St Margaret’s Church
Westminster Abbey

The Funeral of
Tony Benn
3rd April 1925 – 14th March 2014

Thursday 27th March 2014
11.00 am
The whole of the church is served by a hearing loop. Users should turn their hearing aid to the setting marked T.

Please ensure that mobile phones, cellular phones, and pagers are switched off.

The service is conducted by The Very Reverend Dr John Hall, Dean of Westminster.

The service is sung by the Choir of St Margaret’s Church, conducted by James O’Donnell, Organist and Master of the Choristers, Westminster Abbey.

The organ is played by Thomas Trotter.

Music before the service:

Ich ruf zu dir, Herr Jesu Christ BWV 639 Johann Sebastian Bach (1685–1750)

Schafe können sicher weiden
from Was mir behagt, ist nur die muntre Jagd BWV 208 Johann Sebastian Bach

The Right Honourable Ed Miliband MP, Leader of the Opposition, is received. All remain seated.

The Right Honourable John Bercow MP, Speaker of the House of Commons, is received. All stand, and then sit.

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ORDER OF SERVICE

All remain seated as the choir enters the church.

All stand as the coffin enters the church. The Choir sings

THE SENTENCES

I am the resurrection and the life, saith the Lord: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die.

St John 11: 25–26

I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: and though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God; whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another.

Job 19: 25–27

We brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the Name of the Lord.

William Croft (1678–1727) 1 St Timothy 6: 7; Job 1: 21

Thou knowest, Lord, the secrets of our hearts; shut not thy merciful ears unto our prayer; but spare us, Lord most holy, O God most mighty, O holy and most merciful Saviour, thou most worthy Judge eternal, suffer us not, at our last hour, for any pains of death, to fall from thee. Amen.

Henry Purcell (1659–95) The Book of Common Prayer 1549

All remain standing. The Very Reverend Dr John Hall, Dean of Westminster, says

THE INTRODUCTION

We have come here today to remember before God our brother Tony; to give thanks for his life; to commend him to God our merciful redeemer and judge; to commit his body to be cremated, and to comfort one another in our grief.

A brief silence is kept.
Almighty God, you judge us with infinite mercy and justice and love everything you have made. In your mercy turn the darkness of death into the dawn of new life, and the sorrow of parting into the joy of heaven; through our Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.

All sing

THE HYMN

And did those feet in ancient time
walk upon England’s mountains green?
And was the holy Lamb of God
on England’s pleasant pastures seen?
And did the countenance divine
shine forth upon our clouded hills?
And was Jerusalem builded here
among those dark satanic mills?

Bring me my bow of burning gold!
Bring me my arrows of desire!
Bring me my spear! O clouds, unfold!
Bring me my chariot of fire!
I will not cease from mental fight,
nor shall my sword sleep in my hand,
till we have built Jerusalem
in England’s green and pleasant land.

Jerusalem 488 NEH
Hubert Parry (1848–1918)

All remain standing for

THE COLLECT

Let us pray.

Merciful Father, hear our prayers and comfort us; renew our trust in your Son, whom you raised from the dead; strengthen our faith that all who have died in the love of Christ will share in his resurrection; who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.
1 CORINTHIANS 13

If I speak in the tongues of mortals and of angels, but do not have love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. And if I have prophetical powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. If I give away all my possessions, and if I hand over my body so that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing. Love is patient; love is kind; love is not envious or boastful or arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice in wrongdoing, but rejoices in the truth. It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never ends. But as for prophesies, they will come to an end; as for tongues, they will cease; as for knowledge, it will come to an end. For we know only in part, and we prophesy only in part; but when the complete comes, the partial will come to an end. When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child; when I became an adult, I put an end to childish ways. For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then we will see face to face. Now I know only in part; then I will know fully, even as I have been fully known. And now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; and the greatest of these is love.

This is the word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

All remain seated. The Choir sings

JESU, JOY OF MAN’S DESIRING

Jesu, joy of man’s desiring,
holy wisdom, love most bright
drawn by thee, our souls aspiring
soar to uncreated light.
Word of God, our flesh that fashioned,
with the fire of life impassioned
striving still to truth unknown,
soaring, dying round thy throne.

Johann Sebastian Bach
from Herz und Mund und Tat und Leben BWV 147

Robert Bridges (1844–1930)
All stand to sing

THE HYMN

He who would valiant be,
    'gainst all disaster,
let him in constancy
    follow the master.
There’s no discouragement
shall make him once relent
his first avowed intent
    to be a pilgrim.

Whoso beset him round
    with dismal stories,
do but themselves confound,
his strength the more is.
No foes shall stay his might,
    though he with giants fight,
he will make good his right
    to be a pilgrim.

Since, Lord, thou dost defend
    us with thy spirit;
we know we at the end
    shall life inherit.
Then, fancies, flee away!
I’ll fear not what men say,
I’ll labour night and day
    to be a pilgrim.

John Bunyan (1628–88)
adapted from a traditional English melody
by Ralph Vaughan Williams (1872–1958)

All sit. The Right Honourable Ed Miliband MP, Leader of the Opposition, reads

from THE PILGRIM’S PROGRESS

After this it was noised abroad that Mr Valiant-for-truth was taken with a Summons by the same Post as the other, and had this for a Token that the Summons was true, That his Pitcher was broken at the Fountain. When he understood it, he called for his Friends, and told them of it. Then said he, I am going to my Fathers, and tho’ with great difficulty I am got hither, yet now I do not repent me of all the Trouble
I have been at to arrive where I am. My Sword I give to him that shall succeed me in my Pilgrimage, and my Courage and Skill to him that can get it. My Marks and Scars I carry with me, to be a witness for me that I have fought his Battles who now will be my Rewarder. When the day that he must go hence was come, many accompanied him to the Riverside, into which as he went he said, Death, where is thy Sting? And as he went down deeper he said, Grave, where is thy Victory? So he passed over, and all the Trumpets sounded for him on the other side.

John Bunyan

All remain seated for

MADRIGAL

performed by

Stephen Benn

THE TRIBUTE

by

Stephen, Hilary, Melissa, Joshua, and David Benn

All kneel or remain seated. The Reverend Dr James Hawkey, Minor Canon and Precentor of Westminster, leads

THE PRAYERS

Let us pray.
God of mercy, Lord of life, you have made us in your image to reflect your truth and light: we give thanks for Tony, for the grace and mercy he received from you, for all that was good in his life, for the memories we treasure today.
Lord, in your mercy hear our prayer.

The Reverend Rose Hudson-Wilkin, Chaplain to the Speaker of the House of Commons, says:
God of love, Lord of hope, you have created us to care for one another and to search for wisdom: we give you thanks for Tony’s passion for justice, for his integrity and tenacity in refusing to compromise in striving for what he believed to be right.
Lord, in your mercy hear our prayer.
The Venerable Dr Jane Hedges, Canon of Westminster and Acting Rector of St Margaret’s, says:
You promised eternal life to those who believe. Remember for good your servant Tony as we also remember him. Bring all who rest in Christ into the fullness of your kingdom where sins have been forgiven and death is no more.
Lord, in your mercy
hear our prayer.

The Speaker’s Chaplain says:
Your mighty power brings joy out of grief and life out of death. Look in mercy on all who mourn. Give us patient faith in times of darkness. Strengthen us with the knowledge of your love.
Lord, in your mercy
hear our prayer.

Canon Hedges says:
You are tender towards your children and your mercy is over all your works. Heal the memories of hurt. Give us the wisdom and grace to use aright the time that is left to us here on earth, to turn to Christ and follow in his steps in the way that leads to everlasting life.
Lord, in your mercy
hear our prayer.

The Precentor concludes:
As our Saviour Christ has commanded and taught us we are confident to pray:

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name; thy kingdom come; thy will be done; on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen.
All sit. The choir sings

THE ANTHEM

Bring us, O Lord God, at our last awakening into the house and gate of heaven, to enter into that gate and dwell in that house, where there shall be no darkness nor dazzling but one equal light, no noise nor silence but one equal music, no fears nor hopes but one equal possession, no ends nor beginnings but one equal eternity, in the habitation of thy glory and dominion, world without end. Amen.

William Harris (1883–1973)  John Donne (1573–1631)

All stand. The Dean gives

THE COMMENDATION

Let us commend Tony to the mercy of God, our maker and redeemer.

Silence is kept.

God, our creator and redeemer, by your power Christ conquered death and entered into glory. Confident of his victory and claiming his promises, we entrust Tony to your mercy in the name of Jesus our Lord, who died and is alive and reigns with you, now and for ever. Amen.

The choir sings:

IN PARADISUM


May the angels lead you into paradise; at your coming may the martyrs receive you and lead you into the holy city Jerusalem. May the choir of angels receive you, and with Lazarus who once was poor may you have eternal rest.

Gabriel Fauré (1845–1924)
from Requiem in D minor Op 48
All remain standing as the Cortège leaves the Church.

Music after the service:

O Tannenbaum

‘The Red Flag’
traditional German melody

Pièce d’orgue BWV 572

Johann Sebastian Bach

All remain standing as the Choir departs.

Members of the Congregation are requested to remain in their places until invited to move by the Stewards.

The bells of St Margaret’s Church are rung, half muffled, by the St Margaret’s Society of Change Ringers.

A retiring collection will be taken in aid of Crisis, the national charity for single homeless people.
THE RED FLAG

The people’s flag is deepest red,
It shrouded oft our martyr’d dead
And ere their limbs grew stiff and cold,
Their hearts’ blood dyed its ev’ry fold.

Then raise the scarlet standard high,
Within its shade we’ll live and die,
Though cowards flinch and traitors sneer,
We’ll keep the red flag flying here.
Westminster Abbey was built as part of a Benedictine monastery, and as a sacred place for the crowning and burial of the English kings and queens. Since it was never intended to serve the needs of the local community, in about 1150 a parish church was built by the Abbey’s monks to be the parish church for the people of Westminster.

The church, immediately adjacent to the Abbey, was dedicated to St Margaret of Antioch, a fourth-century saint whose colourful but apocryphal legend appealed to mediaeval piety. The present building, the third St Margaret’s on this site, was begun about 1488 and consecrated on 9th April 1523.

St Margaret’s has played a major part in the local history of Westminster for many centuries, and has associations with many historic figures: Geoffrey Chaucer, William Caxton, John Milton, and Samuel Pepys worshipped regularly in the Church; Sir Walter Raleigh’s body was buried here after his execution in October 1618; and Sir Winston Churchill was married at St Margaret’s in 1908.

On Palm Sunday, 17th April 1614, the Speaker of the House of Commons led Members of Parliament to St Margaret’s for a corporate celebration of Holy Communion, thus beginning an association with St Margaret’s and the House of Commons so that even today St Margaret’s is popularly known as ‘the parish church of the House of Commons’. The front pew on the right hand side is reserved for The Speaker. The House came to the church for a Thanksgiving Service at the end of the Second World War in 1945, and to mark the opening of the new Chamber of the Commons in 1950. Members of Parliament and the officers and staff of the Palace of Westminster often come to St Margaret’s for weddings, baptisms, memorial services, and other occasions.

In 1972, because the resident population of the parish had shrunk to only a few hundred people, St Margaret’s ceased to be a parish church and was merged with Westminster Abbey by Act of Parliament.
The Right Honourable Tony Benn MP

by

Andrew Tift 1998

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