

MEMORIAL SERVICE FOR ROBERTA WERNER, JUN 28, 2009



A memorial service for Roberta Werner was held at St. Paul's on Sunday, June 28, 2009 at 3:00 PM. The family received friends following the service in the Parish Hall.

[Click here for the homily by Sally Harbold](#)

[Click here for Thanks from the Family of Roberta Werner](#)

Obituary - Roberta Werner

Roberta Maria Werner, 64, of Cary died at home on June 23 after a brave battle with ovarian cancer. Roberta was born of Harold and Eva Parkerson on February 25, 1945. Roberta is survived by her husband Gordon Werner, her mother Eva Parkerson of Newton, NC, son Eric Jeffords of Dallas, TX, daughter Sarah Jeffords of Arvada, CO, sister Donna Robinson of Asheville, NC, brother Bob Parkerson of Lakenheath, England, and her sister Connie Poteat of Newton, NC. Roberta was also a wonderful "Nana" to seven grandchildren of Gordon's.

During her career, Roberta served as a registered nurse, in recent years specializing in psychiatric nursing in Illinois and North Carolina. The love and care that she showed her patients in this difficult specialty of nursing will be fondly remembered by many. Roberta was an active member of St. Paul's Episcopal Church in Cary, NC. Her special love was singing in the choir. Roberta was lovingly cared for during her illness by many members of St. Paul's, as well as by her family, members of her prayer groups, and many friends.

A memorial service will be held Sunday, June 28 at 3:00 PM at St. Paul's. In lieu of flowers, and in gratitude for the wonderful support from St. Paul's, contributions may be made to St. Paul's Episcopal Church, 221 Union St., Cary, NC 27511, 919-467-1477.

Last Updated (Friday, 31 October 2014)

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Rev. Dr. Sally Harbold
Homily at the Memorial Service for Roberta Werner
June 28, 2009



You and I live in a world that tells us we can count on certain things... plan our lives around the certainty of: a pay check or a schedule we set, paying taxes, or maybe just waking up in the morning and following our usual routines...

We can plan vacations and reunions and even taking time off to do nothing. So as we navigate all of the wonderful things that we have planned for life, when it comes to those plans being interrupted by an illness or even death we are most often taken by surprise and find it fairly hard to cope.

We humans have such a great need to know what is going to happen next. Some of us, our friend Roberta Werner included, have a lot more experience living with the unknown than others of us. In 1991, 18 years ago, Roberta was diagnosed with breast cancer. A doctor told her then that she had only 6 months to live. She told her daughter, Sarah, this story some years afterward, when Sarah was more grown up, saying "I fired that doctor and found another one who had a more positive outlook". She had no intention of dying then - when she had two kids to finish raising. Nor did she have any intention of dying when she got the diagnosis of ovarian cancer in 2006. She knew that she was facing a new battle. She knew the statistics. And she knew that people do survive ovarian cancer.

Many of you know much of her story of the past 3 plus years -- many of you are a part of that story. In fact, by way of exploring the gospel reading, I would like to invite you to participate in a little demonstration. Will you please stand up if you are a part of the groups I mention? Please stand and remain standing for a few minutes.

St. Andrew's Centering Prayer

St. Michael's Centering Prayer (she had a lot of Catholic friends)

Darlene and anyone else associated with Lovely Ladies shop

Folks who took a meal to Gordon and Roberta

People who visited Roberta, sat with her either in the hospital or at home

Care n Share leadership team leaders or volunteer team leaders who were part of this support network and made phone calls and created schedules and kept track of all that was happening.

Finally, anyone who sent Roberta energy of positive thought - who prayed for her.

Now, look around - everybody, look around and imagine this. Roberta is the one who was there lying on the pallet - not paralyzed mind you, but being held back in significant measure by the disease of cancer - and you, each one of you, and most probably everyone in this church building right now, you were helping carry Roberta to Jesus. So that she could be in the presence of the healer. Many of you have been carrying her daily for many years.

I want to thank you. And I know that Roberta thanks you too. I choose this gospel reading today because I was also privileged to be a part of this great network of love and care which supported Roberta and Gordon through the challenges of cancer and the end of her life in this world that you and I still inhabit. And I kept witnessing, in these past three years, the miracles of *healing* and *movement* and *spirit* which took place again and again. Not unlike the first doctor Roberta had with her breast cancer there were a few times when I thought she would surely die this time.

Yet in the mystery of life that includes the mystery of our physical death, Roberta was able to surprise all of us at times. I personally want to thank Roberta for this - for reminding me of the wonder and mystery of dying that can be a part of our ongoing relationship with God.

I was privileged to watch as Roberta moved from the state of not wanting to be facing death at all...holding on to hope for continued life at all cost. And then for her to enter the state of "this is too hard, it's too hard to live like this"... and as she made that transition she came then into a sense of I guess I am going to die from this. "I guess this could be it." And after coming into that place of acceptance her courage seemed to grow larger than life. It almost seems as if her hope of beating the cancer transformed into a new hope that included the hope of everlasting life. I'm not suggesting in any way that Roberta wanted to die. However, armed with that hope and with great courage she was able recently to talk to me and to family and to friends with honesty and love and make very intentional conversations. The conversations were something like this: hello, I'm dying, and this could be good-bye for us so what do we need to say to each other? And of course much of what she had to say was "I love you".

What an incredible and lasting gift it was for me to witness this. And, I hope, an incredible and lasting gift to you, her friends and family who were able to engage in these conversations.

Roberta reminded me that the Spirit of God With Us is mightier than fear or anger or sorrow which all plays a major part in our lives when we face death, either for us or for a loved one.

There are so many things to say about Roberta, aren't there? I hope you will share stories with one another as we gather after this service and the brief internment in our parish hall next door. Please share your stories with one another, especially with Roberta's family who are here from England, Colorado, Texas, Illinois and many other places. Please tell Gordon and Sarah and Eric, her children, and her mom and her sisters and brother of your connection with Roberta. It will be good for them to hear.

The times of uncertainty in Roberta's own life could have included being a single mom with two children, going back to school to get her nursing degree, working with those most marginalized in our society, those with mental illness, and of course battling breast cancer and ovarian cancer.

Through those uncertainties she became a person of courage. A person who entered into and enjoyed a great second marriage with her best friend Gordon, she was someone who loved to travel , who loved life, and someone who faced others (for everyone she met was a potential friend) ... she faced others as another person to love and to come to know without judgment or expectation and with a fantastic sense of acceptance for the differences between herself and another.

Her journey through uncertainty has reminded me to let go of the illusion of certainty in my own life. Her journey through the uncertainty of cancer is, I believe, a great witness to all of us that we might also learn how to embrace the potential freedom and wonder of uncertainty. I am sure that it is here, in the moments when we have let go of certainty, and are working hard to trust in the midst of unknowing, it is in this place that we might find ourselves in the hands of God or might be able to know that indeed, God is with us.

I am so grateful for Roberta's life and the friendship we have all had with her.

Amen.

Last Updated (Tuesday, 23 June 2015)

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THANKS FROM THE FAMILY OF ROBERTA WERNER



The family of Roberta Werner wishes to thank all the members of St. Paul's who participated in the memorial service on June 28, 2009, a beautiful celebration and tribute to Roberta's life. We also want to thank parish members, Centering Prayer groups, and others for the wonderful support to Roberta over almost three years in her courageous battle with cancer. The photo at left is symbolic of Roberta's spirit throughout her journey. Thanks to all who were a part of that journey.

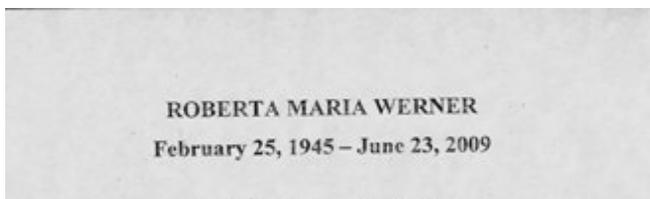
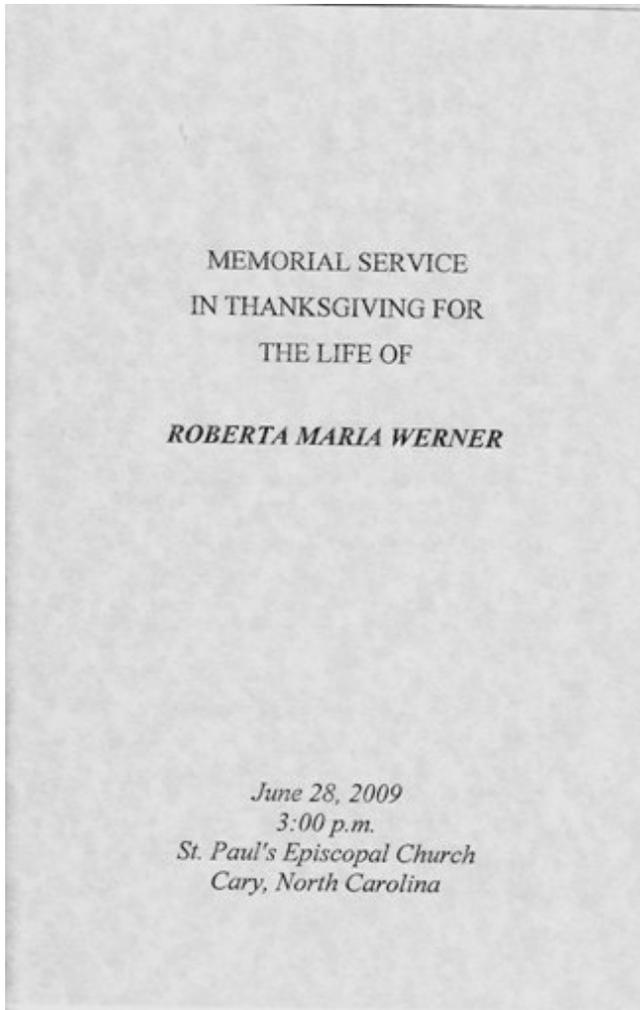
Click here for [The Rev. Dr. Sally Harbold's Homily](#).

The service itself was not recorded, but previous recordings were made of two of the beautiful pieces that were performed at the service.

Hear Joseph Ittoop sing [Lord of the Dance](#).

Hear the choir sing [The Lord is My Shepherd](#).

The bulletin from the service is copied below. Below the bulletin are some photos of Roberta.



LITURGY OF THE WORD

Prelude		Jason Pace, Organist
Hymn 287	For All the Saints <i>verses 1, 2, 7, and 8</i>	<i>Sine Nomine</i>
Opening Anthems		Book of Common Prayer 491
The Collect		BCP 493
First Reading	Isaiah 25:6-9	
Psalm	Psalm 139:1-13	BCP 794
Second Reading	Revelation 21:2-7	
Hymn 383	Fairest Lord Jesus	<i>St. Elizabeth</i>
The Gospel	Luke 5:17-26	
Homily		The Rev. Dr. Saily L. Harbold
The Apostles' Creed		BCP 496
Prayers of the People		BCP 497
Peace		

LITURGY OF THE EUCHARIST

Offertory Anthem	Lord of the Dance <i>Joseph Ittoop, soloist</i>	arr. Hayes
Eucharistic Prayer A		BCP 362
Sanctus Hymn S 129		
The Lord's Prayer		BCP 364
Angus Dei	Dona Nobis Pacem	Berthier

Holy Communion *All baptized Christians are invited to receive the bread and wine*

Veni Sancte Spiritu
Holy Spirit, Come to Us

Eat This Bread

*Eat this bread, drink this cup, come to me and never be hungry.
Eat this bread, drink this cup, trust in me and you will not thirst.*

In the Lord I'll Be Ever Thankful

*In the Lord I'll be ever thankful, in the Lord I will rejoice!
Look to God, do not be afraid. Lift up your voices, the Lord is near;
Lift up your voices, the Lord is near.*

Anthem The Lord is My Shepherd Goodall
St. Paul's Choir

*The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want;
He maketh me to lie down in green pastures:
He leadeth me beside the still waters.
Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,
I will fear no evil.
For you are with me, you will comfort me.
Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life:
And I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever.*

Post Communion Prayer		BCP 498
The Commendation		BCP 499
Closing Sentence		BCP 500
Recessional Hymn 618	Ye Watchers and Ye Holy Ones	

Lasst uns erfreuen

During this hymn the family and those who choose to accompany them will proceed to the memorial garden for a brief interment. You may join the procession to the garden or wait for the end of the hymn and move to the parish hall for refreshments.

Postlude

Lord of the Dance

*I danced in the morning when the world was begun,
And I danced in the moon and the stars and the sun,
And I came down from heaven and I danced on the earth;
At Bethlehem I had My birth.*

*Dance, then, wherever you may be, I am the Lord of the Dance, said He,
And I'll lead you all, wherever you may be,
And I'll lead you all in the dance, said He.*

*I danced for the scribe and the Pharisee,
But they would not dance and they would not follow Me
I danced for the fishermen, for James and John;
They came with Me and the dance went on.*

*I danced on the Sabbath and I cured the lame;
The holy people said it was a shame.
They whipped and they stripped and they hung Me high,
And left Me there on a cross to die.*

*I danced on a Friday when the sky turned black;
It's hard to dance with the devil on your back.
They buried My body and they thought I'd gone;
But I am the dance and I still go on.*

*They cut me down and I leap up high I am the life that will never, never die;
I'll live in you if you'll live in Me: I am the Lord of the Dance, said He.*

Officiating

The Rev. George Adamik
The Rev. Dr. Sally L. Harbold
The Rev. Bernard J. Owens
The Rev. Antoinette Wike
The Rev. Lois Reardin
The Rev. Candace Snively

Organist

Jason Pace





Last Updated (Friday, 14 August 2009)

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