

OBITUARY

DARLENE IONA (nee Wegener) CHRISTIANSEN

September 10, 2013

Darlene Iona Christiansen (87), a resident of the Willow Valley Retirement Community in Lancaster, PA, died on September 10, 2023. Even in her final years, Darlene touched thousands of lives as a mother and grandmother, clergy spouse, a piano teacher and church organist, as a master seamstress, and numerous leadership engagements with churches and communities.

Born on December 21, 1935 in St. Louis, MO, Darlene was the daughter of the Rev. Arthur Henry and Iora Bertha Paul Wegener.

She was pre-deceased by her husband of early 69 years, Rev. Dr. Ronald Charles Christiansen; she is survived by their four children: Rev. Dr. Keith (Marcia Kistler) of New Ipswich, NH, Kendall (Carol Shuchman) of Brooklyn, NY, Kyle (Sandra Magos, M.D.) of Frederick, MD and Karla (Greg Jones) of New Castle, IN. They celebrated fifteen (15) grandchildren: Jeni, Jil, Jesi, Jed, Jake, Job and Jacy; Ben, Rachel and Noah; Peter, Matthew and Daniel; and Annaleza and Ryan Jones, and eleven (11) great-grandchildren.

Darlene also is survived by a sister, Colleen (Rev. Donald) Hafner of St. Petersburg, FL, two brothers-in-law (Donald and Stanley Christiansen), and many other relatives, including a Vietnamese family of 21 members that they sponsored in 1975.

With her husband, they served churches and communities in Midway, Danville and Morton, IL; Webster Groves, MO; Topeka, KS; Romeo, MI; Sidney and Hudson, OH; and Lancaster, PA. In

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her childhood she also lived in Freelandville, IN, Lexington, MO, and Manhattan, KS.

Together, Ron and Darlene traveled extensively across both the U.S. and the world, including on mission trips.

Valedictorian of her high school, her education included studies at Elmhurst College, Elmhurst, IL and Kansas State University, Manhattan, KS.

She accompanied numerous community musical groups and held multiple community leadership positions – including being president of the Peoria, IL Symphony Auxiliary, secretary of the Central IL Youth Symphony board, and member of various Women's clubs.

A gifted community-builder, throughout her life Darlene helped to organize and lead numerous parent-teacher organizations, area church women's groups, clergy spouse retreats; she served as a local, state and national retreat/seminar leader, presenting many programs for churches, senior citizens, nursing homes and community organizations, and producing program materials and magazine articles for the United Church of Christ.

In 1983 she was honored as the first Outstanding Laywoman of the Michigan Conference of the United Church of Christ, receiving that honor at the UCC's national General Synod. The citation said: "In recognition of her service and leadership that has enriched both church and society, inspiring and challenging others by the giving of her time, talent and energy so unselfishly."

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She appreciated her 4-H experience – especially in sewing (both creating and remodeling clothing) and in cooking. Many quilts and baby, confirmation, graduation and wedding gifts plus altar paraments, banners and clergy robes and stoles were of her handiwork.

Interment will be in the Memorial Garden at the First Reformed United Church of Christ in Lancaster. A celebration of her life will be held later.

**In her (and their) memory, contributions can be directed as follows:**

To **The Rev. Dr. Ronald C. Christiansen Scholarship Fund** at Eden Theological Seminary via <https://www.eden.edu/donation-form/>. Please specify The Christiansen Scholarship Fund in the "describe other designation" field. PayPal: @edenseminary or call (314) 918-2691 to contribute by phone. Or via mailed check to Eden Theological Seminary, Attn: Advancement Office, 475 E. Lockwood Ave., St. Louis, MO 63119.

(The family will be notified of memorial gifts.)

Contributions also may be directed (by check) to the **Organ Restoration Fund** at First Reformed United Church of Christ, 40 East Orange Street, Lancaster, PA 17602