

**The Revd. Canon Derek Hawksbee
Memorial Service
Wednesday, October 29, 2008**

Thirty-two years ago, a group of us who were then young Turks in the Episcopal Church of the USA launched the American branch of SAMS. Probably with good reason our unexpected action caused some consternation on this side of the Atlantic – except, perhaps, to Derek Hawksbee, who had for years mulled and prayed over the possibilities that were buried the United States, and needed to see the light of day.

Within a few years Derek and Betty had joined the American staff of SAMS, and remained in the States for a decade. I am convinced that without their leadership and steadying hand the American society would not exist today, which means that a huge amount of Kingdom ministry would not have been done. Those of us who founded the Society had tons of enthusiastic faith and chutzpah, but none of us had much idea of what exactly we were supposed to be doing.

In those early years we made every mistake in the book – and some that aren't there!

God honored our faithfulness by putting in our midst a couple who were tried, true, and tested. Derek and Betty had the gifts and experience needed to help us weather the storm and build a missionary society that would be obedient to the Great Commission, and whose knock-on effect in all sorts of arenas has, directly and indirectly, been enormous.

Derek's wisdom and tenacity enabled the Society to survive, and in the process to work out what it was, what it was supposed to be doing, and how it should do it. From the Society's launch and through the early part of Derek's leadership I was privileged to chair the board of trustees, and through some of the most trying times the two of us were in almost daily contact.

It was during those years that I realized that Derek Hawksbee was not only one of the great unsung heroes of the church, but also

that he was very much a model, a mentor, and a hero to me. I thought I knew what faithfulness was, but it wasn't until Derek and I walked along this very rocky road together that I really discovered its meaning. I am not alone in this, for a number of SAMS people from that time: missionaries, administrators, and trustees, have been in touch since Derek's death and have said something similar. I learned some of the hardest lessons of Christian leadership from Derek, and the manner in which he handled himself. For that I will always be profoundly grateful.

But what Derek did in his years in the States was about a great deal more than just helping a small organization get itself firmly established, for SAMS turned out to be the cradle from which all sorts of other mission ventures were to grow, and through which several generations of American Anglicans would rediscover the power of the Great Commission. The first two chairmen of the Society, myself and Tad de Bordenave, went on to lead other mission societies in their

early days, while some of our earliest personnel, individuals like Tom Prichard, John Macdonald and Heidi Hawkins Smith, have continued to play a significant role in the global advance of the Gospel. All of us learned the ropes from Derek and Betty.

This last Sunday in church we sung John Bunyan's wonderful 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.

As I sang I could not help but think of Derek, a man whose life was marked by constancy as he followed the Master, pushing forward despite setback and discouragement, knowing that he is in Christ's presence and doing Christ's will. Derek did not crave recognition and honors, he was a genuinely humble man who just sought with heart, mind, and strength to be

faithful, and I am sure that when he passed from our presence among the first words he heard were “Well done, good and faithful servant, enter into the joy of your Master.”