

Tribute to Joyce Spicer

who died 25th April aged 82 years
by Mary Spooner

Joyce Spicer had a gift of making everyone feel special and valued.



Although she was committed to Holy Cross church, she had close ties with Greenford Baptist Church as well, and her two girls attended Girls Brigade and forged friendships and links with many children there. She was also a greatly loved brown owl at the Methodist church, so she was truly ecumenical!

After her children and husband had died, Joyce joined the Wednesday Fellowship at Greenford Baptist Church for over 20 years. She was a fount of wisdom, and wherever we went, she knew the history of each place and was fascinating to listen to.

Joyce was the mother of two severely handicapped children. Although neither of them ever walked, and had limited use of their hands, they lived a very full, although short life. There is an inspiring account of them in a booklet called 'No stairs to bed', copies of which are available from Mary Spooner. Elaine died when she was 6 years old, but Anne who was one year older, lived on to the age of 24.

When they had to attend Great Ormond Street hospital for regular checks, Joyce pushed them in the pushchair to Ealing Broadway Station, and then carried them one by one down the steps, and then went back for the chair. She rarely remembers anyone offering assistance.

Joyce describes the opportunities she gave her girls, so that they could share experiences with able-bodied children. She once bought them Wellington boots, sat them on the step of their twin pushchair and pulled them backwards through the autumn leaves; so they could feel what it was like to scuff their feet like able-bodied children. Stan, her husband, had polio, and was not able to physically lift the girls. Joyce once carried Ann up the side of a waterfall, resting her on the ground against the tree stumps. She pushed her up a mountain track to see the sunrise, and took them on numerous camping trips. Their house was full of children, after school and in the holidays, doing activities, plays, and handiwork of all kinds, supervised by Ann. Ann was mentally very bright indeed even though she often used a machine to help her breathe. Joyce had a huge influence on the lives of many young folk several of whom came back to pay tribute at her funeral service.

I came to know Joyce intimately, and we shared many holidays together with the Wednesday fellowship, and also on the Isle of Wight. She was so very wise and had a deep understanding of people. Even when she was seriously ill, she was always thinking of others, and kept her sense of humour. I have been with her in some very challenging situations in hospital, when the staff thought she was dying. She only became downcast when she was in special care in Hammersmith, in a room with no windows. She longed to be able to see the clouds and the sky. Later, she spent many weeks in isolation in Ealing. She used to say that when things were difficult she would shut her eyes and imagine all her friends faces as if in a photograph album, and then she would pray for each one. She has inspired us all with her loving, unselfish concern. When I took her home out of isolation on Christmas Eve, she said 'I've not been discharged, I've been rescued! She was adamant that she did not want to go into hospital any more, and dear Elsie and Emmie made this wish come true for her, on the day she died.

She has become a well-known figure in Greenford riding her scooter through the park, determined to keep her independence. She was active right to the end.

Joyce may rightly be likened to the woman in Proverbs 31 v. 26 – 29:- 'She opens her arms to the poor and extends her hands to the needy. She speaks with wisdom and faithful instruction is on her tongue. Her children rise up and call her blessed. Her husband also, and he praises her and says 'Many women do noble things, but you have surpassed them all'.