

# Ruth LaVonne Stewart,

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Nov. 5, 1937 - May 30, 2018



**KANSAS CITY, MO** – Ruth LaVonne Stewart, daughter of Vera Ruth (Boysen) and Earl Stewart, was born on November 5, 1937 outside Harlan on the family dairy farm in rural Shelby County. She attended school at Monroe Township Number 1 through eighth grade before returning home to help on the family farm. Ruth's early years were centered on farm life and she was very active in 4-H where she loved showing registered Holstein cattle at the local Shelby County Fair as well as the Iowa State Fair. One of her highlights was when she showed her Holstein heifer in Chicago. She took it all the way to Chicago by train. She was awarded a blue ribbon.

But both tragedy and triumph marked Ruth's life when she was 20 years old. Her father died suddenly and this unexpected event set her on the path of becoming a strong, independent woman. Triumph came the following year when she found Christ and accepted Him as her living Savior. She joined the American Baptist Church and her life took on a new dimension.

In 1961, Ruth answered God's call to serve in ministry but knew she was in for an uphill battle as she would have to restart her high school education at the age of 22 before she could attend college and seminary. She obtained her high school diploma through University of Nebraska correspondence courses and in 1963 she entered her freshman year of college at Judson College in Elgin, IL. Shortly after starting college, tragedy struck Ruth's family again when her mother was seriously injured in an auto accident and Ruth was called to come home. Her mother died three weeks later.

Because of her faith in God and commitment to her call, Ruth was determined to start college again and knew her Lord would provide grace and kindness along the way. She worked hard and in 1967 received her BA degree with a double major in sociology and art. A pastor she met while attending college motivated her to enter the field of Christian education and she entered seminary ultimately earning her Master's degree in Education from the Midwestern Baptist Seminary in Kansas City, MO in 1970. She served as a preschool teacher for two years.

But her drive to make a contribution didn't end at Midwestern or in teaching. She went to school again, this time to Southwestern Seminary in Fort Worth, TX, where she earned a Graduate Specialist degree, graduating with a perfect 4.0 GPA. She served as the coordinator of the University Baptist Church Preschool in Fort Worth from 1971 to 1972, but after graduation went into full time Christian ministry.

She was called to Hawaii to serve as the Director of Christian Education at the Pali View Baptist Church in Kaneohe where she also helped develop children's programs for the Hawaii Baptist Association. She served there from 1972 to 1974, then returned to Midwestern Baptist Seminary in Kansas City, MO to serve as Director of the seminary's Child Development Center. Between 1974 and 1989, she built a modern preschool program so popular among professionals in Kansas City that it became crowded, led the planning and installation of a state-of-the-art children's playground on campus, and managed a profitable budget that supported future success.

In 1989, Ruth became a consultant for Childwise Programs in Kansas City, a position she held for many years. From 1990 to 2005, she served as a faculty instructor in the Early Childhood Education Department at Penn Valley Community College in Kansas City, KS. During the same time, she continued her education earning a degree in Early and Middle Childhood Education from Nova University in Ft. Lauderdale, FL in 1991.

Although her call from the Lord took her halfway around the world, many miles from her childhood family farm in rural Iowa, Ruth took with her the hard work ethic taught to her by her mother, father, and her beloved grandmother Sadie Boysen, and modeled by her beloved brother David Stewart. She was highly intelligent, had wide interests that included politics, football, crafts, and helping others. She could tell stories from real life that tickled the funny bones; and, she could analyze and help solve problems with great insight.

Near the end of her career, Ruth wrote grants and helped others plan

and develop pre-school programs at Missouri area churches. She always wanted to spread the word of the Lord through her Christian education ministry so young people could find the vital and meaningful experiences of having Christ in their life. She touched the lives of thousands.

Ruth was preceded in death by her parents Vera and Earl Stewart, her grandmother Sadie Boysen, her brother David Stewart, and her great nephew Ethan Stewart.

Ruth is survived by her sister-in-law Vera Stewart of Harlan; nieces and nephews Lois and her husband Dave Martin of Harlan; Paul Stewart and his wife Diane of Harlan; James Stewart and John Stewart of Minocqua, WI; Janice and her husband Bryan Greve of Elk Horn, and Kathe Slavin of Grimes; 10 great nieces and nephews; six great-great nieces and nephews; many wonderful care givers and friends in Kansas City; and school friends scattered across the United States.

A 10 a.m. funeral service was officiated by Rev. Jerry Cain on Monday, June 4, 2018 at Pauley Jones Funeral Home in Harlan. Mat Clark, Jim Stewart, Bryan Greve, Jamie Martin, John Stewart, Dave Martin, Alex Slavin, Paul Stewart and Zach Stewart served as casket bearers. Interment was held at Harlan Cemetery in Harlan.

Pauley Jones Funeral Home was in charge of arrangements.

**Pauley Jones**  
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