



April 19, 2017

*A CARE TEAM FOUNDER*

She had been a member of the Hills Church for some years when the cancer diagnosis came. Stunned by thoughts of mortality and the long weeks of treatment ahead, this self-supporting single woman could have succumbed to despair. She had no family in New England. But she did have friends. Friends who were members of Hills Church. Friends who generously and lovingly came to her aid. These friends – Rob Ann Tomlinson, Kathy Michel, Natalie Garland, Kelly Ford and many others – provided Luree with numerous rides to Mass General for radiation therapy, helped with grocery shopping, and even did the laundry. Today Luree is cancer free.

Having been redeemed from an early death by advanced medicine and the love of her church, Luree Jaquith longed to see others blessed as she had been blessed. That is why, when Interim Minister Karin Case floated the idea of a Care Team Ministry, Luree knew she had her mission. She immediately volunteered to help implement the idea and still provides key leadership to Care Teams.

Luree's family history is interesting. Her father had done the Triple Jump for the USA in the Olympic Games. He was also the survivor of gas attacks in the Great War, but he never talked about that. His civilian life was not without danger. He was a tea tester with Jewel Tea, and a bookkeeper for the Milk Drivers Union, during the Al Capone era in Chicago. He carried a gun. Known for steady nerves and integrity, he would be chosen to carry the ransom when union leader was kidnapped. He didn't talk much about that either.

Luree's mother was a registered nurse, born in the South, and the first woman to serve as a deacon in her Baptist church in Chicago. As children, Luree and her brother had health challenges: Luree with two mastoid surgeries, and her brother with polio. Still, this on-the-case mother, saw to it that her children's educational needs were well met, which included four years in the Lab School at the University of Chicago. Excellent teaching there led her brother, who had learning difficulties, to develop artistic abilities that landed his art project in the window of Marshall Field.

The family took annual trips to St. Augustine for vacation, stopping along the way to visit relatives in Tennessee, where attitudes on some issues were in sharp contrast to their own. While generous and welcoming to their visitors, these Christians nevertheless spoke of "spooks" and used other derogatory terms when talking of black persons. This was a shock.

Holding a junior college degree, Luree began her career in Illinois, teaching fifth grade. She later earned a Bachelor of Arts degree from Illinois State University. Always a lover of books,

she went on to receive a Masters Degree in Library Science from Western Michigan University in Kalamazoo. From there she came to Lexington, MA, where she served as a librarian for 32 years, ending up on the same faculty as our Kelly Ford.

Luree joined the Hills Church in 1987. She has sung in the choir and served as a Deacon and on the Outreach and Music Committees in addition to her work for the Care Team Ministry. Luree feels fortunate and grateful for a life of meaning in the church, for the privilege of helping young people learn to love books, and for life in general – and the fun of it all. She recalls with a smile, that once while on sabbatical leave in St. Petersburg (then Leningrad), she found herself handing packs of Big Red chewing gum to guards in Red Square. Yes, it was fun!

*By Elizabeth Robertson*