



Polly Betterton

(1948 -)

“Love your neighbour as yourself. The big thing about that for me is that you have to love yourself.” A focus on doing your personal best—and on encouraging others to do the same—has shaped Polly Betterton’s contributions to the Mission community. Her own journey towards recognizing the importance of a strong sense of self-worth is reflected in nearly all that she does. Born in 1948, Polly emigrated from England in 1951 with her parents and baby brother. Looking back to her childhood in Ontario and New Brunswick, she recalls that her family was everything - Polly’s parents serving as role models into her adult life. It is perhaps this early experience of powerful familial love which shaped Polly’s mature years.

After attending university and marrying back east, Polly moved to British Columbia. While her husband Stanley attended law school at UBC, she worked as a clerk in the Faculty of Education. After a few months, Polly decided to apply to become a student herself and, in 1973, she entered UBC’s Fifth Year Transfer Program for teaching. Polly started teaching at Windebank Elementary in 1975.

During the summers of 1976 and 1977, she took School Librarian courses at UBC and became Teacher Librarian at E. S. Richards Elementary in 1978. After her marriage failed in 1979, Polly rejoined the Anglican Church and worked to recognize her own self-worth. Her attention to self-development defined her caring approach to education: she always highlighted the correct rather than the incorrect, praising even the smallest improvement. While at E. S. Richards, she met Edward Betterton, a newly widowed teacher whose classroom was adjacent to her library. They began talking and slowly became friends. They eventually went for coffee and, now happily married, continue to prize their mutual love of discussion. Indeed, Polly’s passion for conversation and for learning led her to befriend students across the District, even after she ceased to be a formal educator.

With the birth of her daughter Naomi, she became a stay-at-home mom. However, despite a deep commitment to raising her daughter and later helping with her grandchildren, Polly was never able to actually just ‘stay at home.’ From the day Naomi entered school, Polly was a devoted member of the Parent Advisory Councils of Fraserview Elementary and Mission Secondary.

A creative woman who loves crafts, she was always sewing and helping out with dramatic productions. Her commitment to young people stems from a genuine love for learning and for forming relationships. She remarks that ‘high school kids are so full of ideas and opinions; it’s really enjoyable talking to them.’ Apart from her involvement in schools, Polly has volunteered with the Mission Community Archives and Canadian Blood Services, and was an elected member of Mission Memorial Hospital Board for nine years. She also served a term as a School Trustee and remains a sincere contributor to her church community. In reflection of the values which underlie her personal life, Polly views the All Saints Anglican Church as a close-knit family. She has served in numerous capacities within the church, but cites that her proudest accomplishment is her reputation as a great Sunday school teacher and a beautiful storyteller.

Despite her motto of ‘personal best’, Polly is always working for the good of all. When asked why she volunteers, she consistently replies that she simply loves to be part of a community and it is perhaps her enduring selflessness which allows her to draw out the ‘personal best’ in everyone she meets.

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