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8-22-2019

## Wilma Marie Lord

Celebration of Life Services for Wilma Marie Lord, 93, who passed away Monday, August 19, 2019, at The Village in Indianola, will be held at 2 p.m. Saturday, August 24, 2019, at Overton Funeral Home in Indianola. The family will be present one hour prior to services to greet friends. Burial of cremains will be held at a later date in the Westfield Cemetery, Grinnell, Iowa.

Wilma Marie Russell was born on December 21, 1925, the second of five children born to William Russell and Viola Parmley Russell, at the family farm near Lynnville, Iowa. She attended country school through eighth grade and graduated from Grinnell High School in 1943.

In 1947, Wilma married Howard Lord in the manner of the Quakers at the Grinnell Friends Church. They farmed at the Lord place south of Grinnell until 1949, when they were called to pastoral ministry and Howard enrolled in William Penn College. For the next 40 years, Wilma raised her children, managed her parsonage homes and Howard's pastoral offices, and shared in the Lord's work as they served churches in Iowa, Pennsylvania, and New Jersey.

Always quiet and compassionate but never weak-willed, Wilma steadfastly refused to bow to the "medical wisdom" of her time to "place this child (her daughter Linda, born with Down syndrome) in an institution and forget you had her." Wilma's determination to raise Linda as a full contributing member of their church families defined her life's work. Before we used the words "mainstreaming" or "advocacy," Wilma devoted herself to ensuring and modeling acceptance, full inclusion, and equal opportunities for people with disabilities.

Wilma opened her home and heart to "the least and the lost" – taking in people who were hungry, broken, abused, abandoned, or needy and nurturing them for as long as they needed help. She served wherever needed, always preferring to be in the background rather than the pulpit. When the local schools did not provide transportation for "special needs students," Wilma stepped in to be the "bus driver" (unpaid) for the Warren County children who attended Winifred Law Opportunity School in Indianola; she volunteered as a Special Education associate at Southeast Warren Schools, and also worked in data processing for Simpson College.

As a pastor's wife, she handled many significant "changes of direction," displaying the willingness to "go where the Lord leads" that would define her life. In 1954, at eight months pregnant, Wilma packed up Howard, three children, the food she had canned, and her houseplants, and moved to New Jersey from Iowa with \$50 to their name, so that Howard could attend seminary. In 1966 they returned to Iowa, where they served the Southeast Warren Parish (1966-78) and the Gladbrook United Methodist Church. They retired from active ministry in 1988, settling into their home at Lake Ponderosa in Montezuma – her first "our own home," at age 62, about 2000 miles west of Grinnell. In retirement, Wilma continued to be active in United Methodist Women in the Montezuma church and as a district and state officer. She was an enthusiastic supporter of the Montezuma schools, attending music and athletic activities. She enjoyed hosting family and friends (and still taking in folks who needed sanctuary) at their Lake Ponderosa home and traveling with family, friends, and church groups. Howard and Wilma moved to The Village in 2013, where they reconnected with United Methodist colleagues and formed new friendships.

Throughout her life, Wilma exemplified faith in action. She welcomed the opportunities to share God's love through mission trips (all involving hard work and some privation) throughout the US and in a remote Guatemalan village. Howard had sailed as a "Seagoing Cowboy" in 1947 for the relief program which became Heifer International; this life-altering trip led to their lifelong commitment to Heifer and untold hours of volunteer work at the Heifer Ranch in Arkansas. The Howard and Wilma Lord Peace Garden at the ranch entrance honors their dedication and work.

Wilma was – beyond all else – the love of her husband's life: a love and life together fully realized together. Wilma was preceded in death by her parents, brother Robert, and sisters Mary Doris Russell and Maxine Rines; and by her husband Howard and daughter Linda. She is survived by her sister, Ruth Jones, and her children: Russell (Denece), Bob (Debra), and Laura (Dennis) Oliver, 15 grandchildren, and 26 great grandchildren.

To sign an online condolence, visit our website at [www.overtonfunerals.com](http://www.overtonfunerals.com).

