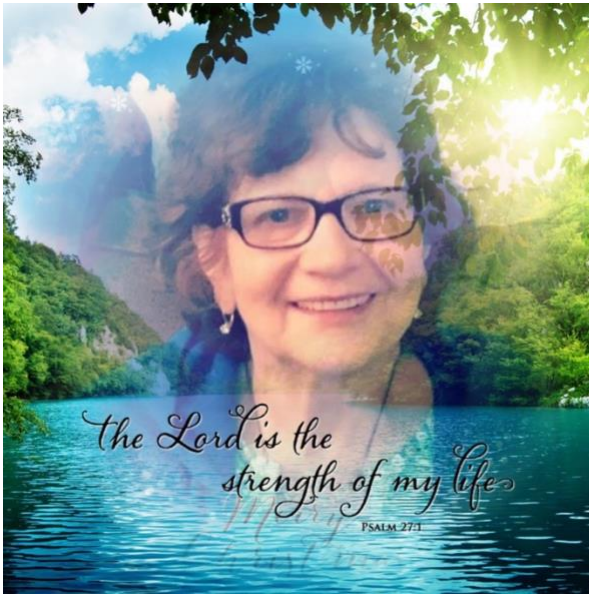


Faith of our Mothers

The Legacy of my Mom Elizabeth A Porter

"A Humble Instrument of Love and Prayer"



(Elizabeth A. Porter Feb 24, 1945 – Feb 18, 2022)

There is a special old song called, "**Faith of our Mothers.**" It was written in approximately 1920 by American Congregational Clergyman Arthur B. Patten (1864-1952). This song has appeared in thirty-nine hymnals since then.

The first stanza of the hymn goes like this:

*Faith of our mothers, living still,
In cradle song and bedtime prayer;
In nursery lore and fireside love,
Thy presence still pervades the air:
Faith of our mothers, living faith!
We will be true to thee to death.*

This song defines my beautiful Mother, **Elizabeth A Porter.**

It was February 18, 2022 at exactly 12:30 AM when my dad called my cell phone. My heart practically leaped out of my chest, as my dad never calls that late. I just so happened to be up that night, as I was doing a bit of writing. I did not know that these thirty-five seconds spent with my dad on the phone would forever change my life.

“Your mother is not breathing, Steve. PRAY!” he said with a trembling voice. He quickly hung up and a few minutes later my sister and I were on the phone with him again listening to the paramedics from Andover, Ohio try their very best to save her. I could hear their valiant and persistent attempts while emotions began to well up in my body as I paced until my legs ached. I cried out to God for help and intervention, but about five minutes later it was clear that my mother had passed on to her eternal reward. She was gone, and my heart was completely broken. I rushed to Ohio from our home in New York in a snowstorm to comfort my dad. A road trip that usually took three and a half hours, turned into eight hours, as we slowly made our way on dangerous icy roads.

Over the next few days we gathered as family at their home, all in shock at the sudden passing of my dear mother. We surrounded my dad with as much love and support as we could give. On February 18, 2022, we assembled at the Baumgardner Funeral home located in their hometown of Andover, Ohio to say our final goodbyes to my mother’s earthly body. We shared love, hugs, and tears that evening, overwhelmed by the powerful revelation that my mother wasn’t lying in that casket—she was back home with Jesus! She was surrounded by adoring family members; she was healed and whole. No pain, no discomfort. She now had her new body.

As Mom went through heaven’s door, she saw her beloved father, whom she hadn’t seen in fifty-three years. Growing up, they’d been especially close, and for the rest of her life she had a special longing to see him again. She’d spoken of him many times throughout my life as she was only twenty-four years old when he had died. Also awaiting her heavenly arrival were her own dear mother, who passed in 2007, two of her siblings, Ellen and Johnny, along with a handful of extended family and friends who’d passed on. But best of all, Mom was finally able to see her beautiful Savior, Jesus, face to face. I’m sure she wept with pure joy as she bowed before Him the first time in heaven, overcome by His manifest presence and relentless love. In my spirit, I could hear her cry out, “Oh Jesus, oh Jesus!” That thought was a great comfort to us all in coping with her sudden passing.

I must admit that I dearly loved my mother and I want the world to know how special she was. She was a very humble woman who left a legacy and spiritual inheritance to her entire family that I feel would encourage the body of Christ. Here is her remarkable story.

Elizabeth Porter “A Humble Instrument of Love and Prayer”



The Early Years

Elizabeth Ann Porter was born February 24, 1945 in Huntsburg, Ohio. She was the daughter of Rev. Yost J. Byler (April 30, 1917-February 22, 1969) and Mary Ann Miller Byler (March 23, 1920- 2007).

My grandparents were born into the old order Amish church and remained there until a sovereign move of God changed the direction of their lives entirely. Yost Byler was a direct descendant of Jacob Byler, who emigrated from Switzerland in 1737. Jacob arrived in Philadelphia, PA in October of that same year. His son, Hannas, settled in Mifflin County, PA and was the first Bishop of the Big Valley. Some family members eventually moved toward Lawrence County, Ohio, and in the spring of 1887, my grandfather's line eventually settled around Middlefield, Ohio in Geauga County.

My grandmother's ancestors moved from Switzerland and eventually settled in a range of places between Somerset County, PA and Holmes County, Ohio, southwest of Walnut Creek in 1814. They came in covered wagons and were among the first Amish settlers of that part of the country. My grandmother was raised in MT Hope, Ohio and eventually arrived in Middlefield, Ohio. My grandparents were married on March 27, 1941. They had five children, one stillborn. Surviving children included Ellen, **Elizabeth Ann**, John, and Mary Lou.

When I studied our family history I was amazed at how many Amish bishops there were directly connected to my mother's family line. My grandfather, Yost Byler, was a farmer at heart and raised his young family on a farm. My grandparents remained in the Amish church until the late 1940's. They were the only ones of their family to leave the Amish and become born again.

By a sovereign act of God, a dear lady named Mary Hostetler repeatedly stopped by their farm and faithfully spoke to my grandfather about his need for salvation. He often politely asked her to leave, but her patient persistence eventually paid off when he gave his heart to the Lord. My mother would often marvel at this miraculous move of God that saved and transformed an entire family. Absent the support of their Amish family and friends, they joined the Maple View Mennonite Church in Burton, Ohio where they faithfully attended until 1957. Mom shared one story from that time that still stands out in my mind. One day at church the pastor asked her father to speak at a Wednesday night service—it was the first time he'd ever spoken in the pulpit. He got up and read the scripture he had prepared and stood in silence for the rest of the thirty-minute service. Mom mentioned this story because later when God called him into the ministry he spoke with a powerful anointing. Mom would always say, "What a difference the anointing makes!" From that point on, God took her parents through a powerful process from Amish to Mennonite, then on to eventually be filled with the Holy Spirit. Again and again, Mom would say, "It's a miracle we ever left the Amish."

Mom recounted another story that occurred in 1953, when her family attended a revival at a meeting where no one knew them. A traveling evangelist was passing through town, and she ministered that evening. She had never met my grandparents, until the moment when she suddenly stopped in the middle of her sermon and began to prophesy to my grandparents. She said three memorable things: **Number one** was that their dog had died that day on the road, after being hit by a car. In **number two**, she detailed exactly the contents of my grandmother's purse, and in **number three**, she revealed that my grandmother was pregnant with a daughter (my aunt Mary). She was 100% accurate on all accounts, and the family left church absolutely amazed. God was moving!

In the late 1950's, revival broke out among the Mennonites. Gerald Derstine came to Burton, Ohio with his tent. He was from Gospel Crusade in Sarasota Florida. In those tent meetings my grandfather was deeply touched by the Lord and received his call to preach the gospel. In one such meeting, he was on his knees deeply touched by the Spirit. After the tent meetings more revival broke out among a couple of local families and they started a small church in Claridon, Ohio, called the **Claridon Revival Center**. Pentecost was new to them, but the people were so hungry for God that they had church every night of the week for a very long time. They were desperate for the deeper things of God.

After some time passed, Yost Byler was chosen as pastor of the church, where the congregation met for the next twelve years. It was in that building that my mom sang and taught Sunday school during her late teens and young adult years. She had a special anointing to teach children and to love people. In 1966 they built another church building on 14662 Old State Road in Middlefield, Ohio and renamed the church **Middlefield Revival Center**. Grandpa pastored the church until February 22, 1969, when he passed away at the young age of fifty-two. They lived right next to the church where everyone called him the "Pastor of Love." It was often said that whenever someone came to visit, he had his Bible on his lap and was deep in prayer. He loved everyone and when the Spirit hit him, he could preach while walking behind the pews! My grandmother gave me his Bible, which was indeed marked up and falling apart, after being loved and used so dearly for years.



My dad met my mom through a mutual friend after mom had made a delicious apple pie. Dad was able to try a piece and after just had to meet the woman who could bake so well. They dated while she was at the old church location in East Clairdon and were married on September 17, 1966. When her dad was on his death bed, my grandpa requested that my parents take over the new church in Middlefield, Ohio on Old State Road, where they ministered for three years. It was in that church my mother became a pastor's wife for the first time. After the Lord called my parents on, some years later the church eventually became **Abundant Life Church of God**. This beautiful church still stands today and recently has seen some precious moves of God and incredible growth. I was honored to preach there many years ago on their Heritage Day. I was thrilled and gratified to find a plaque just outside the door that memorialized its founder, my grandpa, Yost Byler.

My mother had twins on April 26, 1971 in the Painesville, Ohio hospital. My sister Stacey was born first, and I was born three minutes later. My parents took us home to East Clairton, Ohio. Four years later we moved twelve miles down the road to Mesopotamia, Ohio. We had just turned five when we moved to West Virginia and then to Connecticut for a short while. My parents also lived in Chardon Ohio for fifteen years and in Madison, Ohio for ten years. They ended up in Andover, Ohio where they stayed for over twenty years until my dear mother's passing.

My parents had a powerful impact during their thirty years in ministry. My father's messages can be found on our website. Over the years they also helped other churches in variety of leadership roles. My mom was gifted in organization, which she used beautifully until her passing. In fact, everything she ever touched was incredibly well done.

Mother and her Lasting Legacy

I am still amazed at how well my mom managed raising twins. It helped that she was organized and always put her family first; she sacrificed everything for us and would have it no other way. She cooked, cleaned, baked, sewed, and so many other things so

beautifully. She was a fabulous cook and baker, I still crave her delicious food. Coming from the Amish, she learned so much from her Grandma Hershberger who lived right next door as she grew up. She often went next door to serve and care for her, doing whatever needed to be done, and she did it with incredible love.

Her grandma was a marvelous mentor during Mom's youth. Mom spoke often how grateful she was for the opportunity to learn so much from her. In fact, when my mother cooked and baked everyone took notice! Missionaries and pastors who came through our church over the years pleaded to stay in our home so my mom would cook for them. Her dishes were the talk of the town. I was grateful to grow up in a home where she took such good care of us. Even when money was tight, she budgeted every penny and stretched every dollar. My dad is amazed at her gifting with finances and organization. Mom was truly a Proverbs:31 wife to my dad and mother of our family.

One day when I was young, I walked past her door, which was only open a crack. She was down on her knees with her Bible in front of her. She was weeping with tears of intercession. She prayed for Dad, my sister, and all our family members by name. Her intensity and fervency in prayer is what caught my attention. I will never forget hearing her cry out for God's touch on my life. I know it was her prayers that have seen me through all of life's ups and downs, even to this day. Her intercession sustained me and brought me into my calling. I would not be what I am today if not for my dear mother.

Walking into her room one day, I picked up her Bible and sat on her bed as she would. I opened it up and saw that all the pages marked and notes written everywhere, but I was really struck by the tear stains on the pages. I will never forget her deep love for God's Word. I can still see her lying on her bed with her back against the wall and praying and reading the Bible. Every Saturday evening was sacred; Mom spent all evening praying for church the next day. Often on Sunday mornings Mom would prophesy, and I tell you the anointing was so strong that every person in the church knew God was speaking. I can still see her with her hands raised and tears flowing down her cheeks as the word of the Lord touched the people. She truly moved in the gifts of the Spirit.

In 1986, I was in Africa when I became very sick and nearly died. I was lying on a bamboo cot in a tiny shack in the jungle with my life literally hanging in the balance. With no way to get word home, since we were in the deep in the jungles of Zambia, suddenly the Lord woke Mom in the middle of the night, who was back at home, and said, "Pray for Steve." She immediately got out of bed, knelt down and interceded for five straight hours. In a supreme act of God, I was suddenly healed in that distant land, which amazed everyone. When we compared journals after I got home, we were stunned at the timing of it all. It was the exact hour my life was hanging in the balance, that her prayers saved my life. And it was those same fervent prayers that saved my life, time and time again. Her prayers healed me; her prayers saved me, her prayers restored me and repeatedly brought my life back on course.

I struggled growing up and faced some intense rejection in school. I was often at my lowest when my mother took me aside and spoke life over me. In high school she homeschooled me and every day, she declared the Word of God over my life. Convinced of my hopeless

future I told her, “I am dumb, and I cannot learn!” or “I am nothing!” But Mom declared, “You can do ALL things through Christ who gives you strength!” or “You are more than a conqueror!” It was her constant affirmation and encouragement that set the course of my life and brought inner healing to my wounded soul. Through every valley she prayed and encouraged me back to wholeness and healing. I praise God for my mom. A mother’s prayer will not go unanswered! I am living proof!

My mom was a wonderful example for me to watch as I grew up. She truly was a woman of integrity. I never heard her tell a lie or curse—not even once. She wasn’t perfect, as nobody is, and she would always point that out. She often wished she had done things better throughout her life. She often shared how much she learned through all of life’s ups and downs. Even so, she endeavored to be like Jesus and she carried a tremendous reverence for God. She wanted her life to please Him. She often spoke of how much her father Yost Byler influenced her life and who she became.

Later on in my mother's life, she continued to pray and encourage not only me but for her entire family. Everyone was special to my mom—every niece every nephew and all their children. And she deeply loved her grandchildren. Their pictures are scattered all around her house; she kept every note and card they ever wrote her. She would cover them in prayer, exactly as she’d done for me my entire life—so that they would serve and love Jesus and that God’s perfect will would be done in their lives. She never forgot a birthday in her extended family and she either wrote cards or texts whenever the need arose. Even while she suffered with pain in her back and legs, she took time to make calls or visit others who were suffering.

Over the years, Mom led many to the Lord, and she would always say, “It feels so good to make a difference in people’s lives.” I can remember her taking needy church people shopping and buying them clothes or bringing in a homeless man and feeding him at our dinner table. She took care of him for a long time and helped him get back on track.

Mom loved to invest in the youth. She spent thousands of hours investing in young girls’ lives through the youth programs in our church. She helped them memorize scripture and complete all their Bible class work. Even girls who wanted to give up she stood with them and helped them complete all their church programs. I can’t even begin to count how many kids Mom touched through her love and mentoring. Mom took many classes to become a counselor and also helped out at the crisis pregnancy center. She had deep empathy for others. In fact, she would lead church plays, giving up months of her life in the process. She enjoyed ministering through Teen Challenge, prison ministry and most of all nursing homes. For years my parents went monthly to nursing homes and conducted services for the elderly. She visited individual patient rooms and gave gifts to the people. She played keyboard and sang for them, and my dad preached many sermons to encourage the older saints who were forgotten.



Mom's Final Years

In my mom's final years, especially when struggling with health issues, she invested most of her time in intercession. She traveled by car to different towns and either sat in her car or got out with her walker and sat on a park bench and prayed in the end time harvest of souls and whatever the Lord laid on her heart for those who passed by. Over the last year she told me countless times she was interceding for her family and extended family. In her final months leading to her passing her grandkids were especially on her heart and she got up very early in the morning to intercede just for them. She welcomed a great granddaughter into the family (our granddaughter) just a couple months before her homegoing. And just as she had faithfully prayed for me my entire life, she began to lift up our newest family member.

Mom spoke a lot about the end time revival over the last year or so, she spoke of the holy remnant of God who is surrendering their all to Jesus within the church. She felt time was short and we should be prepared, ready for His coming.

I could fill a book with the many testimonies of my dear mother and perhaps one day I will write more but I must bring this tribute to a close. Elizabeth A Porter's life displayed many beautiful qualities, including DEVOTION, PRAYER, FAITHFULNESS, and UNCONDITIONAL LOVE. **My prayer is that her story will encourage the body of Christ to also run their race well. Don't let anything stop you. Push past any hindrance and obstacle you face because your life matters. You only have one life to live. The Lord has a purpose for your life. You have special destiny. Even if you feel too old your life still counts, and God isn't through with you yet.** My mother had to push past many things in her lifetime, but she kept running her race until the very end. And she left a precious spiritual legacy for her entire family. The

seeds of prayer she prayed may have left her mouth, but those seeds will never leave our lives. The Lord took a little Amish girl and saved her, filled with the Holy Spirit and made her a humble instrument of love and prayer. From my mother's sermons to her powerful prayers to her little acts of love and kindness, she will be greatly missed.

Every year I spent a full three days with her alone. We visited all our favorite sites that meant so much to our family. Places we lived, my grandparents' grave sites, and relevant locations to our family's and Amish history. I looked forward to this time all year long. It was a time I had my mom all to myself, and we created memories that I will hold dear until the day I join her in heaven. I will miss our phone calls and visits so much. My mother was always just a phone call away. On my mother's cemetery stone will read the phrase she said so often: **"The Best is Yet to Come,"** and indeed it so true, but now it has an even deeper meaning to me. If we know Jesus as personal Savior, we will see our loved ones again. Heaven and our families are waiting for us. Until then we must, **"Keep on Keeping on,"** another slogan my mother said many times borrowed from her father.

I spoke by phone to my mom just a few hours before her passing. I felt this gentle nudge to call her that evening. The last three words I said before we said goodbye was "I love you," and she quickly answered, "I love you too."

*Faith of our mothers, living faith!
We will be true to thee to death.*

Steve Porter

Refuge Ministries

Email: G524walk@yahoo.com

Website: www.findrefuge.tv

Steve and his wife Diane founded Refuge Ministries and a presence-driven publishing company, Deeper Life Press. He has a special anointing to bring forth the deep truths of the Spirit, with a clarity and simplicity that draws one up into a closer walk and deeper relationship with our Lord Jesus Christ. Steve is a regular contributor to many prophetic publications, including the Elijah List, Spirit Fuel, and the Identity Network. Steve's books, maturity pamphlets, articles, and videos have touched countless lives around the world. The Porters reside near Rochester, NY.