



## Ruth D. Pralle

October 13, 1916 - May 31, 2013

Ruth D. Pralle (nee Stelzer). Beloved wife of the late Rev. Frederick H. Pralle. Loving mother of Ruth (Leslie) Bessant, Dorothy (Glenn) Burroughs, and Lynette (John) McCortney. Dearest grandmother of Susanne (Ben) Perez, Michael, Jeffrey, Kathleen McCortney, and Julia Burroughs. Great grandmother of Django Perez. Aunt of many nieces and nephews. Visitation Tuesday, June 4, 2013 from 3 pm to 9 pm at Foran Funeral Home, 7300 West Archer Avenue (55th Street just west of Harlem), Summit, Illinois. Visitation Wednesday, June 5, 2013 from 9 am until time of service at 10 am at Zion Lutheran Church, 59th and Archer Road, Summit, Illinois Interment Concordia Cemetery, 7900 West Madison Street, Forest Park, Illinois. Ruth was a Lutheran school teacher, organist, and choir director for more than 70 years. In lieu of flowers, memorials preferred. Ruth Dorothy (Stelzer) Pralle 13 October 1916 - 31 May 2013 "It's all about Jesus," is what Ruth would say. "When the Lord is done using me, then He'll call me home." Her family called her "Hot Wheels" or the "Energizer Bunny" because she was unstoppable: whatever needed to be done got done, in the Lord's service. At her church, she was a teacher, an organist, a choir director, a church officer, and an LWML leader. At her home at Luther Village, she was a choir director, a Bible class leader, and a loyal visitor to shut-in friends. In the church community, she gave committed service to Walther League, Concordia University Auxiliary, and Lutheran Women's Missionary League. She had a sense of responsibility to guide those around her to get the things done that were

important, while standing back to let the Lord's mission take center stage. Ruth was born in Racine, Wisconsin, the daughter of Theodore G. Stelzer and his wife Hattie (Brunn). Like Ruth, her father was a Lutheran school teacher, organist, and choir director. Ruth's piano lessons began at age five: she would put on her sweater, go out the back door, and then enter the front door to take her turn with her father's other piano students. Ruth's sister Verna and two brothers, Harold and Roland, were also born in Wisconsin. The family moved to Oshkosh, Wisconsin and then to Seward, Nebraska, where her father was a professor of music at Concordia Teachers College (now Concordia University). The move to Seward was made in January 1927, just after a large snowstorm. They chose a road along a rail line in case they needed help along the way. A hot water bottle kept them warm and also provided a drink for Verna. Another brother, Herbert, was added to the family in Seward, when Ruth was 16. She attended Concordia, training to be a Lutheran teacher and studying organ with her father. Ruth graduated in 1935 and moved to Kingston, New York, to teach grades 1-4, direct the choir, and play the organ. A female organist was unusual at the time, but, of course, Ruth did it. She then continued her teaching and music in Houston, Texas, where she also earned a master's degree in 1947. In 1948 she was called to start a school at Trinity in Amarillo, Texas. In New York and Texas, she was active in Walther League (an LCMS youth organization), directed plays, and traveled (by bus) from Canada to Mexico. She "collected" state capitol buildings in her travels, an activity she continued with her own children. One highlight of her early travels was the New York World's Fair in 1939. Ruth served as children's camp director at Camp Lone Star, a Lutheran camp in La Grange, Texas, where she got to know her future husband, the Rev. Frederick H. Pralle, who was the camp photographer. Fred courted Ruth at church conventions over the next several years, and they were married in 1950. Of course, they attended the national Walther League convention on their honeymoon. Years later, Fred revealed that he had seen an article about her in the Walther League newsletter and decided that she was the woman he

wanted to marry. Daughters Ruth and Dorothy were born while Fred served at Alamo, Texas; daughter Lynette in Chanute, Kansas. In 1956, Fred was called to Concordia Teachers College (now Concordia University) in River Forest, Illinois, to serve as public relations director and teach theology. While her children were young, Ruth was substitute teacher and organist at churches in the area, sang in the choir at Grace, continued her work in Walther League, and took on a new commitment with the Auxiliary at Concordia, a fund-raising, service, and support organization for the college. In 1963, the family moved to Oak Lawn, Illinois, when Fred returned to the parish ministry. Ruth returned to full-time teaching in 1964 and was also organist and choir director. After Fred's death in 1980, Ruth continued full-time teaching in Oak Lawn and then at Zion Lutheran, Summit, Illinois, until she retired in 1988 at age 72.

Retirement for Ruth meant more time for more travel, more music, and more service. Her trips covered the globe, from Alaska to Zimbabwe. In later years, her travel focused on mission trips to Latvia, Guatemala, Jamaica, and Mexico. At home, she continued as organist and choir director at Zion and, for many years, as substitute organist in the area. She took on a new responsibility as Historian/Archivist for the Northern Illinois District of LWML and continued as treasurer for Concordia Auxiliary. She added teaching English as a Second Language twice a week at Dr. Martin Luther in Gage Park, a mere 38 miles from where she lived. After she moved to Luther Village in Arlington Heights, she also began to play for chapel, direct a choir, and lead a Bible class there. A typical week had Ruth driving over 300 miles around the Chicago area. Ruth was always difficult to keep up with. She was a teacher, musician, planner, and leader. Much of her life was about performance. But the best performances always transcend the performer, just as the message transcends the messenger. For Ruth, her activities and accomplishments were not about her: they were about the message. And for Ruth, the message was always God's gift of love and redemption in Christ Jesus. Ruth is survived by her daughters Ruth Bessant (Leslie), Dorothy Burroughs (Glenn) and

Lynette McCortney (John), grandchildren Michael, Jeffrey, and Kathleen McCortney, Susanne Perez (Ben), and Julia Burroughs, along with many nieces and nephews. Great-grandson Django Perez was happy to sing to his "Great Mama" last weekend in Houston.

# Tribute Wall

RD

“ What a joy to know that Ruth has claimed her Victory in Christ! Her decades of loving service to the Lord of the Church were given with happy humility. Whenever Lynette or Dottie shared their incredible musical skills with me for worship or concerts in Chicago & suburbs, Ruth was there! Lectures in Church Music @ Concordia, Ruth was there - carrying huge bags of music & resources for ministry. While I share your grief @ this human loss, we can all rejoice with the angels as she takes her place with the heavenly choir - no more rehearsals needed! With Vaughan Williams' timeless words, We feebly struggle, she in glory shines.... it is my privilege to call Ruth a dear friend in Christ. May His peace be yours.

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Ruth D. - September 24, 2015 at 12:00 AM

RD

“ Dear Family, Mrs Pralle was my 5th grade teacher at St Paul in Oaklawn Illinois in 1964. Your Mom was a good teacher and I was say a - “Challenging Student” . She always had patience with me. Never raised her voice. I was blessed also to be confirmed by your Dad Pastor Pralle. They are united together, forever in Heaven. Best regards, Thomas Hagen hbjea@aol.com

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Ruth D. - September 24, 2015 at 12:00 AM

RD

“ I was privileged to have Mrs. Pralle as my first grade teacher at Trinity Lutheran School in Houston, TX as well as the camp director when I attended Camp Lone Star in LaGrange, TX. I have many fond memories of her as a caring teacher with a soft spoken voice. Over the years our paths have crossed many times and she remembered me and my family when our home burned down many years ago. My thoughts and prayers are with her family as you mourn your loss. Janis Swearingen Taube

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Ruth D. - September 24, 2015 at 12:00 AM

RD

“ Dear family, I just greeted Mrs. Pralle last Sunday at Trinity Lutheran Church, Houston, Texas as she was in town for her granddaughter's graduation. She was my second grade teacher and piano teacher and fond memories of her will always be dear to me. May God be with you as you celebrate Mrs. (Stelzer) Pralle's life and her passing to the greatest reward...being in the presence of our loving Savior. Sincerely, Ruth Taube Stoerkel

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Ruth D. - September 24, 2015 at 12:00 AM