

O PINION

EDITORIAL

Kearney lived to serve humanity

CITIZENS of Durban, and indeed the entire country, will be all the poorer after the passing of well-known and highly respected religious leader, activist and peacemaker Paddy Kearney on Friday.

While many prominent leaders of the past are remembered for their public status and pronouncements, Kearney was someone who spoke with his deeds – on the ground, in the streets, in places of worship and across all communities.

Gentle and humble by nature, Kearney, who was 76, lived his life in the service of others. What he enjoyed most was working tirelessly for the poor, the homeless, the marginalised and the oppressed.

During the dark days of apartheid, he played a leading role fighting injustice and discrimination on many fronts, working closely alongside Archbishop Denis Hurley.

He was in fact the author of the first full biography of Hurley and in recent months had been promoting his latest book based on Hurley's letters, extracts of which are being published regularly in *The Mercury*.

A committed Christian, Kearney helped establish and promote the well-known Diakonia Centre and the Denis Hurley Centre in Durban.

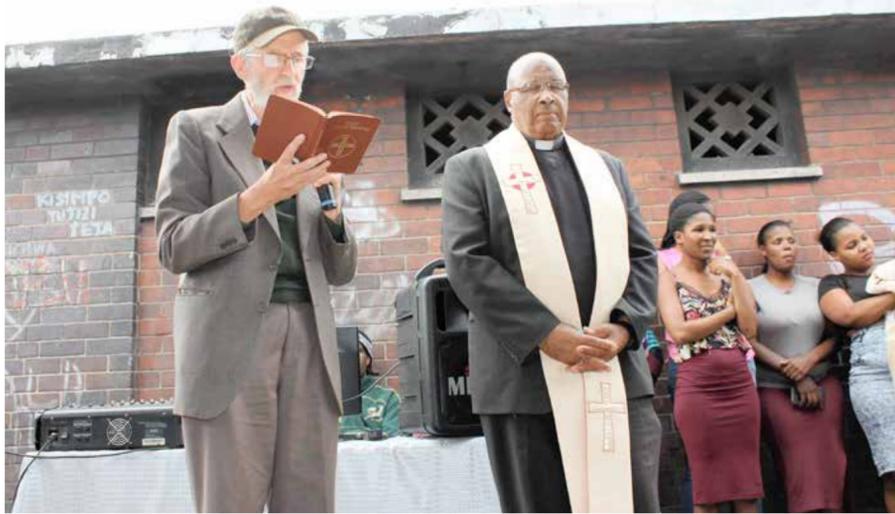
He was awarded a special medal by Pope Francis for his services to the church.

But he was also at the forefront of several campaigns to foster inter-faith partnerships among communities and was widely respected among members and leaders of all faiths.

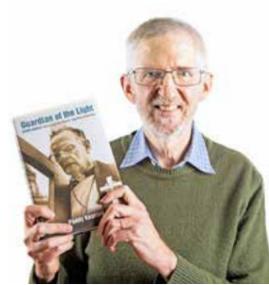
If Durban and the country as a whole are to succeed in the future in dealing with the many serious challenges facing us, we will need more people of the calibre, dedication and commitment of Paddy Kearney.

He was someone who inspired hope and peace in people.

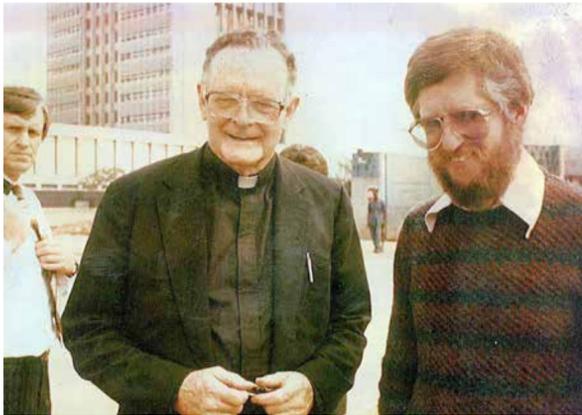
He will be sorely missed across the length and breadth of the city of Durban he loved and helped build.



Paddy Kearney's commitment to the poorest in Durban continued throughout his life. Here he is with Cardinal Wilfrid Napier OFM, the Archbishop of Durban, at the blessing of the Denis Hurley Centre's satellite clinic amid the grime and neglect of the old Dalton Beer Hall.



Kearney with his acclaimed biography of Denis Hurley.



Kearney with Archbishop Denis Hurley, having been released after enduring 17 days of detention without charge. The "Hurley" case established an important legal precedent that helped Paddy and other detainees. | Independent Newspaper Archives



RIGHT: A key promoter of good relations among faiths... Kearney at the opening of the Gandhi Memorial at Warwick Junction with Ruben Philip, Emeritus Anglican Bishop of Natal; Ela Gandhi; and AV Mahomed, chief trustee of the Jumma Masjid.

The Quote

Can we imagine the ecumenical impact on society, the growth of Christian public opinion transforming the very soul of our society...

PADDY KEARNEY
Quoting Archbishop Denis Hurley

The Quote

To do nothing is also a good remedy

HIPPOCRATES

Greek physician and father of Western medicine

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Community serving humanity

Paddy Kearney, who died on Friday, was a visionary social justice activist, religious leader and author

ILLA THOMPSON & RAYMOND PERRIER

PADDY Kearney – a social justice activist, religious leader and author – died in Durban on Friday.

Born in August 1942 in Pietermaritzburg, Gerald Patrick Kearney, known always as "Paddy", epitomised grace, integrity, humility and compassion.

He was an astute and visionary campaigner, working for peace and justice across five decades.

Just like his late mentor, Archbishop Denis Hurley, Paddy was educated at St Charles College in Pietermaritzburg, at the time a Marist school.

He initially pursued a religious vocation with the Marists and, although he left the order after 12 years, spent the rest of his life in the service of the church.

In 1971 Paddy was employed at Inanda Seminary, an all-girls school for black students, where he was exposed to the injustices of apartheid in personal detail, and where he became an activist for justice.

After completing his arts degree and education diploma at the University of Natal in Pietermaritzburg, he undertook postgraduate studies in the US and Mexico.

For almost 30 years Paddy headed the work of Diakonia, an organisation founded by Hurley

in 1976. Unusually for that time, this organisation brought together Christians of different denominations to work in partnership.

They trained people to set up and run social action groups in the Struggle against apartheid in the 1980s. This attracted the attention of the security forces: Diakonia's offices were raided and staff were harassed.

In 1985 Paddy was detained without charge by the security police. This led to a historic court case in which Hurley successfully challenged the notorious Section 29. This not only meant that Paddy was freed (after 17 days), but also set a legal precedent that helped later detainees.

At an age when most other men retire, Paddy initiated the last great project of his life – the creation of the Denis Hurley Centre.

This stands as a living legacy to his hero by bringing together people of different faiths to provide care, education and community to the poorest and most marginalised in central Durban.

Paddy oversaw the building of the R32million structure and chaired the trustees through the centre's first four years of operation.

In addition to his work at the helm of Diakonia and the Denis Hurley Centre, Paddy served on

myriad NGOs, boards, organisations and civil society bodies.

Most recently, he was the chairperson of the Gandhi Development Trust, an adviser to the KZN Christian Council, a member of the Province Commission on Social Cohesion and Xenophobia, and a founding force of the Active Citizens Movement.

A collection of Paddy's own writings has been published, and he has also written three internationally acclaimed books on Hurley, the last of which (an edited collection of letters) was launched in recent weeks.

He was awarded honorary doctorates by the University of KwaZulu-Natal and St Augustine's College, and a papal medal, Bene Merenti, by Pope Francis.

In 2014, eThekweni Municipality honoured him with the title Living Legend.

Although not an ordained minister, Paddy was one of the most influential religious leaders in South Africa in the second half of the 20th century. He played a significant role in opposing apartheid and continued to promote the vision of a just society and the need to work actively to serve our poorest citizens.

He is mourned by his brothers Brian and Jack and their families, and by the many people who he inspired.

TRIBUTES

PADDY KEARNEY, THE NATION MOURNS

IT HAS been both an honour and a great privilege to have a younger brother like Paddy. During his 76 years, his boundless energy and extraordinary motivation drove him to strive to find ways to promote, through ecumenism, a peaceful and non-violent society. In much of this his friend, mentor and model, Archbishop Denis Hurley, set the pace.

It seems to me that to fully understand and participate in his work, we have to examine his legacy. First, he challenges us all within this deeply wounded country to selflessly work for every just and non-violent opportunity. Secondly, his template for this is to work through the combined strength of many faiths. Thirdly, his publications become the rich source for inspiration and sustenance on this difficult path – read his books. | PROF BRIAN KEARNEY (one of Paddy's two brothers)

PADDY Kearney was a proud South African, but he was also deeply proud of his Irish roots. He was passionate about the fight for social justice and equality and he was the inspiration and driver behind the Denis Hurley Centre. He was a man of deep faith and an ecumenical leader. Paddy will be sorely missed, but he has left us a lasting legacy which we will cherish in our future lives. | LIAM MACGHABANN (Irish ambassador to South Africa)

THE UKZN awarded Paddy Kearney an honorary doctorate in theology in 2009. He had close ties with the university as an outstanding student and a fine lecturer in the education faculty in Pietermaritzburg in the 1970s, and later as a government-nominated representative on the university council.

In his own right, his scholarship and meticulous research would have ensured a distinguished academic career had he taken that road. His many publications as author or editor include a biography of Archbishop Denis Hurley, *Guardian of the Light – Renewing the Church, Opposing Apartheid*, described as a "magisterial work" by Blair Kaiser, *Time Magazine's* Rome correspondent during the Second Vatican Council. It won the Andrew Murray-Desmond Tutu Award for best theological work in English in 2010. | PROF DOUGLAS IRVINE (emeritus professor, political studies, UKZN, chairperson, Justice & Peace Commission, Archdiocese of Durban, 1970-1984)

IT IS with shock and sadness that we pay tribute to Paddy Kearney, whom we have known for almost 40 years as director of Diakonia, as a leader and as a friend. He was a kind, quiet and softly-spoken person with a warm and generous spirit. He was a dedicated servant of God who demonstrated his love for his people and his country through his selfless service to humanity.

He will be remembered as a fearless fighter for peace, tolerance and democracy. He made sure that the church in its diverse denominations was firmly on the side of justice for the workers, the poor, the oppressed and the downtrodden supporting their struggles.

He was the face of Diakonia that welcomed all who were pursued by apartheid forces, be they detainees or families whose relatives were persecuted or imprisoned or killed.

This placed Diakonia at the centre of our struggle for liberation, giving protection and inspiration to our resistance to apartheid. He was the glue that held our mass democratic movement, civic and faith-based organisation together to deliver a combined impact on apartheid.

Working with eminent leaders such as Archbishop Hurley and other leaders of faith, he contributed to keeping the flame of freedom alight, encouraging those who were powerless to fight on, and counselling and supporting those who were brutalised and tortured.

Diakonia became a centre for education and a home for campaigns against social ills, the fight against HIV and Aids, the abuse of women and children and domestic violence.

Paddy was a giant who epitomised a non-racial future and unity of our people, determined to transform society to usher in a united, caring and compassionate nation. | DRS MAY AND ZWELI MKHIZE (Co-operative Governance and Traditional Affairs Minister)

IT WAS with great sadness that the Archdiocese of Durban learnt of the news of the untimely death of Paddy Kearney. He was a faithful disciple of Jesus and the teaching of Jesus that

comes readily to mind when thinking of Paddy is "Blessed are the gentle..." (Mt 5:5).

In his firmness of resolve, Paddy demonstrated what Jesus really meant. Society today thinks of gentleness as a soft virtue which avoids conflict at all costs. But Jesus's use of the word means first of all to tame what is wild within us and also to be strong enough to carry another's burden.

This is exactly what Paddy was. He practiced his discipleship with courage and conviction, embracing otherness, helping others to carry their burdens and always showing the prophetic dimension of Christian discipleship. He will be sorely missed on the ecumenical and social justice landscape of Durban, as well as in the personal lives of those with whom Paddy worked. | FR SYLVESTER DAVID OMI (Vicar-General: Archdiocese of Durban)

I SALUTE, respect and thank Paddy for being a dedicated, loyal and selfless person. He played a huge role in my life and in the mass democratic movement. He epitomised the values of a selfless teacher and leader.

The lessons and insight from Paddy's life must be used to teach the current generation and future generations how to build a community based on social justice, inclusion and human rights. | ERIC APELGREN (head of international and governance relations, eThekweni Municipality)

I AM deeply grieved by the sad news of Paddy's passing. I knew him from the early days when he began to look at how to set up the Diakonia Council of Churches.

We had just launched the Natal Indian Congress and my husband, Mewa, was at the time under house arrest. I had a lot to cope with, so I suggested the name of Vish Sewparshad and both Paddy and Vish would discuss the progress with me. Then I was banned and house arrested.

With those beginnings, we had many common concerns and worked together on many issues Paddy's wisdom, foresight, spirituality and his gentle compassion will be deeply missed by me and by the Gandhi Development Trust which he chaired. Sadly, I am not in the country to pay personal tribute but I am with the family and friends in spirit. | ELA GANDHI (founder, Gandhi Development Trust)

I WILL always remember Paddy as an astute, passionate and selfless servant who dedicated his life to transforming society. He was the embodiment of ecumenism because he strongly believed churches have a vital role to play as change agents.

KwaZulu-Natal is at present the only province that has a vibrant ecumenical footprint in every corner of the province, through Paddy's efforts, an ecumenical icon.

Hamba kahle, humble and faithful servant, and join the clouds of witnesses surrounding us. | NOMABELU MVAMBO-DANDALA (director, Diakonia Council of Churches)

I AM orphaned today by the sad demise of my brother, Paddy Kearney, an incredible soul and a man of humanity, justice and peace.

We shared many platforms of inter-faith prayers and I was proud to be associated with him as he and I were the founders of the Denis Hurley feeding scheme.

His patience, care and concern for the poor and destitute were non-negotiable. I pray for his soul to rest in peace – and a very big vacuum to be filled by his loss.

| AV MAHOMED (chief trustee, Jumma Masjid)

PADDY epitomised the Catholic social justice model of "see, judge, act". He was never afraid to have his eyes open to see the reality of injustice and poverty around him when many of his background might have retreated into a social bubble.

He then spent time to judge – to reflect deeply and thoughtfully before coming to a decision. But he would always then act. He might have sat on many committees, commissions and boards, but he would never be happy if the discussions did not lead to concrete action. And not only would he act but he would inspire (and "gently persuade") others to act as well. In this, he followed in the footsteps of Hurley.

Now we at the Denis Hurley Centre – and all whom Paddy influenced in his long and varied life – must follow in his footsteps. But they are big shoes to fill. | RAYMOND PERRIER (director, Denis Hurley Centre)