

Barbara Palmer

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"God's not finished with me yet!" said Barbara with a twinkle in her eye. She was suffering with a sore throat, recovering from a recent fall and yet effervescent as she talked about how serving God keeps her going. For Barbara, being useful in her church is a huge blessing for which she is very grateful – quite humbling when you consider Barbara is 94 years old.

Nominated by Reader Linda Dodwell for the St Piran Cross award, Barbara has been chosen because of her previous service as a three-times church warden at St John's in the Fields, Halsetown, for her contributions to the flower arranging and PCC and also for playing the organ. Barbara feels close to God when she plays, mainly, she says, because she prays the whole time she is sat at the organ. "I'm a great one for arrow prayers, especially as my hands shake a bit these days!" she laughed.

A mother to three children, including twins, Barbara has lived in Cornwall almost all her life. Brought up in Saltash, she well remembers the terrible bombing of Plymouth during the war and the fear she felt when a German plane flew low over her in her back garden. The memories sadden her when she thinks of current troubles in the world, but she finds her peace when playing the organ. "I love to help people, and playing the organ helps the congregation to sing," says Barbara.

Barbara stepped in as organist when their vicar, Rev John Harper, retired in 1990. As his wife was the organist, the church lost a vicar and an organist at the same time. So Barbara and her dear friend Ivy stepped in and shared the role. After Ivy died three years ago, Barbara has carried on, playing every Sunday. She describes herself modestly as a "pianist who plays the organ."

Although wonderfully cheerful and bubbling over with love for her church, Barbara doesn't like being impaired, especially since her fall. But she says, "Whatever befalls my way is from the Lord, and I am so grateful – I don't know how people manage without Him." She feels very blessed to be able to give and so was surprised to be nominated for the St Piran Cross Award. "I'm being rewarded for doing something I love," she said.