



Joan R. Laarman

January 15, 1949 - April 3, 2023

Joan DeJonge Laarman was born in Grand Rapids, Michigan, on January 15, 1949. She died of cancer at her home in Niagara, Wisconsin, on April 2, 2023, at the age of 74.

Joan lived her life on the basis of the biblical truth expressed in the first question and answer of the Heidelberg Catechism: “What is your only comfort in life and in death? That I am not my own, but belong— body and soul, in life and in death—to my faithful Savior Jesus Christ. He has fully paid for all my sins with his precious blood, and has set me free from the tyranny of the devil. He also watches over me in such a way that not a hair can fall from my head without the will of my Father in heaven; in fact, all things must work together for my salvation. Because I belong to him, Christ, by his Holy Spirit, assures me of eternal life and makes me wholeheartedly willing and ready from now on to live for him.”

On June 18, 1971, Joan married Edward Laarman, and they enjoyed 51 years together as partners in life and in service to others. Their son Joel lives in Germany with his wife Carolin and their children Lea and Henri. Son Benjamin lives in Niagara with his wife Kelly and their children Myles, Elijah, and Brooks. Joan’s family gave her immense joy.

Joan earned a B.A. from Calvin College and an M.S.W. degree from Michigan

State University. When Ed asked her which of the many types of therapy she would offer her clients, she replied, “Love therapy.” Joan worked as a social worker in Grand Rapids, MI; Mishawaka, IN; and Appleton, WI. Then at the University of Iowa she partnered with Ed in campus ministry, offering Bible studies and hospitality to international students and scholars. During her ten years in Iowa, she served a meal in her home to people from 6 continents and 77 different countries.

As her life drew to a close, Joan expressed her deep gratitude to God for the many ways her extended family, friends from many countries, and fellow church members had enriched her life. She encourages everyone to nurture the seed of love God has implanted in us, and to accept God’s gift of love and forgiveness in Christ. Joan was quick to admit that she often fell short, but she also knew that love is possible: “We love because [God] first loved us” (1 John 4:19).

We wish to express our deep gratitude to Marshfield Medical Center-Dickinson, Unity Hospice of Wisconsin, and Rev. Mike March and the congregation of First Presbyterian Church in Kingsford for their wonderful care and support for Joan and the family during her illness.

Visitation will be held from 1:30-3:00 p.m. on Sunday, May 21, at First Presbyterian Church in Kingsford, followed by a memorial service at 3:00 p.m. at the church. The service will be live-streamed as well as posted for later viewing at <https://www.youtube.com/@paulschultz6466/streams>. There will also be a service at 11:30 a.m. on Saturday, May 27, at Vogel Center Christian Reformed Church in McBain, Michigan.

Joan requested that in lieu of flowers, anyone wishing to give a memorial gift donate to Refugee Services of Bethany Christian Services or a similar organization. See www.bethany.org or send a check to Bethany Christian

Services, P.O. Box 294, Grand Rapids, MI 49501-0294, and put Joan's name in the memo line. Thank you!

Condolences may be expressed to the family of Joan D. Laarman online at www.ernashfuneralhomes.com.

The family has entrusted the Erickson-Rochon & Nash Funeral Home of Iron Mountain with the arrangements.

Tribute Wall

NO

“*Condolences to you, Ed, and your family. So very sorry for the loss of your life partner and encourager. May you receive God's grace and love in the months ahead.*

Nancy Olthoff - May 03, 2023 at 05:18 PM

AV

“*Ed and Joan left quite a legacy for students at the University of Iowa-Geneva Campus Ministries. We see that in the comments here, and we observed that in their visits to the Pella area with students on the farm tours. Ed and Joan were a great team - loved God, each other, and those around them well. We express our sympathy to Ed and family in the loss of Joan. - Andi & Dan Van Kooten*

Andrea VanKooten - April 24, 2023 at 10:09 AM

KD

“*Joan carried the light of Christ through her hospitality. What warmth and love radiated from her. I was blessed to work with Ed and Joan at Geneva for many years. Joan was tirelessly devoted to that ministry and to sharing the gospel. She had a great smile, and a wonderful laugh. Although she will certainly be missed here on Earth, it is reassuring to know she is in the presence of God!*

Katherine Damisch - April 22, 2023 at 09:47 AM

LW

“ I was one of the many international students in Iowa City that had the privilege to get to know Joan and Ed. Every Friday night, they opened their home to us. We studied bible verses, sang hymns, eat and laugh together like a big family. Joan was like a caring mother to every one of us, giving us a warm home in a foreign country. After I graduated, I left Iowa City and Ed and Joan moved to WI. We had less connection, but every Christmas they still send me a card and tell me the happening in their lives (reading the card is my favorite part of Christmas), making me feel I'm still part of the family.

I'm very much saddened by the passing of Joan. She is the most kind, selfless and gracious lady I've ever met. She is a loyal servant to God, and has definitely touched the hearts of many people. I will deeply miss her!

Ed, my deepest sympathy to you! I know how hard it is to lose a lifetime companion. We all share your grief. Joan is in a better place, and she will always live in our hearts.

Lei Wan - April 13, 2023 at 03:06 PM

BG

“ We are very much saddened by the passing of Joan. We always will cherish the many times she and Ed were at our home along with the many international students they brought to our farm. We have so many memories of Joan but one "tasty one" stands out. After a visit to a Dairy Farm that manufactured dairy products, she made a comment that "if the curds did not squeak between your teeth they were not good curds." So very true. She clearly took an interest in everyone and loved to kindly show her love and interest in all areas of student life, backgrounds, and academia no matter who they were. She was truly an example of how Christ would want us to live.

We will certainly miss her as we have since the Laarman's left Iowa City. Our deepest sympathy to the Laarmans. You have been in our prayers that God will provide for you. It was a privilege and honor to know her-Bruce and Lisa Groenendyk Leighton, Iowa

Bruce and Lisa Groenendyk - April 11, 2023 at 08:11 PM

DM

“ What an amazing woman we have lost! As many have noted, Joan and Ed also took me under their wings at Geneva Ministries in Iowa City! Friday night bible study was a refuge for many of us international students. It was always an opportunity for good food and conversations! Joan's love and support continued beyond Iowa. In all honesty, Joan was among the kindest and most selfless women I have known! To Ed, please have my deepest sympathy! Although Joan has left us physically, her memories and impact on us will forever live on!

Denise M - April 11, 2023 at 03:29 PM

CE

“ When I came to Iowa city in 2013, Joan and Ed welcomed me and made me feel at home. Joan has set the bar high when it comes to love for people. Joan cooked for international students and scholars including myself and made sure that we ate after the bible study at their place in Iowa city. Joan was a loving person, and I'll never forget how she and Ed welcomed me and cared for me when I moved to Iowa.

Ed and family, please accept my deepest condolences.

Celestin

Celestin - April 05, 2023 at 03:32 PM

SS

“ Bob and I witnessed first hand Joan's love of Christ and her family in church and at home. She was a true blessing sharing her love of Christ and taking care of her family. Her children and grandchildren were her pride and joy. She will be missed.

Bob and Susan Strang

Susan Strang - April 05, 2023 at 12:50 PM

CE

“ When I first arrived in Iowa, I was shy and really knew nothing about this place. Ed and Joan welcomed me via stone soup events. It has been a great memory for me. Thanks for being such a nice person, Joan.

Cecilia - April 05, 2023 at 10:57 AM

FA

“Joan loved on me from the time I first met her and Ed in Iowa City in 2005. They nourished, supported, and cared for me and so many other international students and gave us a home. No matter who you were and if you visited once or many times, you were loved in their home. After I left Iowa City, Joan made sure to stay in touch with me and continued loving on me and encouraging me regardless of where I resided. She sent packages and gifts constantly. I felt so loved always. We shared a love for the GB Packers and I loved texting with her and discussing the games. Joan, thank you for your selfless love. Thank you for your kindness towards me. Thank you for thinking of me.
Dear Ed, Ben & family, and Joel & family, please accept my sincere condolences. I'm so sorry for your loss and I know God will sustain you in this time.

Fatima - April 04, 2023 at 07:35 PM

AJ

“Ed, Art and I are saddened by the death of Joan. We have such good memories of our work with you both serving as young peoples leaders together. You both were such a blessing and we praise God for Joan's life. We will pray for you and your family as you travel this road of grief. Shalom Art and Judy

Art and Judy Jongsma - April 04, 2023 at 07:25 PM

BD

“ Dear Ed and Family:

Our hearts are broken in the loss of Joan. Although it has been many years since you were in Appleton, we remember fondly the loving service Joan gave to Covenant Church and its members and to our community at large during your pastorate here. Our thoughts and prayers go out to you during this time of loss and grief.

*With love in Christ,
Bob, Karla, and the Duimstra family*

Bob Duimstra - April 04, 2023 at 03:49 PM

LF

“ Ed, Rick and I are so sorry for your loss in Joan's passing. We pray that God will surround you and your family with the presence of his Spirit found in the love and support of friends and family. Lori Feenstra

Lori Feenstra - April 04, 2023 at 03:22 PM

RE

“ When I speak with enthusiasm about my two years in the US, most people say "Oh, Iowa..." when I tell them where exactly I spent them. Little do they know how lucky I was. One big part of my luck was to somehow stumble into the Friday night Geneva meetings, first at Jason's and Donna's place, later at Ed's and Joan's house. Though being far from my hometown, I felt at home, always welcome, rain or shine, good day or bad, talkative or silent, in pensive or chatty mood. The company, the conversations, the lovely food, the heartwarming welcome from Ed and Joan - when I think of my time in Iowa, those are some of my fondest memories and the things I miss the most, even at the place I nowadays call home. This, of course, does not even come close to the loss you, Ed, and your family must feel these days. In my imagination, God was smiling when he called Joan and looking forward to meeting her, and I'm sure she made his day - like she made our days back then. - Regine :-)

Regine - April 04, 2023 at 12:20 PM

AO

Joan was such a humble and friendly person. She was like a mother to me, throughout my stay in Iowa City as a graduate student, 2009 - 2015. It's eight years now since I left the US but the memory of Ed & Joan's love, kindness and humility to international students still lives with me. I pray for heavenly peace and comfort to Ed and the family at this difficult moment. May Joan's soul rest in Godly peace - Amen.

Albertus K. Onyiego - Dar es Salaam - Tanzania

ALBERTUS KARUME ONYIEGO - April 06, 2023 at 09:56 AM

DZ

It has been more than 15 years since I left Iowa City. When Lei told me that Joan passed away this month, Joan came back to my mind vividly, as if it were yesterday.

I remember the first time we met Joan and Ed when you came to Iowa City. You welcomed us with open arms and love. Every Friday, I looked forward to meeting at your house to study the Bible and discuss our lives. Those times were so precious, as if it were yesterday.

I cannot thank Joan and Ed enough for your love and support. In those years, you lit up my life in a way that you may never imagine. Joan was such a loving, warm, kind lady. She welcomed all of us with love, and her cooking was delicious. Our life in Iowa would not be the same without Joan.

Thank you, dear Joan, for all the joy and love you have given us and kindled in our hearts. We will miss you and remember you as the best days in our lives. Carry the love you gave us forward.

Dear Ed, please take care of yourself in this difficult time. You and your family are in my prayers. As you said, "all of us in the land of the living have more work to do, more love to give, more grace to receive." Thank you and Joan for being the light in my life.

-Dawn Zhao

Dawn Zhao - April 12, 2023 at 02:25 PM

VJ

Hi Ed: Ruth and I were shocked and extremely saddened to hear of the passing of an extremely good friend like Joan. I have known Joan since 1964 (about) and she was the person who told me about the doctoral program in Mich. State in S.W. which motivated me to get my Ph.D. and I'm forever thankful for the friendship of you and Joan. We had good talks even before you went to seminary Ed and what fun those talks were. Even though I have not seen you for many, many years I've always considered you one of my best friends. All the persons who worked at the Chr. Counseling Center have passed away -.Rev. Kik, Dr. Dean, Dr. Scherpenisse and for now only I remain. I remember Joan saying, "I don't want to be a pastor's wife." Like the apostle Paul, sometimes those reluctant to do God's will turn up to be the very, very best in their new role. God bless you Ed, Vic De Jonge

Vic De Jonge - August 22, 2023 at 03:49 PM