



Jo Ellen Bentley Reece

September 20, 1946 - September 27, 2023

Reverend Jo Ellen Bentley Reece left this earth on Wednesday, Sept. 27, 2023, at the age of 77. She was born on Sept. 20, 1946, to Kathryn Rebecca Qualls Bentley and Joe Melvin Bentley of Russellville, Kentucky.

Growing up she loved going to youth group at church, the movies on Saturday (if she wasn't working at her dad's five and dime store), and playing sports, especially tennis, golf, and diving. She loved to dance, whether in her living room or at the county fair contests where she won several medals. She was also the drum major of her high school band and twirled fire batons at the games.

After graduating from Russellville High in 1964, she attended Samford University for two years and went on to earn a Bachelor of Business Administration from the University of Kentucky in 1968, before moving to Nashville, Tennessee.

In 1972, Jo met and married her husband Wayne, an ordained Elder with the United Methodist Church (UMC), and instantly became mom to four daughters (ages 3-12), whom they raised together.

In her early career, Jo served as an administrator/researcher/planner in non-profit settings in business, health, university, and church sectors. She also felt called to professional ministry, and she completed the Board of Ministry seminary requirements within the United Methodist Church. She became a Certified Christian Educator and Consecrated Diaconal Minister for the West Michigan Conference and an Ordained Deacon in Full Connection with the Tennessee Conference.

She served at First UMC in Lansing, Michigan, and at First UMC in Mason, Michigan; at Donelson Heights UMC in Nashville; and as editor for Children's Teacher Magazine for the United Methodist Publishing House for six years.

In 2005, Jo founded Quiet Center Retreat Ministries and apprenticed to become a Traditional Reiki Master Teacher of the Usui Method of Natural Healing in 2006. She was also the co-founder of Spiritual Friends Network of Middle Tennessee in 2007.

Along with her husband, Jo enjoyed travel around the world, especially cruises to the Mediterranean where they served as chaplains for three Princess Cruises. Their other joy was attending St. Louis Cardinals games together each year.

Jo will be remembered as a bright light of love and peace to all who knew her, someone who was quick to laugh, listen with an open heart, and be present for the people and places she loved. She lit up when someone she cared

about entered a room, and her generosity of spirit led her to both see, and bring out, the best in everyone.

She was preceded in death by her parents, her beloved husband Wayne, and her sister Rebecca Byrd Bentley Burns Gay. Left to cherish the many wonderful memories are C. David (Judi) Reece, her brother-in-law and sister-in-law; Wayne (Jean Griffin) Gay, brother-in-law; four treasured daughters and sons-in-law: Marcie (John) Mills, Angela Reece Pierce; Kirsten (Adrian) Goodnight, and Kendra (David) Gray; and four nieces dear to heart: Catherine Burns, Rebecca Burns Wilson, Amy Reece Connelly and Emily Reece. She also leaves behind 15 grandchildren: Heather, Jessica, Jillian, Jonathan, Daniel, Richard, Nick, Jamie, Shawn, Amanda, Ashley, Breanna, David, Jacob, and Samuel; and 17 great-grandchildren, along with all of their families and a multitude of other family and friends.

A Celebration of Life service will be held at 1 p.m. on Saturday, Oct. 14, 2023, in the chapel of Austin & Bell Funeral Home, Springfield, Tennessee, with Rev. Debra Smith officiating. The family will receive friends from 11 a.m. Saturday until the time of the service at 1 p.m. at the funeral home. Burial will be held in the Elmwood Cemetery, 1029 Richard Street, in Springfield, immediately following the service.

For those wishing to make memorial donations in Jo's honor, they can be made to the Dystonia Medical Research Foundation by visiting dystonia-foundation.org.

Austin & Bell Funeral Home in Springfield is in charge of these arrangements.

AUSTIN & BELL FUNERAL HOME-

509 WALNUT STREET, SPRINGFIELD, TN (615) 384-1000

Previous Events

Celebration of Life Service

OCT **14**. 1:00 PM.

Chapel Of Austin & Bell Funeral Home

Receive Friends

NOV **11**. 11:00 AM (CT)

Austin & Bell Funeral Home Springfield
509 Walnut St.
Springfield, TN 37172
(615) 384-1000
<https://austinandbell.com>

Tribute Wall

EW

“ My wife, Josie Williamson, was a cousin and great friend of Jo Ellen's. I picture them in heaven, enjoying some favorite childhood memories. May they both rest-in-peace.

Bunky Williamson

Edgar Williamson - May 22, 2024 at 02:57 PM

AN

“ Reminding those whom you support that your thoughts are with them.

Anonymous - October 13, 2023 at 02:02 PM

RL

“ Our thoughts and prayers are with the family. I have known Jo since 1996, when I was appointed as Associate Minister at Mason UMC with Rev. Wayne Reece as my senior pastor. I have known Jo as a smart, beautiful person, a complement to her husband. May God Be with you all. Rev Jane and Rev Russell Logston, Michigan Annual Conference UMC

Rev Jane Ligston - October 05, 2023 at 08:07 PM

KG

*Thank you for these kind sentiments. We miss them both greatly, but ever thankful for the life and legacy they shared with all!
Blessings,
Kendra*

Kendra Gray - December 29, 2023 at 02:10 PM

TK

“ So very sorry for your loss,prayers for your family

Teresa Kennedy - October 04, 2023 at 03:25 PM

KG

Thank you, Teresa! We appreciate all the prayers and love!

Kendra Gray - December 29, 2023 at 02:10 PM