

Condolences to the family of Canon the Honourable John DePencier Wright

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Tribute to Canon John Wright

From Archbishop Anne Germond...

It is with sadness I announce that Canon the Honourable John DePencier Wright died peacefully at home on Tuesday June 30th surrounded by his loving family following an illness which he bore with courage and dignity. We assure Canon John's wife (Elaine), their children (Joanne, Peter, Mark, Rebecca), and all family members of our prayerful support as they mourn his passing.

John was installed as a Canon of St. Luke's Cathedral in May 2019 – a memorable day in the life of our diocese, and a proud and happy one for the Wright family and St. Michael and All Angel's Parish in Thunder Bay, Canon John and Elaine's spiritual home. What was particularly poignant about that occasion was that, because of his illness, there had been uncertainty whether Canon John would be able to attend. The photo below speaks of the joy experienced by the entire Wright family as the honour of Canon was conferred upon a much loved husband, father, and brother.



Today we give thanks for Canon John's faithfulness in serving the church by using his God given gifts of knowledge and wisdom.

Archdeacon Harry Huskins, who worked closely with Canon John for a number of years, offers this tribute:

John Wright lived out a life of deep Christian commitment to the ministry of our Diocese. John was part of a family of Anglican clergy stretching back over several generations. His father was Archbishop William Lockridge Wright who served as our Bishop for thirty years. John grew up in Sault Ste. Marie and in the life of St. Luke's Cathedral where, over many years, he was a Server, lay reader, Sunday School teacher, an advisory board member, and a delegate to our diocesan Synod from the Cathedral parish.

John was also part of the broader life of our diocese. Finishing his high school education in Sault Ste. Marie, he then went on to obtain a law degree and returned to the city to practice law. While carrying out this very successful practice he served on the diocesan Matrimonial Commission and the Heritage and Constitution and Canons Committees. He was elected by the Synod as our diocesan Registrar and then appointed as Chancellor.

John also contributed to the life of our Church at the provincial and national levels. In this he became part of our national Church history. The introduction of the Book of Alternative Services to be used alongside the Book of Common Prayer was a matter of some controversy in the Canadian Church. In 1986 the first Bishop to be Consecrated using the Service in the BAS was Eric Bays. A case was brought to the Supreme Court of Appeal of the Anglican Church of Canada challenging the use of this BAS Service. This was the first and the only time that this Court has sat and John was appointed as one of its judges. He played a key role in the proceedings and the writing of the Court's judgment that Bishop Bays Consecration was lawful in Anglican canon law.

In 1990, John was appointed by the federal government as a Judge and moved to Thunder Bay to take up a position on the Bench there. In Thunder Bay he became a very active member of our St. Michael and All Angels parish. As a judge, John was required to keep a low public profile and could no longer serve in many of the roles in our Church in which he had been so active before. However, quietly in the background, he has been a source of wise counsel and personal support to our Bishops and the senior staff of our diocese since his appointment to the Bench.

John Wright has made a remarkable contribution to the life of our diocese and we are very much the better for it. The words of Matthew's Gospel may truly be said of him, "Well done good and faithful Servant."

Having grown up the son of a bishop, Canon John understood more than others the nature and work of the episcopate. As soon as Colin and I moved into Bishophurst in 2017, I remember receiving a handwritten letter from John welcoming us to the home and offering me some words of support for my episcopacy. From time to time he wrote, to offer his views on events in the life of the diocese and the wider church, always cautioning me not to let myself become too busy with the work of being a bishop, and to set aside time for rest and renewal. He took his role as a Canon in the Church (which is to be an advisor to the bishop) seriously and I am forever grateful for his teaching and the wisdom he offered in his letters.

Madam Justice Patricia Hennessy, a friend of mine and colleague of John, shares these words:

The Honourable John deP Wright was a gentleman with everyone he encountered and a wonderful mentor to me and many other judicial colleagues. We were lucky to enjoy the benefit of his sound advice as well as his regular commentaries on historical traditions, ceremonies and etiquette. By his very manner and decency, he brought honour to the Court and to the profession.

Archdeacon Deborah Kraft writes:

On behalf of the Deanery of Thunder Bay-North Shore, I wish to extend my deepest sympathy to Elaine, and to the family of Canon the Honourable John Wright on his passing. He lived up to his professional title as his whole life was honourable.

The far-reaching legacy of the Hon. John Wright will always be remembered in Thunder Bay. John was a "living stone" and "precious in God's sight." (1 Peter 2:4) He served with wisdom as a judge on the Ontario Superior Court of Justice for twenty-five years. In a volunteer capacity, John was active in many Thunder Bay organizations including the Children's Aid Society, Lake Superior Scottish Regiment, and Scouts Canada.

I will remember Canon John for his thoughtful responses, his love of God and the church, and his desire for the church to remain relevant and vital. May his legacy of faith and servanthood be respected and imitated by all of us. "Like living stones, let yourselves be built into a spiritual house." (1 Peter 2:5)

May John rest in peace and rise in glory.

The Reverend Nancy Ringham shares thoughts from St. Michael and All Angels:

"He has shown you O man, what is good and what the Lord requires of you, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God." Micah 6:8

This verse exemplifies what Canon John has lived by his life and witness, and sometimes his words as a long time parishioner at St. Michael and All Angels in Thunder Bay. Canon John attended Sunday 10:00 am service faithfully, and over the years, he participated as asked by several incumbents in short term committee projects. He was a sidesperson welcoming people to worship and carrying out his duties with humility. Canon John lived authority and had a servant heart...these are words spoken by his daughter recently. In this season of Covid-19 pandemic, we have been working hard at staying together while apart. Even in the recent days when Canon John's health was failing, his three young granddaughters, with their mother, were planting flowers (weeks ago) for a Covid-19 Parish Porch Drop project. The lessons learned by the daughter of her father's generosity and being of service, were passed on to the granddaughters, so that parishioners would be blessed by the knowledge they were being remembered. Canon John knew of this project, and he saw that it was good. It is surely God's timing that this Parish Porch Drop is taking place this week.

Parishioners will dearly miss Canon John's presence and stature in their midst, especially when we are able to return to worship in the building. But, rest assured, his example will be remembered, and even inspire us to act as he did! Well done, good and faithful servant.

While we mourn the death of a great friend of Algoma's, we give thanks for Canon John's full and rich life. We rejoice that his earthly suffering is over and that he now rests eternally. We pray Simeon's farewell prayer of praise as he held the Messiah in his arms as we give thanks for the life and witness of Canon John DePencier Wright: "Master, now you are dismissing your servant in peace, according to your word; for my eyes have seen your salvation which you have prepared in the presence of all peoples." (Lk. 2.29 – 31)