

A Request from Twende Pamoja ('Let us walk together') to Commemorate Mike Knox

A visionary for peace



Michael Andrew Knox was born on 12 March 1953 in Blythe, Northumberland to parents Ron and Joan and was very close to his grandmother, Jenny. He attended St Cuthbert's School, going on to train as a teacher at St Mary's College, Fenham, Newcastle, where he formed lifelong friendships. At college, Mike was taught by the Sacred Heart Sisters, and that formation influenced him throughout his life, culminating in the creation of the Sacred Heart Centre in Kibosho, Mweka, Tanzania in 2018.

In 1975 Mike moved to Edinburgh to take up his first teaching post in the recently opened Holy Rood RC High School. Within two years he had been appointed Principal Teacher of

Religious Education. Popularly known as 'Knoxy', he was to remain there for 35 years and 64 days. An inspired teacher and communicator, his impact was felt by students and staff alike. In time when he became Depute Head Teacher with particular responsibility for support for pupils, his skills were utilised to the full. Mike retired early in 2010 to develop the work of Twende Pamoja ('let us walk together'), a trust which he had established to develop relationships between schools in Scotland and schools in Tanzania.

Mike's connection with Tanzania dates back to a visit he made in 1978 to the village of Legho in the Kilimanjaro area. It was here that he first came across the small Christian communities, which had been established there, in keeping with the practice of the early church. These communities inspired Mike to set up the Word Incarnate community in Lindisfarne House, where he lived, next door to the parish house in St John's RC Church in Portobello. Mike was the pastoral assistant in the parish and had a long and devoted friendship with Canon Rae, the parish priest, for over 30 years.

As his connection with the community in Legho deepened, a relationship was established between St John's, Portobello, and Legho parishes. In 1999, the first school partnership was established between St John's Primary School and Legho Primary School. This was quickly followed by Holy Rood High School in Edinburgh linking with Lombeta High School in Kilimanjaro region. During the past 20 years over 30 partnerships were established between schools in Scotland and schools in Tanzania. Through the British Council's Connecting Classrooms programme, Mike facilitated exchange visits for many teachers, which had a powerful impact on many lives.

Mike graduated from Loyola University in New Orleans with a Masters Degree in Theology and went on to become an accredited facilitator of their distance-learning programme. Through the programme Mike made lasting friendships, as he did wherever he went.

Mike had a deep Christian faith. For him 'catholic' meant universal – for everyone. He believed that God is love. With that as his starting point, he developed a global vision for peace: a vision he shared with countless young people through his teaching and through the work of Twende Pamoja. Through grant funding provided by the Scottish Government, Mike and those working with him in Scotland and Tanzania, were able to enhance ICT capability in schools in Tanzania, seeking better futures for the young people and connecting schools and young people through ICT.

This was the basis for a cross-cultural literacy project undertaken jointly by Tanzanian and Scottish pupils and launched by Alexander McCall Smith using one of his stories, 'The Blind Man and The Bird'.

Another of Mike's gifts was persuading people from diverse backgrounds to get involved in his imaginative and creative projects.

The search for world peace motivated Mike throughout his life and was a constant theme of his work with young people. To celebrate World Peace Day in 2016, he organised a walk for peace to the Scottish Parliament for hundreds of Scottish pupils who presented a peace pole to the Presiding Officer. That peace pole now resides in the Sacred Heart Centre in Kibosho, Mweka.

Mike had a heart attack as he was about to begin work for the day on 1 September 2020. Working full-time throughout his 'retirement', Mike played a key role in St Ursula's Primary and Secondary Schools, located near to the Sacred Heart Centre and in the Diocese of Moshi, developing educational policy and taking forward community projects. His friend and colleague, Martin Kalula, with others in the Centre, revived Mike, getting him to hospital in Dar es Salaam, where sadly he had another heart attack and died on 2 September 2020. Mike's funeral Mass in Tanzania, and the Mass to celebrate his life in St John's, were both aptly live-streamed as he was a pioneer in the use of technology to bring people together. Martin spoke in tribute of how Mike gave all he had for others.

There is a Hasidic Jewish parable that says when we die and stand before God, He will have only one question to ask of us: "Well, did you enjoy my creation?" Without doubt, Mike Knox will have answered with a resounding "YES" because he loved the fine things of life: food – he was a wonderful cook; a talent he shared freely - wine, art, music, poetry, and he had an enduring passion to share them with others. That is one of the reasons he is so sadly missed by so many.

Mike wrote many poems, which will be published in time. Perhaps it is fitting to conclude with his own words:

‘This Sacred Heart, this pierced-through, vulnerable, selfless heart,
gives entry to a world, of new life, of infinite love, and promise -
quietly, peacefully, mercifully, hopefully, compassionately.’

Des Brogan, Linda McGee & Maria McCann

Trustees of Twende Pamoja

Appeal

We are seeking to raise funds to enable the work which Mike began to continue. The money will go towards the running of the Sacred Heart Educational Centre in Tanzania which works with schools and young people in the community to create better futures through ICT and literacy outreach programmes. Funds will also go towards supporting the school partnerships between schools in Scotland and Tanzania.

We invite anyone who would like to contribute a regular monthly sum to consider setting up a standing order, either through online banking using the details below or by completing the attached form and taking it to your bank. You may also wish to complete the Gift Aid form below. If you wish to make a single donation, please use the bank account details below:

A/C Name – Twende Pamoja SCIO

A/C Number – 11169611

Sort code - 83 06 08

If you have any questions, please email mariagmccann@gmail.com