

BETTY UPPERMAN

Member since 1984

Background:

Birth Date:

August 30, 1931

Place of Birth:

Mercersburg, PA

Did You Know?

Betty was the high school May Day queen her senior year.

Favorite Hymn:

How Great Thou Art



Born during the Great Depression and teenagers during WWII, Jay and Betty grew up during difficult circumstances. Betty explains that there was very little food available during her childhood, and remembers the rationing coupon books they used to purchase coffee, butter, sugar, gas, tires, shoes, nylons, and cigarettes during the war. Yet, despite the lack of luxury, she remembers it as a normal, happy childhood. There were plenty of children living on her street, who would gather to play games in the meadow behind their house. She remembers the excitement of the day when her father brought home a half gallon of ice cream for a special treat. And she remembers her mother helping the needy people who appeared on their doorstep, giving whatever they could spare to the homeless men who rode the freight train into town looking for work.

Unable to afford nursing school, Betty attended a medical secretarial program after high school and began working in a doctor's office in Chambersburg. It was during this time that she met Jay, having been set up on a blind date by his twin sister. It was also around this time that Betty felt a call to begin working with the YMCA. This led to her decision to resign from her job in order to pursue a degree at Wilson. Jay, having just gotten out of the service, was simultaneously pursuing a teaching degree at Shippensburg. Betty recalls this being a difficult period in her life, both because she received criticism for quitting her job and because she found her freshman courses to be very challenging, having been out of school for six years. Although she began as a day-student, by sophomore year she had been hired as a dorm mother on campus. And Betty soon gave up her initial plans to transfer to an out-of-state school, choosing to complete her teaching degree at Wilson in order to stay closer to Jay.

Jay and Betty's relationship grew during their years of schooling, and they were married the summer after graduation. From their first teaching jobs in Madison, NJ through their moves to Hanover, Carlisle, Butler, and finally back to Chambersburg, Betty says she could feel the Lord guiding and directing their path. Wilson College helped them to find their first teaching jobs in the same district. Later, when Jay took a job with the United Telephone Company, Betty was able to continue teaching in the various towns they moved to for Jay's job. And Betty's career ultimately came full-circle when they moved back to Chambersburg and she found a job in a medical office. She worked there until her retirement, once again utilizing the skills she had learned in her original secretarial program.

While all of the twists and turns likely felt haphazard to the Uppermans as they lived them, with hindsight it is easy to see the fingerprints of God.

Through it all, Betty and Jay were faithful to the call of God and His purpose for their lives. During their time in Carlisle, Betty served as their church's Children's Coordinator. And after returning to Chambersburg, knowing they both had the spiritual gift of service, the Uppermans spearheaded a ministry for older adults at First United Methodist Church. Betty also recalls helping with the Thursday Night ministry for many years, sitting down to talk to the neighbors who came for a meal and praying for them in the chapel. One of these relationships has continued with a woman, who still calls her occasionally to check in.

Most recently, Betty was faithful to God's call to care for Jay as his health began to deteriorate. Here, even in the midst of her loss and grief, Betty tells a story of God's blessing. She explains that God led them to move into a cottage at Chambers Pointe (Penn Hall), making it easy for her to visit Jay when he was moved into nursing care. Because Jay was never a flight risk, he was able to remain at the Chambers Pointe Health Care Center, just across from the cottage. It was here that yet another blessing surfaced, even in the midst of a world-wide pandemic. For Chambers Pointe bestowed 'essential caregiver' status on Betty. Each day she was given a rapid COVID test, outfitted in a gown and gloves, and allowed to spend the hours between 4:00-7:00 p.m. with Jay. Betty would visit for awhile in the afternoon, help Jay with his dinner, and then leave him tucked into his room for the night.

Betty told me about how she and Jay would sit on the patio when it was nice weather. She would sing hymns to him, their daily favorite "How Great Thou Art." Jay's lips would move along with the words, until his condition deteriorated too far for him to do so. But even then, Betty sang on day after day, feeling that she could reach him best through music.

With Jay gone, Betty says she often asks the Lord what her purpose is now. Interestingly, having once ministered so faithfully to the oldest among us, Betty now feels called to the younger generations. She has a beautiful testimony to share of how the Lord has led her to trust Him and to believe that all of His ways are good. She says, "I had that relationship with the Lord and never felt that I was away from Him or that He was away from me." And she shows a deep faith in the power of prayer, "I call on the Lord any time I have to do anything or make a decision."

Betty is now dedicated to doing that work of prayer on behalf of younger generations, especially her children and grandchildren. And here at First United Methodist Church, we can all feel bolder knowing we have the power of Betty's prayer lifting up our congregation.