

Big Send-off for St John's Oldest Church Member

St John's United Reformed Church, Somerset Road, New Barnet was packed out on Friday 05 October 2018 when nearly 200 people attended the memorial service for Mrs Dorothy Start BEM, a much loved and distinguished member of the church's congregation, who died recently aged 102.

Dorothy received the BEM (British Empire Medal) in 1989 for her many years of voluntary work with the Girl Guides, the Women's Institute and the Inner Wheel in Barnet.

She was also featured on the Age UK website and on posters in 2014 as part of their nationwide campaign called 'Love Later Life'. Dorothy was asked to take part in the campaign by a friend and, commenting on her late 'stardom' as a poster girl for Age UK, Dorothy said: "My advice to everyone is 'Seize the day'. I don't mind being an advert for somebody who gets on with life."

When asked about her secrets for a long and happy life, she recommended joining organisations and keeping active. She said: "I've always belonged to a lot of organisations. My husband was a Rotarian and I've been in Inner Wheel for 50 years. As well as going to church all my life, I've run Girl Guides, and I've done Scottish dancing for the past 60 years. I would recommend this to anyone who can do it. It's good for your head. I think that's why I've got a good memory. It's also good for your bones."

"I think you have to accept what you have and keep cheerful. The people who are the loneliest are the people who are always moaning and groaning about things and they don't join any groups. As for young people, I think so long as you keep cheerful, they don't mind. I've never felt any handicap being old and being with younger people and I'm with younger people all the time."

Dorothy was the oldest member of the congregation of St John's United Reformed Church, Somerset Road, New Barnet. Her memorial service was led by the Rev. Julian Templeton, the Minister of St John's, and he paid tribute to Dorothy's remarkable character and her ability to be positive and cheer people up. He said: "Dorothy was a remarkable person, an inspiration to us all."

She was a keen fan of Scottish country dancing and as a tribute to her, her fellow dancers took part in the service. As well as hymns and tributes to Dorothy, the service included the playing and dancing of Dorothy's favourite Scottish dance, the Strathspey.

Dorothy never let her great age stop her from travelling the world. Until very recently she visited Hawaii every year to see relatives. She was half Japanese as her father was from Japan and her mother was English and they met in Hawaii.

Mark Treasure, her son-in-law, told the congregation at the memorial service that border computers could not cope with Dorothy's passport information once she reached the age of 100 as they only flag up the last two numbers. "When we went through Eurotunnel with Dorothy as a centenarian, the official looked puzzled and then told her 'According to the information on my screen you haven't been born yet'."

Dorothy was a devout Christian all her life and she visited Israel and the Holy Land more than a dozen times. A former teacher and a great grandmother, she was a widow for 26 years after the death of her husband Ted in 1976. She died at her home in Somerset Road, New Barnet.

Dorothy Hana Start B.E.M. 15th September 1916 to 22nd September 2018.

Here is the link to the Barnet Borough Times article about Dorothy.

<https://www.times-series.co.uk/news/16968610.church-packed-out-for-scottish-send-off-for-remarkable-woman/>