

Ardis Everett

The achievements of Ardis Everett are innumerable. Starting her education in a storybook one-room schoolhouse, she attended the International School of Business in Des Moines, worked for the Iowa State Security Commission, the Vocational Education Commission, and *Successful Farming* Magazine. She received higher education at universities in Stockholm and Amsterdam, as well as Rockhurst College here in Kansas City. Fluent in Swedish, Dutch and Norwegian, she worked as a secretary, business manager, realtor, legal secretary, and paralegal, for organizations as disparate as a local radio station and the Central Intelligence Agency. The list goes on. Ardis worked quickly. She married Jim on their third date. As her activities receded, she enjoyed in her later years people who connected to her roots. She was a loving wife to Jim for 65 years, a model mother for Lynne and Susan, a hostess of unmatched skill, and one of the first women ordained to the office of Evangelist in the Community of Christ. She loved her family, and she loved her congregation. On occasion Ardis joined us here at the cathedral for prayer and fellowship. Speaking for all of us at cathedral parish, we are honored to welcome her family and friends, and especially her congregation, the members of Woods Chapel Community of Christ and Pastor Rick Maupin. The congregation's website says its "goal is to inspire, enhance, and support each one's spiritual journey in discipleship through relevant and meaningful activities grounded in the message of Jesus Christ." It's hard to imagine a better exemplar of that goal than Ardis Everett.

The last year and a half contrast starkly with the previous 90 years of Ardis's life. Time stole her from us bit by bit. Lynne witnessed her mother's growing incapacities as she returned the selfless service she had learned as a daughter at home. In that light, the first two readings we just heard console us. From the book of Wisdom: "the souls of the just are in the hand of God, and no torment shall touch them.... Chastised a little, they shall be greatly blessed, because God tried them and found them worthy of himself." From Paul's Second Letter to the Corinthians: "We know that if our earthly dwelling, a tent, should be destroyed, we have a building from God, a dwelling not made with hands, eternal in heaven.... We would rather leave the body and go home to the Lord."

That image of a homecoming is particularly comforting because of the way Ardis so exceptionally practiced hospitality, welcoming people to her home by the hundreds every year, unflappably feeding them with fine food and uplifting conversation. This Gospel account, then, fittingly captures future hope. On the evening of the resurrection, when Jesus revealed himself to two of his disciples on the road to Emmaus, he did it in lively conversation and while breaking bread. Ardis lived a stellar public career, but in the privacy of her home, she shared what meant the most: the company of other people, thought-provoking conversations, and food to delight both mouth and mind. To be with Ardis on those occasions was to experience a little bit of heaven.

Today we pray that she will experience the fullness of heaven at a banquet prepared for her. After so much education, countless skills, varied jobs, exotic travels, so many friends, Ardis made her final career service to the gospel. Arriving now at the goal of her journey to Emmaus, may she dine with Christ.

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