

Campbell, Ruth 17 July 1953 - 20 August 2021

Testimony to the Grace of God in the life of Ruth Campbell

Ruth Campbell was born to Alec and Mary Campbell in Leicester, England, on July 17, 1953. Ruth cheerfully acknowledged that she was “a bit of an accident” for her youthful parents, and it would be another twelve years before her sister Nina was born.

Ruth started school at three years of age but, with undiagnosed dyslexia, it was not until she was around ten years old that she was able to read with any degree of fluency. Despite her later academic successes, the condition was then so little known that one of her teachers told Ruth’s parents that she was “educationally subnormal”.

Ruth remembered her parents taking her to Stratford to watch Shakespeare plays – with three shilling tickets and standing at the back of the theatre behind a rail – which engendered in her a lifelong love of Shakespeare.

When Ruth was ten, the family migrated to Australia, living briefly in Adelaide (in a small flat behind a butcher’s shop in Unley Park) before moving to Queanbeyan where Ruth attended Queanbeyan High School. Academically, this was more satisfactory than Ruth’s earlier schooling had been, but was not really a happy time as she felt she lacked both the sporting and the social skills to fit in easily.

After leaving school, Ruth decided to study Physiotherapy and was accepted into the course at the University of NSW. The system, however, was not very accommodating of her dyslexia, and she was not able to complete her studies there.

Around this time, the family returned to Adelaide where Ruth enrolled in the Physiotherapy course at the then SA Institute of Technology. The staff there were much more understanding, allowing her extra time in exams and even providing oral exams in some subjects. Their attitude seemed to be that it was important for a physio to be able to do the job, not to write perfect essays.

After graduating, Ruth worked in Adelaide and in Wallaroo, and was able to buy herself a house. To help ease the financial pressure of an expensive mortgage, she went to Saudi Arabia for a time, where her work in a military hospital proved a challenge her pacifist principles.

In 1995, Ruth’s mother died after a brief illness, and Ruth subsequently spent some time in England where she became involved with Quakers through her cousin, Diana Campbell. After returning to Australia, Ruth attended meeting at Adelaide Local Meeting and was accepted into membership of the then South Australia Regional Meeting in 1999.

Ruth applied to work with Australian Volunteers International and, in December 2001, just a week after returning from a holiday in India with her father, and three months after the attacks of 9/11, set off to work in a Palestinian camp in Lebanon. There she had to find creative and resourceful ways to deal with the problems she encountered. This two-year posting was followed by another similar when she was employed by Caritas Austria. During both those missions, Ruth had to be evacuated from Lebanon for a time—for eight weeks in 2003 when the US invaded Iraq and in 2006 when Israel invaded Lebanon.

Ruth returned to Adelaide in 2008 and settled down to a quiet suburban life, sharing a unit with her father, both of them coming along to Meeting for Worship each week. She felt, however, that the stories she’d encountered in Lebanon needed to be told, and enrolled in a PhD, seeing that as a way of documenting those stories. ALM supported Ruth financially to return to Lebanon to record her interviews, and a copy of her thesis now forms part of the ALM library collection. In the subsequent years, although her health followed a long slow deterioration, Ruth continued

to be a valued member of ALM. Her ministry in meeting was always thoughtful and insightful, and her unfailing cheerfulness was much appreciated.

Ruth was determined to make the most of her love of travel during her last years, and undertook many travel adventures for as long as she possibly could. When she wasn't off adventuring, Ruth continued to attend Meeting for as long as she possibly could as well, even when that meant with rather faltering steps and with the aid of a walking stick.

We miss Ruth's positive, cheerful presence in our meeting, and we give thanks for the Grace of God in the life of Ruth Campbell.

Minute of Record

We hear of the death of our Friend Ruth Campbell who died on 20th August 2021. Ruth was accepted into membership on 2nd May 1999. She regularly attended Adelaide Local Meeting. We ask Kerry O'Regan to prepare a Testimony to the Grace of God in the Life of Ruth Campbell.

SANTRM Meeting for Worship for Business, Sunday 3 October, 2021, Minute 21.10.03 - 3b

Notice

The memorial meeting for Ruth Campbell was a relaxed occasion when many of her friends spoke appreciatively of her friendship and insights into life. Her sister who adored Ruth spoke in loving detailed length about her singular life. The most memorable reference was her indomitable will. Although severely dyslexic Ruth was able to complete a PhD. Readers of Walking Cheerfully will remember her enlightening reports about her work in a Lebanon Refugee Camp when she was working for Australian Volunteers Abroad. She wanted to do more for healing the world's problems than by writing letters to the editor, and praying. Much was said about her cat Charlotte. The meeting concluded by a friend of Ruth's singing a tribute to her in a deep and harmonic bass voice. It was followed by pleasant outside refreshments in the meeting house grounds. Ruth Campbell was another of the worthy members of the Society of Friends in Adelaide.

Walking Cheerfully, SANTRM Newsletter, February 2022, p4

Notice

The Memorial Service for Ruth Campbell will be held on Friday 3rd December 2021, at 11 am at the North Adelaide Meeting House. All are welcome.

Adelaide Local Meeting e-Notices, 15 November 2021.