

Reflection at the funeral of Val Reeves

St Philip's Anglican Church, O'Connor
Revd Rebecca Newland
Tuesday 25th June 2013

Psalm 23; John 14.1-6

What a wonderful privilege it is to stand here and help us all celebrate the life of Val and to give thanks for what she gave to all of us. Val was a special member of our church family and we will miss her very much. We will always remember her beautiful smile, her soft face and her thoughtful care.

At this point in the service I don't really want to say very much. When I spent time with Val and Andy planning her funeral a few weeks before she died she was very keen that this service was simple and not drawn out. I think her last thoughts were for all of you. Given that Val chose the hymns, the music and the readings we can safely let the service and its words speak to us of Val and her simple but steady faith. We can let her understanding of God comfort us and point us to the love that overcomes all endings and all death.

Val chose Psalm 23 and the reading from John's gospel. The psalm speaks of God's loving presence through all our lives, on the mountains and in the valleys and the promise that God's children will dwell in his house forever. The gospel reading has Jesus Christ reassuring his followers that he goes before them and prepares a place for them all. In a moment Janise will sing *Amazing Grace*, the well loved hymn that is full of hope and the belief that grace will lead us on through life and home. We will also hear *Over the Rainbow*, a beautiful song that is full of yearning for a place beyond troubles and clouds. Finally, we will sing *Thine be the Glory*, which is a hymn that is full of joy that in Jesus Christ death is overcome, new life is ours for the asking and our eternal home is with God.

There is a theme here isn't there? All the music and readings Val chose are about going home to God, dwelling in God's loving presence. This faith, this hope and assurance meant that Val could face her ending with courage, hope, love, acceptance and trust that God was with all of you. Some of her last words and thoughts were for her family and friends. Does this make Val special and a saint? Not at all! And she would be the first to reject such an idea. She was a flesh and blood woman who lived life the full with all its ups and downs. What it means for me was that Val trusted in God and put her life in God's hands and heart. This gave her immense dignity and courage.

Today we can celebrate and give thanks for Val's life for many reasons. We give thanks because of the gift of Val in our lives. We rejoice that we knew her. We rejoice that somehow she became part of our lives, touched us in small and great ways, taught us and loved us. There is so much to rejoice about when we think of Val, her courage, her tenacity and good humour throughout a life full of challenges. We give thanks that how she was in the world taught us things we needed to learn about ourselves and love itself. May she rest in peace and may our hearts not be troubled. May they be filled with the assurance of God's love and forgiveness. Amen