

## Elizabeth Mary Pietsch

Liz was born at Eudunda District Hospital in South Australia on 25 April 1952, the fourth child of Angus and Rufina Farley (nee Sieber). She was baptized on 1 June 1952 at Emmaus Lutheran Church in Eudunda and grew up on the family farm north of Robertstown. There she enjoyed a carefree childhood, playing with animals (especially cats), climbing trees, eating fruit from the mulberry trees, and trekking down the garden path at night to go to the outdoor toilet. She went to school at Robertstown Primary, which she loved, graduating from printing to cursive writing in 1960. Every day she rode her bike down the farm's long driveway and then another two miles down the road to meet the school bus. This same driveway was the site of an infamous childhood incident. At the age of seven, having made a miraculous recovery after being allowed to stay home from school unwell, she decided to race her father (who was in the ute) to the bottom of the drive on her bike. Turning to see if he was coming, she flew head over the handlebars landing face first on the ground, knocking out her two newly grown front teeth, and there beginning an ongoing relationship with the dental profession.

From the age of twelve, Liz attended Concordia College, Adelaide, boarding at the hostel on Wattle Street, Highgate. She loved school and it was there that she met Julie and Edie, with whom she remained lifelong friends. She joined the debating team, played netball and softball, and in her final year was elected Head Prefect. It was at Concordia that she started dating a fellow student, Michael Pietsch. Her father had insisted that she and her sisters received a good education and that they each obtain a profession, something Liz always spoke of with admiration and gratitude. She chose teaching and, awarded a Commonwealth Scholarship, entered Teachers College in 1970. After one semester she interrupted her studies to take up an American Field Service (AFS) scholarship in the United States of America, re-entering high school and completing Senior Year in Wyomissing, Pennsylvania. Liz often described this as one of the most incredible experiences of her life. She thrived in the new environment, embracing her freedom, seizing new opportunities, participating in sport and drama, delighting in the expansion of her horizons, and making enduring friendships.

On her return to Australia in 1971 she resumed her teacher training, specializing in Physical Education, English, and Speech and Drama. Boarding with a retired couple, the Klingbergs, she enjoyed the self-direction of tertiary study and received excellent grades. Soon after her return she started going out with Michael, who was also studying in Adelaide. Her father Angus bought her an old Austin A40 and at the young couple would play sport, attend church and spend time with friends. In 1973, on her 21<sup>st</sup> birthday, she and Michael got engaged, and in January 1974, on a 40 degree day, they were married at Bethlehem Lutheran Church in Adelaide. After a camping honeymoon to Lakes Entrance, they moved into a flat in Fullarton, and then subsequently into Liz's grandmother's old house in Prospect. Money was tight, but they continued to play netball and football, and also took up tennis. In 1975 Liz started her first teaching job, at Daws Road High School, earning the princely salary of \$5,000 a year. She loved the school and her colleagues there, but after two years, she transferred to Morialta High School which was closer to the new house she and Michael were building on a block of land in Greenhill in the Adelaide Hills.

Children soon arrived. In 1978, Liz gave birth to her first child, Tamson. Sam followed in 1980 and Nathan in 1983. She spent twelve devoted years at home caring for them. Although punctuated by the terrible 1983 Ash Wednesday bushfires which ripped through their small community, and by the unexpected death in 1984 of her mother, these were happy years for Liz. She took the children to playgroup and Kindergym and became Chairperson of the Kindergarten Committee and Burnside Primary School. She and Michael hosted and participated in weekend parties and events in their local community and the children roamed freely with their neighbourhood friends. They started attending Grace Lutheran Church Bridgewater, where they made many close family friends. Liz also took on some part-time organizational work at the Australian Council for Health, Physical Education and Recreation (ACHPER) and taught at one of the Adelaide Teachers' Colleges. She was active and fulfilled in her work and community service and family life.

The recession of the late 1980s brought financial hardship that, in 1989, led the family to sell their home in Greenhill and move deeper into the Adelaide Hills where, on five acres of land outside Littlehampton, they

built another house. This began a new chapter for Liz who in 1990 resumed her teaching career, becoming one of the foundation staff at Cornerstone College, Mount Barker. Initially she was employed for two days a week, but her passion for teaching and the school itself meant that she was there almost full time, teaching Physical Education and English. She found the twelve years at Cornerstone incredibly rewarding, with colleagues she loved and admired and a cause to which she was steadfastly committed. She felt she learned an enormous amount from Mal Wegner, the Principal, from her fellow teachers, and from her students. Liz continued to play basketball up until she was nearly 50 and weekends were spent ferrying teenage children to cricket and football and hockey, going to church, and seeing friends, while always managing to fit in a few hours of marking. Holidays were frequently spent with Ju Jenkin, Liz's sister, and her family, either at their farm near Hamilton, or at Port Fairy, and those relationships remained a mainstay of life, both for Liz and her children.

In 2003, Liz received an invitation to become the inaugural Head of Secondary of a Lutheran primary school in Wodonga that was looking to expand. With the children all moved out, Liz and Michael decided to seize the opportunity for change, and in 2004 Liz set about establishing a new life as well as a new school. But part way through this year her marriage ended. Devastated, she decided to return to South Australia. A temporary role at Concordia College, along with supportive friends and colleagues, helped restore some of her confidence and belief in her teaching abilities. A backpacking trip around the world with her dear friend Julie to visit Tamson in Oxford, Sam in Munich, and Nathan in Vancouver, opened her horizons and bolstered her sense of self. This began a series of overseas trips including several to Scotland, England, and Europe as well as Palestine and Israel. While some of these were in groups, many were undertaken alone in the intrepid spirit of adventure that had characterized her first journey to the United States. In 2005 Liz started a new role as Head of Senior School at Unity College in Murray Bridge, also running the vocational education and work experience programs. In 2008 she graduated from Australian Catholic University with a Postgraduate Certificate in Educational Leadership as well as a Master of Education from the Australian Lutheran College. Through these, sometimes difficult, years the support she received from her church community and her "Friday night girls", as well as the affirmation she received from Lutheran Education Australia (LEA) was regenerative. She returned that affirmation with dedicated service and committed faith, receiving LEA Service Awards in 2011 and 2018.

With the birth of Annabel to Sam and his wife Ainsley in 2011, Liz became a grandmother. This was a role she adored and in 2012 she moved to Melbourne, living first in Eaglemont and then buying her house in Viewbank where she was very happy. She took on a role as the Education Officer for the regional office of LEA which she loved, not least because it gave her the chance to travel to schools in Victoria, NSW, and Tasmania, but also because through it she connected with many teachers about what it meant to work in a Lutheran school. More beloved grandchildren followed: Lucas (2013) and Benjamin (2015) to Sam and Ainsley, and Harriet (2014) and Huxley (2017) to Nathan and Sarah, then finally Vita (2021) to Tamson and her partner Ruth. Along with her children and daughters-in-law, of whom she was tremendously proud, her grandchildren were the great joy of her later life.

Following her retirement in 2018, Liz continued her passion for Lutheran education through her roles as a school council member and chairperson of Sunshine Christian School, which she carried on until early 2022. Even after her cancer diagnosis in 2018, and despite declining health and COVID disruptions, Liz continued to take opportunities to travel, squeezing one last trip in to Edinburgh and Wales, visiting friends in Adelaide, flying to Sydney for Vita's baptism and birthday, and even making a six-hour taxi trip in January 2022 to stay with Ruth and Tamson in regional NSW. She maintained and cherished her friendships across state borders and she drew great solace and support from her community at St Paul's, Box Hill.

Across her 70 years, Liz was a gregarious woman who cherished her relationships, a dedicated educator, sportswoman, lover of sweet treats, woman of faith, and fan of a dramatic turn. Beloved mother and Nanna, friend and colleague, by the end she was ready to go, but goodness we will miss her.