



Joanne Ruth Werner

December 28, 1930 - February 11, 2026

Joanne Ruth Werner was born to William and Viola (nee' Breitenbecher) Schmaltz on December 28, 1930, in Detroit, Michigan. She was born again by water and the Spirit through Holy Baptism in 1931 at Messiah Lutheran Church in Detroit, MI, making her Christ's very own and adopting her as a daughter into God's family and an heir of the heavenly kingdom. Her body died on February 11, 2026, surrounded by loving family, one month after her 95th birthday. Her soul then began its rest with Jesus where she will await the resurrection on the Last Day when the promises of Christ will be realized in full.

Throughout Joanne's childhood her family lived on Detroit's east side. Her father was a Detroit police officer and he remodeled homes, moving the family into one flat of the home while working on the other flat, and so the family moved frequently in her childhood. Her grandparents, William and Eva Breitenbecher always lived close-by which created a loving multi-generation family environment for Joanne while growing up. Joanne learned to bake for her grandmother as a child, and learned to love her grandparents' flower gardens. Special treats as a child included putting on her hat and white gloves to walk to Jefferson Ave., where she caught the street car to Hudsons in downtown Detroit. And she loved walking to the big, three-story Kresge store where she visited the music department to purchase sheet music for her growing skills playing piano. The ladies in her family were strong, independent

women and in 1938 at age 7 Joanne joined her mother, grandmother, and another relative on a women's road trip from Detroit to California via Route 66. She loved her elementary school years at Guyton Elementary School in Detroit, before attending Southeastern High School. Joanne and her mother frequently walked to Messiah Lutheran Church where Pastor Loeber guided her to confirm her faith in Jesus Christ as her Savior in 1945.

Joanne met John Frank Werner at Wayne University in Detroit and they were married on June 14, 1952 at Messiah Lutheran Church in Detroit, with Pastor Loeber officiating. Joanne and John celebrated 62 years of marriage until death separated them. Together Joanne and John raised four sons, and they were very active in their local Lutheran congregation. As a young mother and active member of Mt. Calvary Lutheran Church in Detroit, she led that large congregation to become one of the founding churches

in the Council of Lutheran Women of Detroit, and she served as vice-president for many years, and chair person of the annual Metro Detroit Lutheran Woman of the Year banquet.

Joanne's free time was spent in the leadership of several Lutheran organizations, such as the Women's Guild of Peace Lutheran Church in Warren, Michigan, and the Board of Youth Ministry for the Michigan District LCMS where she coordinated travel to national youth gatherings and conference arrangements for Michigan Lutheran youth conferences.

After teaching Kindergarten at Von Stueben Elementary school, Joanne raised her family, and then joined AAL (Aid Association of Lutherans), again being a pioneer as one of the very first women to be District Representative. She built many relationships within the Lutheran community which helped when she began Lutheran Travel, a fund-raising ministry under the Detroit Lutheran Center. As tour leader she arranged group trips for many years, traveling

around the world to more than 70 countries. One of her joys was bringing her grandchildren with her on international trips where she created great family memories.

Joanne is survived by her sons: John of Palm Springs, CA, Steve (Alison) of Clinton Twp., MI, Paul (Suzanne) of Lorain, OH, and Mark (Cindy) of Mason, MI. She is also survived by thirteen grandchildren: Emily, Lynae, Abi, Nate, Dan, Zack, Sarah, Leah, Joel, Eli, Michaela, Bethany, and Noah, and eighteen great-grandchildren. Joanne is predeceased by her husband, John, parents, Bill and Viola Schmaltz, and her brother, Donald Schmaltz.

She clung until her last breath to the promise of Jesus, "I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die." (John 11: 25)

Funeral services will be held 11am Saturday, February 21, 2026, at Trinity Lutheran Church, 45160 Van Dyke Ave., Utica, MI. Following a luncheon for all guests served at the church, burial will take place in Glen Eden East Cemetery, Macomb Twp., MI. Visitation will be held from 3pm to 8pm on Friday, February 20, 2026 at William Sullivan & Sons Funeral Home, 8458 Hall Rd., Utica, MI, and visitation will be one hour prior to the funeral at the church on Saturday, February 21, 2026.

In lieu of flowers memorials may be directed to Trinity Lutheran Church of Utica, Michigan; Concordia Seminary St. Louis, Missouri; Lutheran Hour Ministries, St. Louis, Missouri; and the Hemophilia Foundation of Michigan

Previous Events

Visitation

FEB 20. 3:00 PM - 8:00 PM (ET)

Wm. Sullivan and Son Funeral Directors-Utica
8459 Hall Road
Utica, MI 48317

Instate at Chruch

FEB 21. 10:00 AM - 11:00 AM (ET)

Trinity Lutheran Church
45160 Van Dyke
Utica, MI 48317

Funeral Service

FEB 21. 11:00 AM - 12:00 PM (ET)

Trinity Lutheran Church
45160 Van Dyke
Utica, MI 48317

Burial

FEB 21. 1:30 PM (ET)

Glen Eden Memorial Park - East
19810 26 Mile Rd
Macomb Township, MI 48042-1204

Tribute Wall



“ *Emerald Garden Basket was purchased for the family of Joanne Ruth Werner.* ”



February 16 at 07:20 PM