

IN MEMORIAM

Connie M. Kleingartner

February 10, 1948 – August 21, 2008

When nothing more could be done to stop the spread of cancer she had been battling for over a year, Connie Kleingartner requested a service of the Commendation of the Dying. Over 200 people gathered at the Lutheran School of Theology in Chicago in May and walked with Connie through the waters of baptism on her way to death. The Rev. Dr. Connie Kleingartner died August 21, 2008, at the age of 60. She died as she had lived—with courage, grace, and more than a little flair. The same playful person who wore flowing skirts and bodacious hats everywhere and occasionally put on red socks and a sweatshirt for faculty meetings let her community bless her bald head and commend her to God in her dying. Connie's deep and unshakable trust in the graciousness of God gave her freedom to embrace her flaws and celebrate her gifts. A longstanding colleague and friend wrote these words at her death: "She was as full of contradictions as any sinner of the Lord's redeeming."

At her death, Connie M. Kleingartner was the Logos Professor of Evangelism and Church Ministries and director of Field Education at the Lutheran School of Chicago at Chicago, a position she had held since 1995. Prior to that, she was a parish pastor and a coordinator of congregational life for congregations among Lutheran churches in Iowa.

Connie had been among the first wave of women ordained in the Lutheran Church in the late 1970s. Her dissertation was based on substantial research with ordained Lutheran women who began as "firsts" and later became established leaders in the church. Connie used those studies and her own experience in her work as director of field education to advocate

with students “to trust the process” and discover possibilities in ministry they could not easily imagine.

Connie Kleingartner left an enduring legacy as teacher and mentor and friend and colleague. She often spoke about the need to say “no” in order to be gracious with ourselves. She was equally passionate about teaching leadership skills and promoting new models for supervising in contextual education. Above all else, Connie was determined to live as fully and possible. She was a diabetic who walked the mountains of Nepal, learned Spanish after 50, traveled widely with friends, and took delight in “long, leisurely luxurious baths.” Connie was a member of the Editorial Board of the *Journal of Supervision and Training in Ministry* from 2000–2006 and a regular contributor to the Association of Theological Field Education. In a written reflection on pedagogical issues in teaching the practices of ministry, she wrote this: “We need to know our strengths and our shadow sides. We need to be in a process of ongoing transformation, so that we do not trip over our own hidden, unexamined or unchallenged thoughts and behaviors.” As her teacher and friend and colleague, Connie taught me that “the unexamined life is not worth living.” It is a truth that I cherish in her memory.

Herbert Anderson, Editor, *Reflective Practice*
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