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In Memory of Ruth

I first met Ruth 34 years ago. At that time, both YC and I had just become Christians for two years and had relocated to Boulder for work. By God's guidance, we came to BCEFC for fellowship. The church had just been established, with around twenty people attending the gatherings. The brothers and sisters had a close bond with one another. Throughout the journey, Ruth became a deeply influential spiritual mentor to me. She was humble in her actions, never seeking attention or recognition. She quietly served the church, not pursuing fame or seeking rewards. She was an excellent listener, skilled in encouraging and comforting others. She highly respected personal privacy, disliked gossip, and refrained from making baseless judgments. Both Ruth and Pastor Henry were individuals of great integrity, always living a modest and honest life. In her faith, she relied on God with a quiet and focused heart, yet she never hesitated to acknowledge her own weaknesses. She was truly an honest and upright person.

Ruth's dedication to children's ministry over the years left a deep impression on me. Every Sunday, she faithfully served in the children's Sunday school, and the children loved her. In the early days when there was no internet and printing was inconvenient, Ruth used a creative approach to teach the children to sing children's hymns. She asked me to buy white cloth from the fabric store and instructed me to write the song lyrics on the cloth with colorful markers. The cloth was then hung in the classroom so that the children could sing the hymns while memorizing the lyrics. Over the years, she diligently sowed the seeds of the Gospel in the hearts of the children.

Ruth had a profound understanding of the Bible. Her meticulous and in-depth interpretation of the Scriptures greatly benefited many. In the early years, Dr. Xu Hua was invited twice to preach at our church, and after those evangelistic meetings, people made decisions to believe in Christ. At the request of the congregation, Ruth led the adults in studying the Gospel of John in the adult Sunday school class. Since then, she had lent me several classical Bible commentaries, inspiring me and igniting my interest in studying God's Word, which later influenced my direction of serving God.

Due to a viral infection in her childhood, Ruth had damaged heart valves and had to take blood-thinning medication for a long time. These medications had significant side effects, making her physically weak. She had undergone multiple heart surgeries, including two open-heart surgeries to install artificial valves. Throughout those challenging processes, we witnessed God's grace together and saw Ruth's trust and obedience to God.

When YC and I visited Pastor Henry and his wife in late May, Ruth's health was already extremely frail. However, she still talked with me for over forty minutes, providing detailed updates on her condition and expressing her desire for us to pray for her. In her conversation, her longing for God naturally shone through. The last time I spoke to her on the phone was on June 11, just before my long trip to Seattle. Her voice was surprisingly lively, and she sounded in good spirits. I had been planning to contact her these past few days when I received the news that she had returned to her heavenly home.

Many years ago, Ruth expressed that there was no need for a memorial service when she passed away. She truly embodied the words of the Apostle Paul, who said, "I have counted everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ." "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness." Though we feel a sense of loss in our hearts, we take comfort in knowing that she has been released by the Lord, peacefully passing away and being freed from sickness and toil. Knowing that she now rests in the arms of the Lord brings us great comfort.

As I write these words, the hymn "Near to the Heart of God" resonates softly in my heart:

There is a place of quiet rest, near to the heart of God;
A place where sin cannot molest, near to the heart of God.
O Jesus, blest Redeemer, sent from the heart of God,
Hold us, who wait before Thee, near to the heart of God.

There is a place of comfort sweet, near to the heart of God;
A place where we our Savior meet, near to the heart of God.
O Jesus, blest Redeemer, sent from the heart of God,
Hold us, who wait before Thee, near to the heart of God.

There is a place of full release, near to the heart of God;
A place where all is joy and peace, near to the heart of God.
O Jesus, blest Redeemer, sent from the heart of God,
Hold us, who wait before Thee, near to the heart of God.