



Sarah Virginia Miller

October 13, 1933 - May 15, 2025

Sarah Virginia Miller, 91, passed away on Thursday, May 15, 2025, at Brooks-Howell Home in Asheville, North Carolina.

Virginia was born on October 13, 1933, in Jonesboro, Tennessee to Paul and Vernie Higgins Miller. She had one brother, Dallas; a sister, Barbara "Bobbie" Markham; and a stepsister, Mary.

Through the influence of a "Rural Worker", Gladys Newcomb, she felt called to mission as a teenager.

Virginia graduated from Hiwassee and Emory & Henry Colleges. She began her career in the Methodist Church as a US-2, working in Lee County, Virginia. She was commissioned a Deaconess in 1962 and continued to work in the Western North Carolina mountains, southwest Virginia, and Mississippi. Her expertise was in Christian Education in rural churches, as well as organizing for needed services in rural communities. She worked with a self-help housing agency which helped people in need of decent housing learn to build their own homes.

While Virginia was working in Cherokee County, NC, a tornado struck the Ranger area, destroying the United Methodist Church and several hundred homes. It was a shock to the mountain people who bore snow and floods stoically, but a tornado was unheard of. At that time the General Conference

had redefined the mission of United Methodist Committee on Overseas Relief to include domestic disasters and was renamed United Methodist Committee on Relief. Virginia's work in the Ranger tornado was recognized as a new model for domestic disaster response. UMCOR asked Virginia to recruit a cadre of twelve volunteers, all of whom had experience in disaster response, to be trained and, in turn, to become trainers for conference disaster response. For more than twenty years, Virginia worked with UMCOR, designing, training, and developing resources. She watched with wonder the growth of United Methodist response, recognizing that it had become a primary force in disaster response programs.

In November 2006, Virginia was recognized by the Hiwassee College Alumni Association for outstanding community service. Gordon Knuckey, Disaster Response Field Consultant for UMCOR wrote, "Under her guidance, the casework program was established and now is the national standard for all disaster response agencies..."

After retirement, Virginia volunteered with an inner-city children/youth program before moving to Brooks-Howell Home (Asheville, NC) in September 2006. She was active in Canton Central United Methodist Church, especially United Methodist Women (now known as United Women in Faith). At Brooks-Howell, Virginia and her sister Bobbie were responsible for the operation of the Gift Shop.

Virginia was preceded in death by her parents, brother, and stepsister. Surviving family members are her sister, Barbara "Bobbie" Markham; several nieces & nephews; and many friends.

Two Celebration of Life services will be held. The first will be at Brooks-Howell Home Memorial Chapel on Thursday, May 29th, 2025, at 3:00 pm, officiated by Rev. Kelly Dotson & Rev. Tom Owens. The second service will be held on

Saturday, May 31st, 2025, at 11:00 am at Canton Central United Methodist Church with Rev. David Christy and Rev. Karen Kurtz officiating.

In lieu of flowers, memorials may be made to: Brooks-Howell Home, 266 Merrimon Ave., Asheville, NC 28801; Central United Methodist Church, 104 Church St., Canton, NC 28716 (for Haven House); or UMCOR US Disaster Response, Advance #901670, 458 Ponce de Leon Ave. NE, Building A Suite 1, Atlanta, GA 30308.

Previous Events

Celebration of Life

MAY 29. 3:00 PM (ET)

Brooks-Howell Chapel
266 Merrimon Avenue
Asheville, NC 28801

Officiated by Rev. Kelly Dotson & Rev. Tom Owens

Celebration of Life

MAY 31. 11:00 AM (ET)

Canton Central United Methodist Church
34 Church St.
Canton, NC 28716

Officiated by Rev. David Christy & Rev. Karen Kurtz

Tribute Wall

DP

“ 3 files added to the album Virginia at Brooks-Howell



Debbie Pittman - May 29, 2025 at 11:15 AM

DP

“ Virginia, you have been my mentor since the day we met. Thank you for all your gentle guidance and friendship. You will be truly missed. Until we meet again....
Debbie

Debbie Pittman - May 29, 2025 at 11:10 AM

MB

“ Virginia was a beautiful soul. She was one of the first people to welcome me to Canton UMC and always had a kind word to say. She was truly one of the good ones! Martha Barksdale

Martha L Barksdale - May 22, 2025 at 02:49 PM