



In Loving Memory

Marna Held

November 1st, 1942 ~ May 19th, 2026



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Celebration of Life
Tribute Video*



Marna Louise (Ott) Held, 83, New Salem, died on May 19th, 2026 at Elm Crest Manor surrounded by her husband and family.

Marna was born on November 1, 1942 in Fairmont, Minnesota to Rev. Harold and Beatrice (Teason) Ott. Although Marna started school in Fairmont, her family moved to the Chicago area while she was still young so her father could serve churches in Naperville and Evanston. Marna graduated from Evanston High School in 1960 and shortly after this the family moved to Bensenville, Illinois.

After high school Marna took night classes at Elmhurst College while working at a few different jobs, including Paraplegic Manufacturing and U.S. Plywood. Marna also worked at a veterinary clinic and as a switchboard operator.

In March of 1969, Marna was visiting family friends Rev. Harold and Erma Jane Willman in New Salem. While she was there, they went out to the farm of Carl and Evelyn Held to get some eggs. This was the first time Marna and Donald met. Donald sent a Christmas card to Marna that year, and they continued to get to know each other through all the letters they sent. Over Memorial Day weekend in 1970 Donald visited Marna in Bensenville and proposed. Marna said yes. They were married at Peace UCC in Bensenville on October 10, 1970, and the couple made their home on the family farm southeast of New Salem.

Even though Marna grew up in the city, she loved living on the farm. Marna loved animals and was very fond of the animals on the farm, especially the pigs. She loved gardening and planted vegetables and flowers every year and then spent time canning and freezing as the summer drew to a close. Marna even learned how to butcher chickens, even though that was not her favorite task. Marna also helped out with fieldwork when she had time and loved taking evening drives with Donald around the farm.

Even though Marna kept busy with raising her children and all the work on the farm, she was still employed outside the home. Marna started selling Avon in 1980 and did that for 10 years. She later worked as a CNA at Elm Crest, followed by her time as the secretary at the Northern Plains Conference Office. Marna's last job before retirement was at the Certified Nurses' Education Network, where she worked until 2007.

Marna was a very creative woman and loved all kinds of arts and crafts. She took classes to learn how to decorate cakes, and the kids all loved her fun and clever birthday cakes. Marna learned how to sew, and made lots of outfits for her kids, especially when they were younger. She also learned how to crochet and cross stitch. Marna also wrote poetry and short stories even though many of them were never shared beyond the family.

Marna did not necessarily have a host of cooking or baking skills when she got married, even though she could make a mean pie crust, but she quickly learned many skills in the kitchen. She became a very good cook and a great baker. Marna was known for many special dishes and desserts, and her kids remember many of these tasty dishes with great fondness. What Marna's kids remember the most was her homemade bread. Marna's mother-in-law, Evelyn Held, taught her to bake bread, and from that time on she baked bread for her family every week. Marna even did presentations at the elementary school on how to bake bread.

Marna was also a talented musician. She was well known for her beautiful voice, but she also played the piano and accordion. Donald and Marna were known for the beautiful duets they sang in choir, and as the kids grew older singing in church became a family affair.

As a "Theologian's Offspring", it is probably not a surprise that Marna was a person of deep faith. She lived out her faith at home and at church. As a member at Peace Church Marna sang in the choir and played in the handbell choir. She taught Sunday school for many years, and she was part of the Women's Guild before joining Koinonia. After joining Salem UCC, Marna continued to attend church every week, she taught Sunday school, and she still sang in the choir. It was also well known in the family that Marna

spent time every morning in prayer. While she was working, Marna prayed on her way to work. After retiring, she still spent time every morning in prayer.

Marna loved being Grandma to her grandchildren, and in later years she loved being Oma to her great grandchildren. She loved watching her grandchildren as they played sports or played music in the band or orchestra. Marna loved spending time with her grandchildren and spoiling them with their favorite foods or fun sleepovers. Always a singer, Marna loved singing to her grandchildren and great grandchildren; they truly brought her great joy.

Marna is survived by her husband of 55 years, Donald Held; her children Margaret (Mark) Johnston, Carolyn (Darcy) Held, Deborah Held, and David (Jen) Held. She is also survived by her grandchildren Joshua (special friend Macayla) Tatum, Jacob (Lexie) Tatum, and Kylie Held; and her great grandchildren Oakleigh, Malakai, Evelyn, Kathryn and Ethan. Marna is also survived by one sister, Edith Diel. Marna was preceded in death by her parents, Rev. Harold and Beatrice Ott; her daughter, Jennifer Held; and her sister, Emilie Ott.



Celebration of Life
Marna Held

Saturday, June 6th, 2026; 1:00pm
United Church of Christ, New Salem, ND

Officiant: Rev. Marcy Dawson

Urn Bearers
Joshua Tatum
Jacob Tatum
Kylie Held

Musicians
Lexi Tatum
Kylie Held
Donna Marie Dettmann

- Prelude Donna Marie Dettmann
- Invocation
- Funeral Processional *"Softly and Tenderly Jesus is Calling"* - #449
- Call to Worship
- Prayer
- Reading of the Obituary
- Reading Jacob Tatum
- Hymn *"In the Garden"* #237
- Scriptures Readings Psalm 23, 1 Corinthians 13: 1-13
- Message Rev. Marcy Dawson
- Prayer/Lord's Prayer
- Special Music *"My God and I"* Lexie Tatum and Kylie Held
- Affirmation of Faith
- Announcement
- Commendation
- Benediction
- *Recessional *"What a Friend We have in Jesus"* #506