

## Linda our Dearest Soul / Hagar and Friends

My life and yours crossed paths somewhere in 2008  
When we both studied a course about cancer at the UK Open University  
It didn't take long for us to become the best of friends  
That friendship got stronger and stronger throughout the years

The distance didn't prevent us from visiting each other  
We enjoyed many precious moments  
The last of which was during my visit last October

When we departed, we hugged lengthily at Angouleme train station  
We promised it wouldn't be too long before we see each other again,  
And now I am standing here in front of all these people at this church  
Doing something I never thought would so quickly happen  
Having to talk about you in past tense...

But, although you may not be with us in flesh and blood  
You are here with us in your spirit

And so, since you asked that we don't mourn your being gone,  
With this poem, I would like to celebrate the remarkable life that you had  
This is how I would like to remember you  
I bet all of you, who are gathered here, too!

So here are some things that made you "our Linda" – just to name a few:

Liz and Jon Greenway know you from Bloxham  
You were a pretty fluent German speaker then  
Liz says that that skill came in quite handy  
As the two of you improved the range of your swear words  
While shedding blood, sweat and tears  
In the process of making your dress  
For your upcoming wedding with Andy

It was the warm "welcome home" greeting you extended  
To Susanne O'Connell  
As she arrived to live in Benest  
And became a fellow holiday home owner

Anthony Nixon will never forget  
His 2001 visit at your home in Benest  
For him those were blessed moments of rest  
As he was caring for his disabled wife  
In 2002 he visited you again, after his wife passed  
These visits gave him strength  
And he was able to "step out in faith"

For Rhiannon Beech it was the perfection  
In everything you have done  
And also your meticulous preparation  
For your (sometimes lengthy) sermons

Rev. Barry Brewer adds  
That your cheerfulness and enthusiasm were contagious  
It was your methodical delivery of your sermons  
That made you able to put across your message

Michael and Gisele Hepper (and I think all of us here)  
Are fond of your smile, your endless energy,  
Mentorship and generosity  
We stood in awe to see how you harnessed to all of these  
Your personal experience being a foreigner in France  
Dealing with this stupid disease  
From all of this Cancer Support France was born  
It offered English-speaking patients a source of hope  
So that they could find the strength and courage to cope

For Jane Thomas these were your hugs  
As she arrived in Benest weekly  
To perform her tasks as the CSF secretary

For June of CSF Deux-Sevres it was the laughter and tears you shared  
And the glasses of wine that accompanied that

Sue and Richard Ware from CSF Haute-Vienne  
Supported you as you explored alternative healing ways  
They were grateful to share your discoveries  
With all their Active Listeners

The three of you joked and suggested Sylvie Cottham  
As the potential person to set up The Association of Teabags and Kettles  
To teach the staff at Girac hospital  
That offering tea to their patients should be considered essential

Karen the Treasurer of CSF Haute-Vienne  
Said you were bossy but very efficient  
Your last conversation went over numbers  
Particularly your suggestion  
That the survival statistics  
Would need to be updated  
Because you lived much longer  
Than all your doctors have anticipated!

For Tony Benstead you offered a well of inspiration  
As he started CSF Dordogne Sud  
And later also in his role as your successor  
Penny Parkinson, the current National President of CSF  
Agrees with this wholeheartedly  
For many years to come  
People will continue to be supported  
All thanks to your legacy

Andy's cousin, Bridget  
Loved listening to you  
As you were strumming your guitar  
At her kitchen table  
During your last visit across the channel

For Patrick and Christine Jenkins these were your excellent curries  
And debates over religious issues  
But above all, they cherish your beautiful singing  
At the renewal of their wedding vows

On the evening before you were taken back to the hospital  
You wrote me a message on Whatsapp  
You signed it off with "Love you" and added an icon of a red heart

I love you too, my dearest pal  
I bet you have been listening to me  
Sitting up there in Heaven  
Your face shines in a big smile