

“When I was sick you visited me” by Margaret.

As an Assistant Chaplain at the Base Hospital, it is unusual to encounter a person who is a patient for a long period of time. Visiting a person for nearly 6 months, off and on, is a rare privilege. The lady I wish to talk about came from Horsham – a good two hours by road. It is very bumpy and uncomfortable ride in the ambulance. This lady was therefore far from home.

If ever there was a case of Murphy’s law, this was it. Diagnosed with cancer and because of the complexity and extent of the surgery, she was required to go to Melbourne. While there she had a number of complications and was an inpatient for a couple of months. She was sent back to Ballarat. She had a colostomy that she had to learn to manage herself. Because of the nature of the surgery, this was more complicated than usual. While in the Base Hospital, again there were a few complications. I would visit on one day and she would tell me she was going home, but she would still be there the following week, because of complications. She was sent home to Horsham a few times, only to return with another complication

When you are far from home and your family can only visit occasionally, therefore the visits of our Chaplaincy are important. We are as our motto says a companion on the way.

I was overwhelmed and humbled by her faith. It was inspirational. This lady constantly affirmed that God was with her throughout her entire journey. She never complained. Her faith never wavered, no matter what happened. Even when she had gone home and came back again she greeted me by saying that she had felt the presence of God during the current upset. She was thankful for the strength and courage that she was given along her entire journey. God always provided her with enough strength to manage her episodes. She put herself completely in God’s hands.

For me it was a privilege to visit her – to provide companionship along the road. During my visits I heard of her incredible journey. We had many wide-ranging discussions. She was able to share her deep faith with me, to indicate how much she loved her family and friends and how they kept in touch with her even if they could not visit. She was able to express her feelings and shared a great deal of her life with me. We had a few laughs together. She felt she could discuss whatever was on her mind at each visit. We always spent some time in readings and in prayer. This was important to her.

She eventually managed her colostomy satisfactorily and went home.

I suspect I gained more out of our visits than she did. I was able to provide her with a companion when far from home. But for me to see such faith in action was inspirational.

