**A Good Word for Judy Campbell
October 30, 2011**

 This past week, the world lost one smile. One bright and shiny and good smile. Her face could light up a room. Her excitement could energize any group. Her go-getter attitude could invigorate any situation. And her smile could warm every heart. Yes, when I remember Judy Campbell I will choose to remember that smile. I know that smile is at the very core of who she was. I have been with Judy during some of her most difficult days: in a hospital waiting room literally all night long while Doc received new lungs – and she was still smiling – even it was nervous energy; visiting in her home during these last couple of years as she declined – and she was still smiling. God put in Judy Campbell a spark divine joy so that even in life’s toughest moments, even when life’s road was filled with bumps and even a few potholes, even then she could manage a real and heartfelt smile. When I think of Judy I see joy. Not a bad legacy to leave to this world.

 And so I began to wonder – what was it that could bring a smile to Judy’s face? No doubt about it – it was music. Even today’s service should reflect her love of music. From her faithful leadership in the choir at our church – holding down the front row of sopranos to joining Layton in the musical Fiddler on the Roof when he was only 7 years old to following Layton and Douglas everywhere from NYC to cruises holding down the front row seat as their most adoring fan, music has proved another language for Judy. A language of the heart. Someone once said that the one who sings, prays twice. Surely that was Judy’s motto as well. And even as her ability to communicate declined, after she could no longer speak, if you sang to her she could join you. Music spoke to a deeper place in Judy. A place where words could not go.

 What was it that could bring a smile to Judy’s face? No doubt about it – it was her friends. From their bridge club that eventually just quit playing bridge and instead shared meals and vacations together to her clients that she tried her best to keep beautiful and young, Judy knew the value of good friendship. Faithful to them she remained, just as they were to her.

 What was it that could bring a smile to Judy’s face? No doubt about it – it was the mountains. She loved that family house. She loved the change of the leaves. She loved the fresh air. She loved view. She the getaway. And always one for adventure, Judy even wanted to be in the mountains for a big meteor shower that was to occur at 3:30 AM. So Doc and Judy went to the deck wrapped in blankets and oohed and ahhed over each and every shooting star. Look at that one! Did you see that? She attacked life with the enthusiasm and energy and innocence of a child – seeing it all – the mountains and the stars as wonders of God’s creation.

 What was it that could bring a smile to Judy’s face? No doubt about it – it was her parents and her sister. Growing up in Granite Falls, she was something of a country girl and a tom boy – which is a little hard for some of us to imagine. She went fishing with her Dad and skied the Catawba River. She rode motorcycles and drove go-carts. And she was a good shot with a rifle. And she could embarrass her little sister to death driving a big old flatbed truck. Didn’t bother Judy a bit, though Terry was more likely to hide in the floor of that old truck. Family was all important.

 What was it that could bring a smile to Judy’s face? No doubt about it – it was her church. She taught Sunday School and went on youth trips. She led the CROP Walk effort and participated faithfully in Tableau. She knew this church to be an extension of her family – a community that would walk with her along life’s path of ups and downs and joys and sorrows. She was progressive in her theology. Listening and questioning and doubting were as important to her faith journey as any answer she ever found. She practiced unconditional love because she knew that was the way of God.

 What was it that could bring a smile to Judy’s face? No doubt about it – it was her grandchildren. Harrison, Isabel, Sophia, you truly filled her heart to overflowing. She loved watching you at baseball and dance. She loved taking care of you and in the very best sense of the phrase – helping to raise you – including teaching you to eat well (tomatoes, broccoli, green beans, and salad) and of course a little green eggs and ham. Really, green eggs. I can see that grin spread across her face now as you sat at her kitchen table anxiously awaiting breakfast and received green eggs. It may have made you happy for surely it was fun, but to Mama Judy is was pure delight. That’s what you were to her. Pure delight.

What was it that could bring a smile to Judy’s face? No doubt about it – her boys. Layton and Douglass, surely you must know that you truly were her pride and joy. Oh the stories she could tell of coaching your tennis league and sitting through countless baseball games. Oh the stories she could tell of musicals and performances and theater. Oh the stories she could tell of raising two teenage sons. Oh the stories she could tell . . . that I’m sure at the time she might not have been smiling, but now that you made it through to the other side of those years, she could find the humor of boys being boys. But it wasn’t just the stuff she went to. It wasn’t just that she was your biggest fan. You are from her. She was one of those mothers carried you and birthed you and nurtured you and loved you and accepted you for exactly who you are and did it not because it was what she was supposed to do. She did because you are perhaps the best definition of who she was. When she heard the name Layton, she beamed with pride. When she heard the name Douglas, she smiled with joy. The two of you are the best of what she was. You are her gift to this world. So even in the midst of the many many tears, remember to smile often and smile big that you might remember her well.

 What was it that could bring a smile to Judy’s face? No doubt about it – it was Doc. In just a few weeks they would have celebrated 49 years together. That is a long time. Their life and their love grew through all of their experiences. Perhaps at no time more than during Doc’s lung transplant have the two of you had to live your vows more fully. *For better/for worse. In sickness/and in health.* She kept such a faithful watch. She gave you her dedicated and total focus. She took over things that had to be taken over. She charged through like a bull in a china shop when she needed to and she was gentle when tenderness was what was called for. She was a knock-out, according to Doc. Full of life. Full of adventure. One of their first dates they went shagging. And that was the beginning of a beautiful relationship. Whatever Judy took on, she did it with great gusto. She had been doing some gardening and one Christmas Doc asked her what she wanted for Christmas. She didn’t have to think twice. Dirt. Twelve truckloads were delivered, I guess with a red bow on top. This is as good of an example of the goodness of their life together as any. A woman who could pull of wearing a hat better than anybody, a woman who loved jewelry and fashion, a woman who dealt in cosmetics and age prevention simply wanted dirt for Christmas. And Doc fulfilled her wish.

 But I’ll have to stop here and tell you something that makes me smile. In the last 2 years, Judy has been cared for with such grace and such dignity. She has been loved and fed and read to. She has been visited and tended. The Care Team from our church have modeled Church for me and any who have witnessed their care. Some are in the choir and the rest sit behind the family today. *Well done, good and faithful servants.* You have made Judy’s life in these last days of struggle something to smile about. Long past her ability to smile at you, you can know that God was smiling upon you. And to Gloria and Denise, who have become like family – *well done, good and faithful servants* to you as well. You have shown the love of God in the way you have performed what for many would just be a job. I’ll tell you what I witnessed just a couple of weeks before Judy died. I stopped by one morning and spent some time with Doc at the kitchen table. Then I went down to speak to Judy. Her eyes were open but she was looking past me. I talked to her. I even sang to her. Nothing. No recognition. No movement. I went back up to Doc at the kitchen table. A few minutes later Denise came in. She briefly told us hello and then set out on her routine with Judy. As soon as she heard Denise’s voice, Judy perked up. She followed Denise all around the room as she changed her clothes and sheets. She ate applesauce for her. And what did I do? I marched myself down to that bedside and I told Judy this wasn’t going to do. This wasn’t going to do at all. She ignored me. And I don’t blame her, because when Denise got there, there the real minister had arrived.

 Judy gave her life to the care of family and friends and church. And so it was fitting that in the times of her greatest need her family and friends and church returned to her a portion of what she had given away. And do you know who is smiling today? God - for basking in the glow of heaven is Judy. I can see her now – in the very presence of God – smiling. May it be so.