



Mrs. Martha J. Strunk

November 2, 1926 - July 20, 2018

Martha Jo Ann Strunk, 91, passed away on Friday, July 20, 2018 at Brooks Howell Home. Martha was born on November 2, 1926, to Allen R. and Addie Ann Johnson, in Tipton, Indiana. She was the second of six children. Both parents were faithful members of the Methodist Episcopal Church, so it's no surprise that by the age of 14, she felt called to missionary service.

Martha graduated from Taylor University in 1948, with a BA degree. The Women's Division of the Board of Global Missions confirmed her call and following a year of study at Scarritt College in Nashville, Tennessee, Martha went to Brazil. After a year of language study (1952) she taught Bible and Christian education classes at the Junior College Department at Colegio Bennett, the largest Methodist School for girls in Brazil, located in Rio de Janeiro.

While at language school Martha met Leon Strunk, a short-term missionary working at a rural boarding school. They were married December 7, 1953, and honeymooned on the tropical island of Paqueta in the bay at Rio de Janeiro.

Their marriage severed her relationship with the Women's Division. They returned to the United States for Leon to go to seminary at Emory University in Atlanta, Georgia.

Music was a big part of her life, and a way to give joy to everyone around her. Alongside Leon, she served teaching youth and adult classes, helped organize various societies of women, directed choirs, composed and arranged music for choirs, composed a Christmas Cantata, taught Bible and Christian education classes at the Conference Seminary, and for a time was secretary to the bishop. In 1975 Martha began a two-year probation period as pastor. She was the first woman elder in that Conference, ordained in January, 1977. During her 21 years as ordained pastor, she guided two of her churches in building new sanctuaries, and led a new congregation in developing a Community Center, which they named after her. She “retired” in 1992, but returned to Brazil to serve six more years as a volunteer.

Martha and Leon entered the community of Brooks-Howell Home in May 1998 and became associate members of Biltmore United Methodist Church. She worked tirelessly in the ministries of that church as well as continuing to use her musical gifts directing the choir at Brooks-Howell Home and planning music for their chapel services.

Martha is survived by three children: her daughters, Alycia Johnson (Mandel) and Joanna Cannon (Patty); and her son, Nathanael Strunk (Maria Alice). She is also survived by five grandchildren and one great-grandchild.

A celebration of her life will be held on Monday, August 6 at 3:30 PM in the Memorial Chapel of Brooks-Howell Home with the Rev. Ashley Crowder Stanley officiating. Gifts in her honor may be made to Brooks-Howell Home, 266 Merrimon Ave., Asheville, NC or CarePartners Hospice Foundation, PO Box 25338, Asheville, NC 28813.

Previous Events

Memorial Service

AUG 6. 3:30 PM (ET)

Brooks Howell Home
266 Merrimon Avenue
Asheville, NC 28801
<http://www.brooks-howell.org>

Tribute Wall



“ *Mrs. Martha J. Strunk*

October 07, 2023 at 11:15 AM



“ *I am Helen Kramer and am a member of Biltmore UMC. I always enjoyed talking with Martha after the worship service on Sundays.. We shared a love of music and singing in the choir and memories of our missionary service: Martha in Brazil and me in Argentina.. On the occasions when I attended events at the Brooks-Howell Home, I often saw Martha there directing the Brooks-Howell choir. Several weeks ago after attending a Church Women United meeting at Brooks Howell, which ended at noon, I went into the Dining Room and chatted with Martha as she finished her lunch. That was the last time I saw this wonderful Servant of God.*

Helen A Kramer - August 03, 2018 at 07:54 PM



“ *Country Basket Blooms was purchased for the family of Mrs. Martha J. Strunk.*



August 01, 2018 at 01:59 PM

FB

“ *Martha’s Love for her family and her parents was profound and she showed it in the way that she told stories about them, of happy memories and how she looked into her daughter’s and granddaughter’s eyes, when they were together, with abounding love. Something I admire about Martha was her ease and ability to laugh. I am so grateful that the last moments we saw each other we laughed and laughed and laughed. These are the gifts that Martha shared with the world and I am grateful to have witnessed them. My heart and prayers go to the family in their time of grief and healing. Peace be with Martha.*

Frankie Bolt - July 26, 2018 at 06:49 AM

PJ

“ *So appreciated her gentle matter-of-factness. Also her humor...loved to hear her laugh. Appreciated the way she called us as students to think beyond the continental US. Blessed to have known her.*

Peggy J.

Peggy L Jeffries - July 25, 2018 at 11:32 PM

JR

I was so bless to have known her. I agree with Peggy's statements above. I also worked in the library - where we each wrote our names on the cards as we checked out books. And I loved her signature! It was beautifully simple and elegant.

Jo Dene R-S

Jo Dene Romeijn-Stout - July 26, 2018 at 12:02 AM

DR

As my sister - in - law we had some great times together. We sang, played games and laughed together.

Dorene Reed - July 26, 2018 at 11:11 AM

MD

I have always greatly admired my Aunt Martha and Uncle Leon. What a legacy!

Melissa Devendorf - July 26, 2018 at 04:04 PM

JD

I feel lucky indeed to have met Martha and Leon at G-ETS. In a time of emerging adulthood and all that goes with that for most of the fresh-out-of-college seminarians, they were both a wonderful stabilizing and accepting presence for me. Even if I didn't know who I was or would be, their gentleness exuded acceptance. I remember Martha's winning smile and lovely laughter in particular. I grieve with the world for the loss they are on this plane of living and yet also celebrate the life of faith and the fruits of the Eternal Spirit she --and Leon - left behind in their work and in their families who carry on.

John Donnell - July 26, 2018 at 05:28 PM