

The Funeral of James Kim, 1946-2023

St Philip's Anglican Church, O'Connor ACT Australia

19 December 2023

The Reverend Canon Professor Scott Cowdell, officiating

Psalm 30; Luke 2: 22, 25-32 (NKJV, abridged)

+In the Name of the Father & of the Son & of the Holy Spirit. AMEN

Some years ago, a young Evangelical found himself in a Bible study group with what for him was a most unlikely couple, James Kim and Brian McKinlay. For this young man a gay couple and the Bible didn't belong together, but over time he was touched and converted by the plain Christian witness of this devout and loving Christian couple.

I remember reading somewhere that when the Anglican Communion's blow-up over same-sex matters started ramping up, the then or perhaps the next Archbishop of Canterbury, Rowan Williams—on whose theological work Brian wrote his doctoral dissertation—made a bold plea. He said that what our Church needed were narratives of gay and lesbian holiness, so that opponents could be won over by the evidence of Christ at work in patently godly lives. And so it was for that young Evangelical, thanks to Brian and James: he eventually became a priest in our Church and is now a leading advocate for gay and lesbian inclusion on our Church's General Synod.

Now, don't get me wrong. The message isn't that anything goes, or that every breathless progressive enthusiasm is equally worthy, as if that were the point. The message is simply this: that the God we meet in Jesus Christ is the great lover of human beings, the unlocker of our prisons, the patient respecter of our inmost yearnings, and the sender of our liberating dreams. Our Psalmist today testifies to this, and James testified to it:

*You have turned my lamentation into dancing:
you have put off my sackcloth and girded me with joy,
That my heart may sing your praise and never be silent:
O Lord my God, I will give you thanks for ever.*

The message is simply this: that God keeps God's promises—to Israel, as we heard in our Gospel just before, and indeed to all of humanity as God's beloved creation—as Simeon also declares—but also to us, to you and to me, with James and all those made one with Christ in baptism. This is a bond that God will never break, though of course we might choose to.

The *Nunc Dimittis*, proclaimed by Simeon in that Gospel reading, and either said or sung in the Evening Prayer of our Church, celebrates all that the coming of Jesus means. It joins those other joyful mysteries of Jesus's coming in the Gospels: the annunciation to Mary, her encounter with the mother of Jesus's forerunner, John the Baptizer, Jesus's birth in the barn at Bethlehem, and then the boy Jesus going head-to-head with the Temple theologians. All this is good news for God's ancient people, whose national faith becomes universal and viral in Jesus Christ. So, it's good news for everyone in general, and for each of us in particular—as James knew personally, and as he most insistently wanted us to know, you and me.

The Lord be with you . . .