

A tribute to Sharney...her life as Miss Truscott at Prescott Primary Northern

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Keywords: Bereavement, early career teacher, family, learning community, legacy, tribute

My name is Tamara Bernoth - I am one of our Deputy Principals at Prescott Primary Northern, in South Australia. Although heartbroken, it is my absolute honour and privilege to share on behalf of our Prescott family, some memories, and insights of Sharney, Miss Truscott, as a teacher, colleague, and friend.

I first made contact with Sharney in September 2018, when she was considering a job offer to come and teach Year 2 at Prescott. I remember her excitement, her wonder, her genuine nerves of the unknown and her absolute keenness to begin her teaching career - a ministry role that she certainly embraced. We shared conversations about what her role may look like, the team she would be working alongside and just the general move - as this was such a huge step to uproot and move interstate away from her precious family - not an easy thing to consider. However, we were incredibly blessed that Sharney was courageous and made a leap of faith and followed God's leading to become a part of our team at PPN. We often spoke during her time with us and agreed that making this move meant she fell into a family at Prescott. A family that teach together, laugh with one another, and sometimes at one another, cry together, celebrate one another, share frustrations and stresses and journey together as colleagues, but more importantly, family.

Teaching was not always easy for Sharney, and she faced some challenges along the way, like any new graduate teacher. Sharney wasn't afraid to come and talk to us about the good and the bad, with her teaching experience but also her personal journey, and she learnt to lean in to her Prescott family. We valued her grit, determination, and teachable spirit to work through these challenges, and grow from them and her willingness to draw on the wisdom and strength of the team placed around her. The growth we saw in Sharney, personally and professionally, in her two years with us was such an absolute privilege to witness. God placing Sharney at Prescott was no accident, it was certainly meant

to be, not just for her journey, but to touch the lives of the staff as well.

There are so many beautiful qualities we saw in Sharney and a standout one for many was her heart for her students, particularly those that needed someone in their corner. She used her own life experiences to give her the tools and heart for those students. She was patient with her little ones. She was gentle and calm. She wove her dry and quirky sense of humour into her teaching. She was musical and used her ukulele in the classroom and sometimes in our Chapel band, praising God with her whole heart. She enjoyed dressing up - which tends to happen a fair bit at PPN. She was creative and would put many hours and effort into creating memorable lessons, particularly in science, for her students. Some younger students referred to her as "the chicken teacher" due to the fact that she hosted chickens in her class in Term 4 for her lifecycle science unit. I know quite a few Year 1 students would ask if they could be with the chicken teacher in Year 2! During both Term 4s, I would frequent her room often with a child or two who were struggling with something in their life, and we would spend time with Miss Truscott and hold chickens. Both Sharney and the chickens would have a calming presence for these anxious and upset children. Little did she know that "the chicken teacher" would become the mother hen to her students.

Sharney was a hugger. A willing hug giver and hug receiver! Many on staff miss her regular hugs!!

Sharney had a knack for really celebrating the growth in her students. She would often bring her students to our office to share and rejoice over their growth. I remember one particular occasion, she brought down one of her students, who she fondly referred to as 'my little friend' - he was a frequent flyer in our office for some "not so good" choices, but this time she was excited to bring him down to celebrate him going up quite a few reading levels. This student was absolutely beaming and so very proud. As I looked towards Sharney, this was also reflected on her face - the pride for her little friend was absolutely contagious! Celebrating the big and little moments of growth and joy is a beautiful

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Reflections, Impressions & Experiences

attribute of Sharney as a teacher that can inspire and encourage us to do the same.

During World Teacher's Week last year, I interviewed students, including some of Sharney's students, for a video to share with the staff. The common theme of these little ones were her fun lessons and her always being kind, even if they were in trouble or had done the wrong thing. What a legacy!

I spent some time this past week with one of Sharney's past students that was particularly upset about her passing. We shared memories together and I asked her what her favourite thing about Miss Truscott was and her immediate reply was "She was my favourite teacher. She was always kind to me, and she made me feel safe". As a school leader, what more would you want from your teachers. What a beautiful summary of a beautiful teacher!

Sharney's dry sense of humour and quirky one liners will be missed by our team. Our Year 2 teachers reflected upon times when they would chat about their experiences in uni or early career days, and Sharney would cheekily share with them that she had not been born then. She would often remind Angela and Kelly that they were old enough to be her mum! In fact, Sharney "adopted" quite a few mum-like figures in Adelaide - some special relationships that will always be held dear.

A particularly fun memory was when one afternoon, Sharney announced that she had decided to experiment and make her own kombucha and needed to leave at the end of her Year 2 meeting to collect some kombucha starter she had randomly found on Marketplace. She sent photos of this starter to Ange and Kelly, and they spent the entire weekend worried that she would poison herself or blow up her apartment! To this day, we are unsure of whether this experiment was successful, however, we are quite confident she didn't blow up her apartment!!

Sharney was a prayer warrior! Not just for her students, but for many of you here. She would often bring those dearest to her heart forward in prayer during staff worship. Sharney believed in the power of prayer and lived out her faith through the joys and sorrows. As a staff family, we valued her willingness to be raw and vulnerable when she shared about her journey with God during staff worship. There are many songs she shared that spoke to her heart that will always be "Sharney songs" for us.

Sharney missed her family so much, particularly last year with limited opportunities to travel back and forth due to travel restrictions, and she made the decision to "fly our coup" and move back home at the end of the year to be close to her much-loved family. We didn't want to lose her at Prescott as she

had very much fit into our family, but in hindsight, we are very grateful that she was close to her family during her final few months.

Although her teaching career was very short, Sharney used her time to make a positive and lasting impact on her students, her team, and the school community. There are little ones that will be forever touched by her kindness, support, and love. Our hearts are breaking that she is gone. It was such an honour for our Prescott community, that we were blessed with her two years of her teaching career and to be a part of her amazing growth and journey as a person and a teacher. We will always remember Sharney for the incredibly gentle-hearted and kind teacher she was, and as a Prescott family, we will lean on one another as we walk through this loss and continue in the teaching ministry that Sharney was so passionate about.

Author information:

Tamara Bernoth is one of the Deputy Principals at Prescott Primary Northern, in South Australia.

Editor's Note:

In publishing this tribute to Sharney Truscott we honour this young teacher whose life was taken, due to cancer, at the untimely age of 25 years. This tribute response from her school is considered exemplary, modelling within it the traits of a loving Christian learning community. TEACH thanks Sharney's family and Tamara for permission to publish this tribute.

TEACH also chooses to express condolences to all those grieving the loss of their 'teacher', expressing our shared hope and comfort awaiting the resurrection (1 Cor 15 52-56; 1 Thess 4:15-17)

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