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In Memory **Mary Pulsford 1930-2022** *by Alan Misson*

[The following is the address given by Alan Misson at the funeral for Mary Pulsford in Chester on the 18th May 2022.](#)

Mary Pulsford was born Mary Nicholls on the 25th March 1930, the third of four children of Frederick and Florence Nicholls of 25 Waldegrave Road, Anerley, in South London, just a short distance from the site of the famous Crystal Palace which was still standing at that time.

From her birth she was immersed in the New Church - for more than two thirds of her life at the Anerley church just a short walk down the hill from her childhood home then briefly at West Wickham and finally for the last third of her life at the Chester church.

Her parents had been married at the church in Waldegrave Road in 1921 and her maternal grandfather, Samuel Bernard Dicks, had been for a while a Lay Minister of the church in Dalston, during

the mid-Victorian period. And so Mary was already very well connected with the church when she was baptised on the 11th May 1930.

Mary grew up in the Sunday School alongside her siblings and surrounded by cousins, uncles and aunts. At the age of 14 she was made a Junior Member and then 6 years later a Senior Member. At that time another member of the church was Raymond (Ray) Pulsford. Ray also had a strong lineage in the New Church.

When Mary and Ray got married at Anerley on the 16th of August 1952, they started out on a life together which involved great service to the church by both of them in so many ways. And with their children David and Pamela and succeeding generations Mary played a key family role which is perhaps best left to family members to describe. What has been visible to all, though, is that Mary and Ray established a deepening mutual relationship that has endured for nearly 70 years and has been an example to all.

In a moment I am going to focus on the Anerley Sunday School and Mary's key role within it. But before that just a few words about her role as a hostess. One of Mary's lifelong friends was Kathy Jackson who with her husband Bob were regular visitors to Chester twice a year for about a decade. Kathy recalls that they were always met by Mary and Ray off the train and taken to their home where 9 times out of 10 a chicken was in the oven for the evening meal. Mary always had a plan in mind for the many excursions they took, and also made sure that a wonderful picnic was provided wherever they went. Kathy and Bob always felt like honoured guests and Mary couldn't do enough for them.

Another good friend was Marjorie Misson, my mother. At Christmas, for what seemed like decades, my mother would welcome her growing family to Christmas gatherings and inevitably bring out a Christmas cake with the simple words - *Mary made it and Ray iced it*. On the day that Mary passed away my son Christopher happened to be visiting and when I told him the sad news he said - *didn't Mary make the Christmas cake and her husband ice it?* It may not be a big thing but it shows how Mary's kindness and thoughtfulness had a real long-term impact.

And so to the Sunday School.

If I was asked to sum up Mary in one sentence I would say – *She loved little children and greatly cared for their spiritual well-being*. I don't know exactly when Mary started out as a Sunday School teacher but it was probably in her later teens soon after the end of the war.

I must have started in the Primary Sunday School shortly after the time of her wedding and by then Mary, with her older sister Barbara, **was** the Sunday School. Some 25 years later my three children also passed through her caring hands. Mary played a key role not only in the teaching of the younger children but also in the work of putting on all sorts of dramatic events for the annual Sunday School Anniversary and Prize Giving. And then there was the Sunday School Outing. This annual event, often including a hired London

bus, was the climax of the Sunday School year and at its centre was Mary and the magnificent refreshments she masterminded. Talk to anyone about these outings and they will often mention the cherries and the iced cakes and the selection of sandwiches in the individual paper bags. And these outings were not just occasional events, they went on for years, indeed for decades, with Mary heavily involved, making sure every event was a success.

There is a statement in New Church Teachings to the effect that – *All religion has relation to life, and the life of religion is to do good.* I am sure this was a guiding concept in all areas of her life but perhaps most notably in her care for the spiritual well-being of little children.

To conclude I want to quote another text from New Church Teachings from Emanuel Swedenborg's book Heaven and Hell.

As soon as children are reawakened (which happens immediately after their death), they are taken to heaven and given to female angels who had loved children tenderly during their physical lives and had loved God as well. Since in this world they had loved all children with a kind of maternal tenderness, they accept these new ones as their own, and the children love them as their mothers as though this were inborn in them. Each such angel has as many children as her spiritual maternal nature wants.

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