



Right now I'm in a place afar
And though we seem apart
I'm closer than I ever was,
I'm there inside your heart.

I'm with you when you greet each day
And while the sun shines bright
I'm there to share the sunsets, too
I'm with you every night.

I'm with you when the dawn birds sing
or to share a laugh or two,
And if ever you feel a sad regret
I'll still be there for you.

And when that day arrives
That we no longer are apart,
I'll smile and hold you close to me,
Forever in my heart.



IN LOVING MEMORY

Donna Johnson

1932 ~ 2026





Donna May Johnson passed away on March 11, 2026, at the age of 93.

The daughter of William “Bill” and Ragna (Olson) Knutson, Donna was born on May 28, 1932. Her family lived on a farmstead south of Almont and later at the Reichel farm. It was a time before the days of Rural Electric Co-Ops and indoor plumbing. Kerosene lamps provided light and a “pot-belly” stove using wood and coal for heat and cooking. She remembered winter mornings were chilly until the house warmed up so getting dressed was done near the stove. “We bathed in a square laundry tub or took a sponge bath using a small basin that mother, using a Norwegian expression, called a “katte vaske” cat’s wash.” The Knutsons moved to Almont in 1946, where Bill started a grocery store.

Donna attended school in Almont. “I carried my lunch in an empty syrup pail. We played fun games at recess, like Prisoner’s Base, Pom Pom Pullaway, and Anti-i-over.” At home, Donna accompanied her dad when he was out hunting and trapping. Indoor entertainment was spent listening to radio programs and reading books. She was the only child until, when she was seven years old, her brother, Donald, was born and later, Gary. Almont offered free street movies on Saturday night, which was a fun time for the kids. They were usually westerns or science fiction.

Donna’s ambition was to be a teacher. Her mother and her aunts were teachers. After graduating from Almont High School in 1949, she attended Dickinson State Teachers College for two years and began a teaching position in Washburn. Donna began her own family and life on a ranch marrying Joel Johnson on December 19, 1954. They moved into Joel’s childhood home, north of Almont, where she assisted Joel with ranch work. The Johnson’s had three children, Grant, Bryan, and Kay. Donna resumed her education attending classes, while the children were attending school in Almont, completing a Bachelor of Science degree in Education at Mary College, Bismarck in 1973. She taught at New Salem Elementary for 26 enjoyable years.

Donna will be remembered for numerous community activities, especially her 50 years as the Sims Scandinavian Lutheran Church organist. Donna and Joel were active in obtaining a “Save America’s Treasures” grant for the renovation of the 1884 Sims church parsonage. This led to statewide recognition of Joel and Donna in 2008, when they were hosts to the First Lady Laura Bush (honorary chairperson of the Treasures grant) and North Dakota First Lady Mikey Hoeven. Laura Bush selected the Sims parsonage as one of the two sites during her visit to North Dakota.

Later years, Donna always enjoyed expanding her knowledge through reading every night, often on historical subjects, documentaries, and survivor stories related to the Holocaust. The Mandan library bookmobile knew Donna well and often recommended books to her.

A wonderful mother, wife, grandma, and great grandma, Donna is survived by her husband of 71 years, Joel Johnson of Almont; children, Grant (Sheri) of Almont, Bryan of Louisville, CO, and Kay (Dave) Moody of Dickinson; grandchildren, Andrew (Katarina), Nate (Ellie), Ali (Addison), Aanen (Gabrielle), and Claire; seven great-grandchildren (from 6 years to 1 week), Asher, Ailo, Kai, Jeremiah, Aanen-Joel “AJ”, Ove, and Obadiah “Obie”; and brother, Gary Knutson of Bismarck.

Donna was preceded in death by her parents; brother, Donald; and sister-in-law, Marti Knutson.

Funeral Service

Friday, March 20, 2026; 11:00 AM
Sims Lutheran Church
Almont, ND

Officiant

Rev. William E. Dodd

Musicians

Caroline Schwartz, Colleen Reinhardt
The Sims Trio – Tracy Larson, Teri Nelson, & Sheri Johnson

Celebrating the Life of Donna Johnson

Prelude

Introduction & Remembrance of Baptism p.206 LBW

Processional Hymn “Children of the Heavenly Father”

Psalm 23

Prayer of the Day

Obituary & Memorial read by Bryan Johnson

Special Music by Sims Trio “Sweet Hour of Prayer”

Scripture Readings Philippians 4:10-14
John 3:1-17

Sermon

Hymn of the Day “Just A Closer Walk With Thee”

The Apostles’ Creed p.209 LBW

Prayers p.209 LBW

The Lord’s Prayer p.211 LBW

Special Music by Colleen Reinhardt “To Everything There is a Season”

The Commendation

Benediction

Recessional Hymn "Love Divine, All Loves Excelling"

Graveside Service

Sims Cemetery
Almont, ND

*The family invites you to join them for refreshments and fellowship
downstairs in the Fellowship Hall following the burial service.*