

A Service of Death and Resurrection

# Mary Lou Vergara

September 13, 1945—April 2, 2025



Saturday, September 13, 2025 at 11 am

Saint Francis United Methodist Church, Cary, NC

PRELUDE

\*PROCESSIONAL

\*THE WORD OF GRACE

Rev. Anne Ahl

Jesus said, I am the resurrection and I am life. Those who believe in me, even though they die, yet shall they live, and whoever lives and believes in me shall never die. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last. I died, and behold I am alive for evermore, and I hold the keys of hell and death. Because I live, you shall live also.

\*GREETING

\*HYMN

Swing Low, Sweet Chariot

UMH# 703 vs. 1 & 2

PRAYER

Rev. Jonathan Sobel

The Lord be with you. And also with you.

Let us pray: O God, who gave us birth, you are ever more ready to hear than we are to pray. You know our needs before we ask, and our ignorance in asking. Give to us now your grace, that as we shrink before the mystery of death, we may see the light of eternity. Speak to us once more your solemn message of life and of death. Help us to live as those who are prepared to die. And when our days here are accomplished, enable us to die as those who go forth to live, so that living or dying, our life may be in you, and that nothing in life or in death will be able to separate us from your great love in Christ Jesus our Lord. Amen.

OLD TESTAMENT

Isaiah 25:1, 6-9

Dillon Healy

PSALTER

Psalm 23

Jailu Navarrete

POEM

from *"Motivation for the Great Work"* by John P. Cock

Sean Healy

TIME OF NAMING AND WITNESS

Teresa Healy  
Sally Evans Stopfkuchen  
Rev. Vernon Vergara  
Margaret Gergen

POEM

*"When Death Comes"* by Mary Oliver

Van Campbell

HYMN

On Eagle's Wings

UMH# 143 (sing twice)

\*GOSPEL

Matthew 5:1-12

Rev. Anne Ahl

HOMILY

Rev. Anne Ahl

PRAYER OF COMMENDATION

Rev. Anne Ahl

\*HYMN

We Shall Overcome

UMH# 533 vs. 1, 3, 4

INVITATION TO HOLY COMMUNION

Rev. Jonathan Sobel

\*THE GREAT THANKSGIVING

The Lord be with you. And also with you.

Lift up your hearts. We lift them up to the Lord.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God. It is right to give our thanks and praise.

... we praise your name and join their unending hymn:

Holy, Holy, Holy Lord God of power and might. Heaven and earth are full of your glory.

Hosanna in the highest. Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest.

... as we proclaim the mystery of faith.

Christ has died; Christ is risen; Christ will come again.

... all honor and glory is yours, almighty God, now and forever.

Amen.

\*THE LORD'S PRAYER

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.

\*SHARING OF THE BREAD AND CUP

Communion Meditation

How Great Thou Art

Traditional

PRAYER AFTER RECEIVING

Almighty God, we thank you that in your great love you have given us a foretaste of your heavenly banquet. May the grace of this holy meal comfort us now and give us the assurance of that kingdom where there is no death, no sorrow, no crying, but only the fullness of joy with all your saints; through Jesus Christ our Lord, Amen.

\*HYMN

Hymn of Promise

UMH# 707

\*DISMISSAL WITH BLESSING

Rev. Anne Ahl

\*POSTLUDE AND RECESSIONAL When the Saints Go Marching In

Traditional

The family invites you to a reception  
in the Multi-Purpose Room immediately after the service  
and to a gathering from 3 - 6 pm  
at the Courtyard by Marriott,  
102 Edinburgh Dr., Cary, NC.

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Donations may be made in Mary Lou's honor to:

The ACLU (American Civil Liberties Union)  
[action.aclu.org/give/now](http://action.aclu.org/give/now)

Dorcas Ministries of Cary  
[dorcascnc.org/](http://dorcascnc.org/)

Transitions Hospice  
[transitionslifecare.org/donate/](http://transitionslifecare.org/donate/)



# Mary Lou Brunkow Vergara

*September 13, 1945 - April 2, 2025*



Mary Lou Vergara died peacefully at hospice in Raleigh, NC, at age 79, ushered homeward by fresh flowers, prayers, loving hands, and singing. She was preceded in death by her beloved parents, Otto and Genieve Brunkow; her sisters, Dorothy Walker and June Evans; and their husbands, Captain Grant Walker and Charles Evans. Mary Lou is survived by her two daughters and their husbands, Kristina and Troy Campbell of Apex, NC, and Teresa and Niall Healy of Concord, CA. She is also survived by her four grandsons: Sullivan Campbell, Liam Campbell, Dillon Healy, and Sean Healy.

Mary Lou was born in Oak Park, IL on September 13, 1945. She was the youngest of three daughters born to Otto and Genieve Brunkow. Mary Lou lived her first twenty years in Glen Ellyn, IL, outside of Chicago. During those formative years, Mary Lou was nurtured by a loving family, caring neighbors and members of the First United Methodist Church. She credited those relationships with providing a firm foundation for her future life choices.

After graduating from Glenbard West High School, Mary Lou attended the University of Illinois and graduated from Greensboro College in NC, with a BA in Sociology. Throughout her life she had a passion for working with people, exploring the depths of spirituality, and pursuing social justice for all. While Mary Lou was a student at the University of Illinois, she attended a Religious Studies I course (RS-1), at the Ecumenical Institute in Chicago. Years later she would encounter this group again in the Philippines.

The trajectory of Mary Lou's life was greatly influenced by societal events in the 1960's: the Civil Rights Movement, assassinations of President John F. Kennedy, Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., and Robert F. Kennedy and the Vietnam War. In 1968, Mary Lou married Jaime R. Vergara, Jr., a young seminarian from the Philippines, attending Perkins School of Theology at SMU in Dallas, TX. Jaime was the cousin of Lily Vergara Barcelona, who had lived with Mary Lou's family as an exchange student in 1963.

In 1972, the couple moved to the Philippines to work for the United Methodist Church. While there, they also began working with the Institute of Cultural Affairs (ICA), formerly the Ecumenical Institute. For the next twelve years, their family was assigned by the UMC to work with the ICA, doing rural community development across the globe. During that time, they lived in the Philippines, the Marshall Islands, Guam, Hawaii, Canada and Chicago, IL. Their two daughters, Kristina and Teresa, were born in Manila Philippines and Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, Canada respectively.

In 1985, Mary Lou graduated from the University of Hawaii-Manoa with a Master of Social Work degree (MSW). This marked a major transition in her life. She and her daughters moved to Chicago, where she began her thirty-year career in social work with older adults. In 1987, Mary Lou and Jaime officially divorced, but ties with the Vergara family remained intact. Throughout the remainder of her life, Mary Lou treasured the love and support of the extended Vergara family and enjoyed following the lives of her many nieces and nephews.

After nine years administering a retirement community in Evanston, IL, Mary Lou moved to Atlanta, GA where she worked for the next twenty years with Senior Services North Fulton and the Atlanta Regional Commission (ARC) Aging Services Division. While living in Atlanta, Mary Lou also received a Master of Divinity degree from Candler School of Theology at Emory University in 2003.

In 2016, Mary Lou retired from ARC and moved to Cary, NC. She continued her work in supporting family caregivers and grandparents raising grandchildren. She also helped develop Older Adult Ministry Programs for local congregations. She was happy to live near her daughter's family in Apex, NC, where she enjoyed watching her grandchildren grow and develop.

Every connection she made was personal, honored and cultivated. She was our family historian and archivist. Mary Lou is remembered for her prolific holiday, birthday, anniversary, and condolence cards. By extension, she was a supreme connector of people. Mary Lou is lovingly remembered for her rolodexes, and loved connecting people to other people and resources, seemingly just in their time of need.

Mary Lou appreciated sports of all kinds, particularly football, basketball, tennis, and Olympic finals, and any sport played by a family member. She loved music, Motown and world music, Masterpiece Theater on PBS, and, later, Korean dramas. She loved storytelling, a quick wit, and laughter. She delighted in silly mishaps, mischief, and verbal meanderings. Light-hearted, compassionate, and nonjudgmental, she was approachable, inspiring, and a profound leader.

To the end, Mary Lou was driven by faith, carefully choosing congregations faithful to living the loving Word of God. Most recently, she found a home at St. Francis UMC in Cary, NC., where she actively engaged in numerous programs, and became a Stephen's Minister in 2024. Although only with them for a short time, she felt a deep and gratifying connection with their community. She understood her life as a gift from God and as a part of an unbroken line throughout human history of those who willingly and joyfully gave their lives in service to others.