

July 11, 2003 – Excerpts from Rev. Claudine Carlson's Eulogy for Amanda

Two roads diverged in the wood and I took the one less traveled God and that has made all the difference. Some of you recognize that as the closing words of a famous poem, "The Road Not Taken", by the famous American poet, Robert Frost. It's always been one of my favourites. Probably because it's one of the few bits of poetry that I think I can understand. But I've neither thought of it nor read it probably for years now. But it's been rolling around in my head a lot since I heard of Amanda's death on Monday morning. You see, the poem speaks to me of a person on the path of life who, instead of running with the crowd, takes the road less traveled; is a bit of a trail blazer; a person who is unique and unafraid and courageous. Amanda was one who journeyed usually quite fearlessly on that road less traveled. I think that's the reason that my first impression of her, I don't even recall the events surrounding our first meeting, but I certainly remember thinking to myself, "this is one of the ones that's going to make a difference in the world."

I was a professional teacher for only five years of my life but had been teaching something, one way or the other, for my entire adult life and as a teacher I think sometimes one develops a sixth sense about the very special students. The ones who will go on to make a difference. Let me make it very clear right away that it has something to do with far more than intelligence. Far more than that. The ones who make a difference are the ones who are at home in their own skin, the ones who march to the beat of their own drummer, the ones who have such a sense of self that they don't need to do whatever it is that most young people think they need to do in order to gain approval or popularity. It's not a rebelliousness, mind you, it just determination and confidence. These are the students who ask the good, hard questions in class, not because they're trying to challenge the teacher, but because they're interested and they truly want to understand. These are the students who don't need to run with the conventions of their peers, who are strong enough to stand alone if necessary. If a classmate comes up to you and says that if you want to be cool you need to smoke, such a student is likely to say "that's really stupid." And if somebody tries to encourage you to put down others and to form cliques in order to be "in", such a student will say, "sorry, I don't do that, that's unkind". That was our Amanda. Who had such a compassionate heart and a passionate spirit. She was extraordinarily kind but she was no pushover. She had absolutely no use for those that were inclined to cruelty and she could say so. She knew what was right and she knew what she wanted and she rarely wavered. She possessed a sturdy and often stubborn character and when I use the word stubborn with reference to Amanda, I am using it in the best sense of the word. And she was intelligent. Very intelligent. It was my great honour to teach her two years in confirmation here at Mount Zion and she was a wonderfully challenging student. When Amanda asked a question, you'd better have the answer and if you didn't give an

answer to satisfy her, she would keep pressing; and if you said, "I really don't know right now but let me go home and I'll try to find the answer", next week she would be there asking you again if you had found the answer to the question. What a joy. That every teacher could have students like Amanda.

When Amanda was confirmed, after confirmation she spent a year at Vet Camp and then went on to be one of our counsellors out at camp Edgewood. She was remarkable. Absolutely remarkable. She loved her campers, she could control them. She was excellent in any kind of emergency but what I remember most of all is the relationship that she formed where she shared the depth of her spirituality with her kids and each night she would write her own devotions for her campers and they would pray together. I remember as well, when we were needing to raise some funds for our youth to go to one of our national youth events, Amanda stepped forward and took charge. "Why don't we have a fund raising dance?" Why not? She did it all by herself. Amazing competence, amazing confidence, amazing stuff for a fifteen or sixteen year old young woman to undertake. But that was Amanda. Pure Amanda.

I'm sure that Amanda was borne a particularly gifted person with that sturdiness of spirit in her little heart from day one but those wonderful attributes were nurtured and refined in her family. There is so much respect and kindness in this family. How much they love and enjoy each other. I remember being kind of surprised that on David and Lynn's twenty fifth wedding anniversary they were taking the girls along with them to their anniversary trip in Mexico. There, at a time when most young people would be cringing at the thought of taking a holiday with their parents because that was just not cool, Lisa and Amanda were thrilled; and when they came home they shared with me many happy and delighted tales. Those family vacations continued most recently in May they went to Spain and every time David and Lynn planned one of these vacations they always had in mind that it would be their last family vacation because the girls probably won't want to go anymore. They loved being together and I don't think that this was indicative of any kind of weird dependency on the part of Lisa and Amanda. No, indeed they had their own lives thank you very much. It's just an indication of the incredible love and joy of being a part of this family.

When I first heard that Amanda had become a paramedic, I stopped and thought about it, I realized that it was perfect for her; and when I heard how this career had unfolded for her, I recognized it as something of a calling for Amanda. A co-op term in high school and she was hooked and she became one of the favourites and one of the best students—obviously. She was fortunate enough to stumble into something very early that would use her finest gifts and keep her passion for life ignited brightly. Her compassion, her intelligence, her ability to work calmly and well in crisis situations

all were necessary in this vocation. It's no wonder that she loved it so very much. It was far more than a job to Amanda. It almost defined who she was as a person.

In the long, incredibly hard days ahead let us give thanks to God and to Lynn and David who all together fashioned this amazing young woman. Who, from the beginning it would seem, trod the road less traveled.

We'll miss you Amanda. We already do. Your compassion, your intelligence, that wonderful smile, those rosy cheeks, your sense of fun, your affection—I could go on forever but perhaps most of all we will miss that incredible, indomitable spirit which was the essence of who you were. That strong and wonderful spirit that assures us that despite your all too brief life, you did indeed make a difference. A huge difference in our lives and in the world. We thank you for that Amanda sweetheart. Good night and god bless you. We'll see you in the morning.