

Priscilla Grace Inkpen

Priscilla Grace Inkpen '69 of Boulder, Colo., died at home on Saturday, March 21, 2009, after surviving two years with ovarian cancer. She was 62.

Priscilla was born in Detroit, Mich. on Feb. 13, 1947, and moved to Ann Arbor, where she attended secondary and high school. She graduated from Hope College, class of 1969, where she majored in English. A junior-year abroad in Beirut, Lebanon, fed Priscilla's commitment to a global worldview, an intense engagement with international dimensions of peace and justice, and an openness to other cultures. She returned to Hope in 1988, invited to give the fourth annual A.J. Muste Memorial Peace Lecture, titled "Christian Violence: Examining a Chronic Pathology."

The year after college, Priscilla married Bruce Ronda, also a Hope graduate, and they moved to New Haven, Conn. Priscilla received an Master of Divinity from Yale Divinity School in 1976 and was ordained in the United Church of Christ. In 1977, their daughter, Margaret, was born.

Priscilla worked in a series of congregations as a minister: an inner-city Reformed Church in Paterson, N.J.; a UCC congregation in New Haven; a small, rural, United Methodist congregation; and an American Baptist church in downtown Schenectady, N.Y. In 1985, they moved to Boulder, Colorado, where Priscilla began campus-ministry work at the University of Colorado.

As Priscilla continued her lifelong inner explorations, she found the need to come out as a lesbian, and to end her first marriage. She was especially honored to serve as one of the plaintiffs in the 1992 lawsuit that overturned Colorado's anti-gay Amendment 2. The decision was upheld by the United States Supreme Court in 1996 as *Romer v. Evans*.

Priscilla met Paula Zoller in 1992, and they held a celebration of commitment in 1994.

In the late 1990s, Priscilla decided to return to school, this time to study issues of consumerism and ecological awareness. She received, in 1997, a master's degree in social science from the University of Colorado, Denver. This area of study prompted a deeper interest in discovering ways to live sustainably on the earth, and intensified her appreciation for the natural world.

Priscilla's best and final workplace was Naropa University in Boulder, where her abilities were well matched with her responsibilities as associate dean of students, and where her identity as an educator-activist was fully appreciated. She worked closely with students, particularly around diversity and GLBTQ issues. Among her many accomplishments at Naropa was the creation of a joyful public celebration of Coming Out Day on campus every year. She also taught progressive/contemplative Christianity courses and offered contemplative worship services for Christians and seekers. The last class she taught was "Mysticism and Prophecy."

Central to Priscilla's life was the contemplation of what she described as "the Spirit of God in our lives." She dedicated her energy to the qualities of compassion and service she saw in the life of Jesus and other spiritual teachers. She also thought deeply about the mysteries of faith, often finding the "Holy One" in "darkness and silence," and in the prayers of the mystics.

Survivors include her partner, Paula Zoller; her daughter, Margaret Ronda (Tobias Menely) of Portland, Ore.; and one sister, Ruth Inkpen of New Brighton, Pa. Priscilla's friends are legion.