

Sea of Faith

Exploring Values, Spirituality and Meaning

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Newsletter 129, March 2017

We farewell

The Very Reverend John Murray **former Moderator of the Presbyterian Church of NZ**

Most of this copy came from the website www.presbyterian.org.nz and was written by the Assembly Executive Secretary, Rev. Wayne Matheson.

Dear colleagues and friends

The Very Rev John Murray, ONZM, died on Friday, 17 February 2017 at Sevenoaks Matai Wing, Paraparaumu.

We not only pause and acknowledge John's life and the many contributions he made, but we also express our love, sympathy and support - and our prayers - to Shirley and the family.

John was born in November 1929, and attended St Clair School, followed by Kings High School, then undertook MA studies at Otago University.

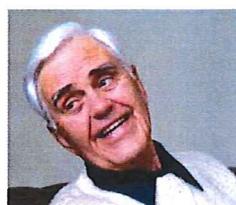
He attended the Theological Hall as a special student in 1952. John travelled overseas for further study at King's College in the United Kingdom and graduated with a MA from Canterbury in 1954.

He married Shirley in July of the same year in Cambridge, England.

John then studied at Bossey Ecumenical Institute, Switzerland before returning to New Zealand where he accepted a call, and was ordained at St David's, Taihape in June 1956.

John resigned from this role on 31 January 1962 and was appointed as ecumenical chaplain to Victoria University and Wellington Teachers' College from 1 February 1962. During these years John was actively involved in protests against the Vietnam war.

John accepted a call to Knox Church, Christchurch in November 1967.



He worked with HART (Halt all Racial Tours) and was involved with the NZ Race Relations Council.

John was then called to St Andrews on the Terrace, Wellington, in February 1975 and served there until his retirement in 1993. During these years, St Andrew's became a centre for social action and political debate.

John co-founded "Boycott" to stop the All Blacks tour of South Africa in 1985.

He served as the convener of the Presbyterian Public Questions Committee.

John also played an important part as a co-founder and later as chairperson of Te Kakano o te Aroha Marae Trust, Moera, Lower Hutt, in 1988.

John was installed as Moderator of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa New Zealand in 1990 and presided at the 150th anniversary celebrations.

He helped found the St Andrew's Music Trust and the St Andrew's Trust for Religion and Society.

John was the founder and chairperson of the NZ Hymnbook Trust, promoting and publishing New Zealand hymns and songs for all churches. In addition he was manager and the chief editor of "Alleluia Aotearoa", the first book of NZ hymns for all churches in Aotearoa, published in 1993.

John believed the church needed to speak into the social and political issues of the day – both within Aotearoa New Zealand and beyond.

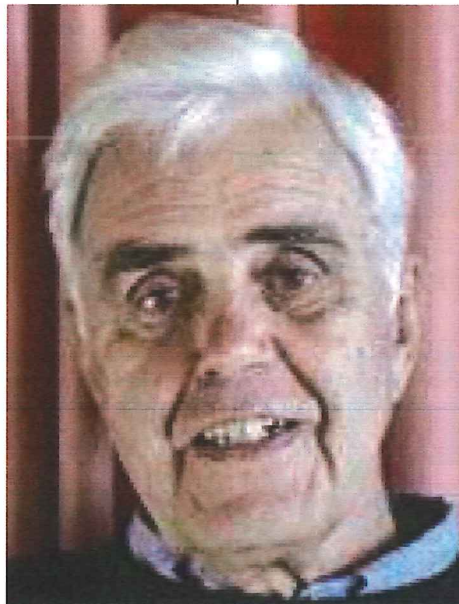
Not only to speak – but to act.

John was active in social engagement and the list of his passionate commitments is long and includes being a member with Amnesty International for many years; he was also actively engaged in the fight to save historic buildings and sites including the Bolton Street Cemetery and 22 The Terrace in Wellington; and was a strong supporter of the 1985 homosexual law reform bill.

John also served as chairperson of the national co-ordinating World Court Project committee to outlaw nuclear weapons at the International Court of Justice.

John was granted minister emeritus status by the Wellington Presbytery in July 1993, retired from active ministry and moved to Raumati (Kapiti Coast).

In retirement he remained active in many spheres including serving as president of Frederic Wallis House, an ecumenical retreat centre in Lower Hutt; as the national co-convener of Abolition 2000, the NZ movement to eliminate all nuclear weapons; and as a world church peace monitor for the first post-apartheid democratic election in South Africa in 1994.



He was involved in publishing "Songs of Praise from Aotearoa", the first video of NZ hymns in 1999 and published "Faith Forever Singing", 80 new NZ Hymns, in 2000.

John was awarded the ONZM (Officer of the NZ Order of Merit) for service to the community in 2000.

He was appointed as a member of the Race Relations Sector Advisory Group of the New Zealand Human Rights Commission in 2003.

John worked for causes close to his heart in his local community, actively working towards initiating local Kapiti Coast civic/community celebrations of Waitangi Day; and was part of an inter-iwi group promoting better race relations between different local ethnic groups.

He was a founding trustee of "Dignity New Zealand Trust" for law change on end-of-life decisions (voluntary euthanasia).

The Service of Thanksgiving took place at the Kapiti Uniting Church in Raumati South on February 21st. The building was overflowing. Speakers, in addition to family, included Sir Lloyd Geering, Alan Tristram and the Hon. Hugh Templeton. The video of the service is available at <https://vimeo.com/withloveweremember/johnmurray>
