends,

We learned today of the death of Brother Colin Wilfred of the Society of St Francis, at the friary of Canterbury, England. Brother Colin was in his early 70s and had been unwell for a time. This is indeed sad news for the church because Brother Colin served amongst us here when the friars were living in Auckland. During his time in Aotearoa New Zealand, Brother Colin conducted many retreats, gave many bible studies and talks and contributed widely from his considerable theological and spiritual resources. Brother Colin was instrumental in creating the Anglican Religious Life Advisory Group of Aotearoa, New Zealand and Polynesia for the Anglican Church of these islands. Although Brother Colin left for England some years ago he will be remembered with much aroha, for his passion for justice and peace as well as his intelligent and creative witness to contemporary Christian spirituality, not forgetting his wonderful wit. This record of service by a friar amongst us underscores again the incalculable value of Franciscan witness and Franciscan vocation for us and with us.

E te pononga o Te Atua, haere, haere, haere, moe mai i roto i te rangimarie o Te Karaiti

Well done thou good and faithful servant.

Archbishop Brown Turei

Archbishop David Moxon

Archbishop Winston Halapua

An edited version of this text was released from the Anglican Communion News Service  
<http://www.aco.org/acns/digest/index.cfm/2011/8/3/Brother-Colin-Wilfred-dies-in-UK>

and also online in Anglican Taonga

<http://anglicantaonga.org.nz/News/Common-Life/Brother-Colin-Wilfred-dies-in-UK>

**Obituary from Martin Pendergast – particularly concerning Colin’s AIDS ministry in London in the 1980s and early 1990s**

Bro. Colin Wilfrid SSF - RIP



Brother Colin Wilfred of the Anglican Society of St Francis died at their friary in Canterbury on 2 August 2011. Brother Colin was in his early 70s and had been unwell for a time, although active in many ways. More recently he was Guardian of the friary next to the medieval Greyfriars.

He was well known to many Roman Catholics, not least for his pioneering work in showing how Christian communities could live positively with HIV/AIDS. In the late 1980's and early 1990's, both government and faith communities in London were faced with the reality of HIV, then an incurable and usually quickly fatal disease. There was growing statistical and anecdotal evidence that London was home to the largest concentration of people with or affected with HIV. A number of individuals (both lay and ordained) from within the Christian communities were actively involved with providing different kinds of both practical and pastoral support to people with or affected by HIV. They were aware of the climate of fear, prejudice and ignorance which adversely affected people with or affected by HIV and interfered with a proper understanding of and response to the this illness.

Issues of sexuality, and theology made the response to HIV both one in which they believed the churches should take a lead, but also which caused confusion and sometimes judgement within their communities. They originally came together for mutual support and to discuss how these problems might be handled effectively in a number of ad hoc groups, such as the inter faith group of Terrence Higgins Trust, the Ministers' Group (an informal meeting of clergy and others involved with people with HIV and AIDS started in 1986), and London Christian Action on AIDS. These included Revd. Andrew Henderson, Sr. Eva Heymann SHCJ, Revd. Malcolm Johnson, Fr. Bill Kirkpatrick, Charles O'Byrne, Martin Pendergast, and the late Fr. David Randall.

Over time, all of these groups ceased to meet, although there was a general consensus that there was a need to continue meeting, but a shortage of resources to plan and organise meetings. The London Churches HIV/AIDS Unit, accountable to the London Churches Group of ecumenical church leaders, was established in September 1990, and in 1991 it presented a briefing paper detailing the view of its steering group and its Adviser, Bro. Colin Wilfred, that the London Ecumenical AIDS Forum should be established, bringing together representatives of groups, hospital chaplains, those

appointed by denominations to work on this issue, and others within the Christian and Jewish communities in order to offer support, to share information and to identify needs and avoid duplication, as well as attend to the spiritual aspects of HIV need.

One of the first World AIDS Day liturgies was held at St. George's Roman Catholic Cathedral Southwark when Colin's flair as a liturgist combined with his commitment to people with HIV. With the then Canon John Hine, now Catholic auxiliary Bishop in Kent, Colin Wilfred co-presided at a joint Liturgy of the Word, followed by separate Anglican and Roman Catholic celebrations of the Liturgy of the Eucharist, probably the first of its kind in a UK Roman Catholic Cathedral. He and I worked together on a number of further World AIDS Day liturgies to be held in Southwark Anglican Cathedral, Westminster Abbey and other London churches of various denominations.

In 1991 Colin Wilfred had moved to St Botolph's Anglican Church Aldgate, to be the first full time Anglican counsellor for people affected by HIV. He had already been a member of the Ministers' Group. Colin later moved to the Royal Foundation of St Katharine in 1993 where a small SSF community was formed.

Colin memorably devised the dignified Exodus Liturgy marking LGCM's formal eviction from St Botolph's Church in September 1988 at the orders of the Diocese of London and its Consistory Court. It was a rare assignment for anyone and he produced a reflectively creative and rousing finale for LGCM's sojourn at that church, with a passionate evocation of the terrors of discrimination and stigmatisation, all set within the framework of the Hebraic-Christian story which brought out his skills as an imaginative, challenging liturgist alongside his passion for justice.

He continued to develop his liturgical expertise, co-compiling many of the editions of the Daily Office SSF. The original influenced *Celebrating Common Prayer* which influenced the Daily Office in *Common Worship* (CofE).

Colin Wilfrid was later elected Minister Provincial of SSF in Australia and New Zealand. Responding to news of his death, the archbishops of the Anglican Church of Aotearoa, New Zealand and Polynesia said: "This is indeed sad news for the church because Brother Colin served amongst us here when the friars were living in Auckland. During his time in Aotearoa New Zealand, Brother Colin conducted many retreats, gave many bible studies and talks and contributed widely from his considerable theological and spiritual resources. Brother Colin was instrumental in creating the Anglican Religious Life Advisory Group of Aotearoa, New Zealand and Polynesia for the Anglican Church of these islands. Although Brother Colin left for England some years ago he will be remembered with much aroha, for his passion for justice and peace as well as his intelligent and creative witness to contemporary Christian spirituality, not forgetting his wonderful wit. This record of service by a friar amongst us underscores again the incalculable value of Franciscan witness and Franciscan vocation for us and with us. 'E te pononga o Te Atua, haere, haere, haere, moe mai i roto i te rangimarie o Te Karaiti. Well done thou good and faithful servant.'"

In 2009 he contributed to an ecumenical day on spirituality, sponsored by Carmel-in-the-City, at St. Joseph's Church, Bunhill Row, London.

His funeral will take place at St. Peter's Church, Canterbury, on the Feast of St. Clare, 11 August, at 13.00.

Martin Pendergast

## Obituary written for Church Times

### BROTHER COLIN WILFRED SSF

Brother Colin Wilfred, who died in the Canterbury friary at Eastgate Hospital on Tuesday, 2<sup>nd</sup>. August was a much loved brother of the SSF who lived joyfully, and who bore the last years with an irreversible condition of the lungs as a true friar and Christian man. Did he welcome Sister Death? At any rate, he never complained and persevered in ministry within and without the Society until Sister Death could no longer be denied. He travelled to meetings on public transport through last winter, and was present at our Annual Brothers' Chapter in June.

Colin Cherriman was born 5<sup>th</sup>. September, 1937 at Chaldon. He attended Reigate Grammar School, and went on to qualify as a librarian. He was a member of St Mary's Church, East Grinstead, adjacent to the Convent of St Margaret, was later accepted for ordination and attended Leeds University and the College of the Resurrection, Mirfield. He was ordained deacon to a title at St Francis', Bournemouth in 1965, and priest the following year. His vicar was the late Alan Harrison.

On the 5<sup>th</sup>. July, 1969 at the age of 31 he entered the Society of Saint Francis as a postulant, was clothed as a novice three months later and was professed in vows on 10<sup>th</sup>. June, 1972. For the next 24 years he served in the European Province in various capacities – novice tutor at Hilfield, then Plaistow – in charge of the friary at Harbledown, Canterbury – in Belfast and in Edinburgh – back to Hilfield, then in 1982 he became Guardian for five years of the Alnmouth Friary. Like all good teachers, he was a good learner and through these years he grew as a missionary, a retreat conductor, a spiritual director, a liturgist. He was never at a loss for words!

Over the years there was also growing in Colin a passion for justice in society and in the churches for people of all sexual orientations – so, when in the mid eighties AIDS made its devastating appearance among us, he became active in the cause of ministry to sufferers, both practical and pastoral. In 1987 he was released from Alnmouth so that he could move to London where he worked from various bases (Camberwell, Paddington, The Royal Foundation of St Katharine with Brother Jude) – as HIV/AIDS Pastor for the East End at St Botolph's Aldgate. From Brother Jude 'He stayed with people until they died, washing their bedding when they had no one to care for them; sometimes in the early days of the epidemic when there was much fear, he laid out people because undertakers refused to do the job. In one week he conducted 14 funerals. By 1996, he was burnt out'.

And, in 1996, came the call to the Australia/New Zealand Province, of which he was elected Minister in 1997. The three archbishops of the Anglican Church of Aotearoa/New Zealand and Polynesia send this tribute:- '..... During his time in Aotearoa/New Zealand, Brother Colin conducted many retreats, gave many bible studies and talks and contributed widely from his considerable theological and spiritual resources. He was instrumental in creating the Anglican Religious Life Advisory Group of Aotearoa/New Zealand and Polynesia for the Anglican Church of these islands.....His will be remembered with much aroha, for his passion for justice and peace as well as his intelligent and creative witness to contemporary Christian spirituality, not forgetting his wonderful wit'. And, from Australia, Brother Bruce-Paul writes:- 'I lived with Colin at Stroud from 2001-3. He was a great gift

to us all even if it wasn't easy to get a word in sideways sometimes. I give thanks to God for his friendship, his liturgical and preaching gifts and the gentleness of his pastoral ministry one to one.'

In 2003 he returned to the European Province, and has since lived at the Canterbury friary. With Sister Joyce he worked untiringly on the revision of 'The Daily Office SSF' whose undoubted success he lived to see, served on the Editorial Board of *Franciscan*, Provincial Chapter, and the group which planned the Annual Brothers' Chapter 2011, and continued to carry out preaching engagements.

All who mourn him give thanks for a wonderful and loving brother who came bearing gifts selflessly shared, and departs with our prayers for his rest and bliss.