

In Loving Memory
Karlene Ruth Johnson





*After the service, you are invited to join us for a reception,
served in Fellowship Hall downstairs.*

**Please stand, as you are able.*

Congregational participation is in bold type.

MUSICIANS: *James Haagenon and Lauren St. Martin*

ORGAN and PIANO: *Jurhee Hong*

+ **Karlene Ruth Johnson** +

August 11, 1965 – December 21, 2023

Saturday, February 10, 2024, 2:00 pm

First Covenant Church, Seattle

PRELUDE

WELCOME

INVITING GOD'S PRESENCE

OPENING SONG: *Into the West*

~ Annie Lennox

CANDLE LIGHTING: *Phia Waite, Nathalie Kent, and Teddy Bass*

THE LORD'S PRAYER

Led by Alex Schmidt

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be your name.

Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread.

Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us.

Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

For yours is the kingdom, the power, and the glory, forever and ever.

Amen.

READINGS

When I am Among the Trees, by Mary Oliver

Read by Virginia Hewgley

Remember, by Joy Harjo

Read by Anna Ruttan

***SONG:** *What a Wonderful World*

~ George David Weiss and Bob Thiele

Led by James Haagenon and Lauren St. Martin

Sign Language Interpretation by Charlotte Bass

1 **I see trees of green
Red roses too
I see them bloom
For me and you
And I think to myself
What a wonderful world**

2 **I see skies of blue
And clouds of white
The bright blessed day
The dark sacred night
And I think to myself
What a wonderful world**

3 **The colors of the rainbow
So pretty in the sky
Are also on the faces
Of people going by
I see friends shaking hands
Saying, "How do you do?"
They're really saying
I love you**

4 **I hear babies cry
I watch them grow
They'll learn much more
Than I'll ever know
And I think to myself
What a wonderful world
Yes, I think to myself
What a wonderful world**

KARLENE'S STORY: *Rev. Todd Johnson*

REMEMBRANCES

John Spence, read by *Cris Gunter*

Alex Schmidt

Elena Johnson Waite

Tina Laurel Lee

Becka Lynn Lee

A TIME TO SHARE REMEMBRANCES

***SONG:** *The Healing Song*

~ Written and performed by Audrey Pitchford

Sign Language Interpretation by Charlotte Bass

1 **You are strong.
You are powerful.
You are resilient.
You are resourceful.**

2 **You are discerning.**
You are kind.
You are compassionate.
You are connected.

3 **You are whole.**
You are healthy.
You are well.
You are beloved.

4 **All this and more,**
All this and more,
All this and more good
You are.

5 **You are,**
You are,
Each and every moment
All this and more good
You are.

REPEAT: **We are strong**
REPEAT: **I am strong**

HOMILY: *Rev. Todd Johnson*

***SONG:** *Hallelujah*

~ Leonard Cohen

Led by James Haagenon and Lauren St. Martin

**Now I've heard there was a secret chord
that David played, and it pleased the Lord,
but you don't really care for music, do you?
It goes like this: the fourth, the fifth
the minor fall, the major lift;
the baffled king composing Hallelujah!
Hallelujah Hallelujah
Hallelujah Hallelujah**

**Your faith was strong but you needed proof.
You saw her bathing on the roof;
her beauty and the moonlight overthrew you.
She tied you to a kitchen chair
she broke your throne, and she cut your hair,
and from your lips she drew the Hallelujah!
Hallelujah Hallelujah
Hallelujah Hallelujah**

**I did my best; it wasn't much.
I couldn't feel, so I tried to touch.
I've told the truth, I didn't come to fool you.
And even though it all went wrong,
I'll stand before the Lord of Song
with nothing on my tongue but Hallelujah!**

**Hallelujah, Hallelujah
Hallelujah, Hallelujah
Hallelujah, Hallelujah
Hallelujah, Hallelujah
Hallelujah, Hallelujah
Hallelujah, Hallelujah
Hallelujah, Hallelujah
Hallelujah, Hallelujah
Hallelujah**

**There was a time you let me know
what's really going on below
(ah) but now you never show it to me, do you?
(But) I remember when I moved in you,
And the holy dove (she) was moving too,
[And] every single breath that we drew was Hallelujah!
Hallelujah, Hallelujah, Hallelujah, Hallelujah**

**I did my best; it wasn't much.
I couldn't feel, so I learned to touch.
I've told the truth, I didn't come (all this way) to fool you.
(And) Even though it all went wrong
I'll stand (right here) before the Lord of Song
with nothing on my tongue but Hallelujah!
Hallelujah, Hallelujah, Hallelujah, Hallelujah
Hallelujah, Hallelujah, Hallelujah, Hallelujah**

BEANNACHT / BLESSING by *John O'Donahue*

Read by Eli Waite

COMMITTAL

SENDING SONG: *What the World Needs Now*

~ *Burt Bacharach*

BENEDICTION

POSTLUDE: *You've Got a Friend*

~ *Carole King*

Please join us for a reception, served in Fellowship Hall downstairs.

Karlene Ruth Johnson

Karlene Ruth Johnson, age 58, died peacefully at home on the Winter Solstice, December 21, 2023, surrounded by her family after an arduous and brave fight with cancer.

Karlene was a bright light to all who knew her, quick to make a heart connection and to find the beauty in all whom she encountered.

Born in Tacoma, Washington, to K. Allen Johnson and Shirley Harris. Three years later Elena Johnson was born and she became the eldest of two sisters. They grew up in Wauna exploring the outdoors around Puget Sound, and attending favorite cultural events like the Puyallup Fair, Folklife Festival, and summer outdoor theater. They were smart and funny together, coming up with nicknames for everything and raising kittens whenever their mother would allow. After her mother's remarriage to Stanley Lee in 1986, Becka Lynn Lee and Tina Laurel Lee joined the family and Karlene became the eldest of four combined daughters (4Ds). Her big sister skills were essential in creating a well-connected, blended family that endured through many losses.

Her sense of adventure took her to Occidental College in California, and on to a semester in France, where she was a proud tour guide to her mom and aunts.

In 1991, she married Tim Schmidt and in 1993 gave birth to Alex Schmidt. It was a great source of pride and honor for her to be his mom, and she was an involved and loving parent. She made many lifelong friends around her interests in the healing arts and through these heart connections she filled her life with intentionality.



She worked as a writer, eventually joining Frank Russell Company. She reveled in launching Russell's very first website, as part of the emerging Internet, developing how to describe themselves in a single place, with a single compelling voice, to great success. As a co-worker, she had an easy intelligence and charm that belied how strong and principled a partner she was. She generously shared her successes.

It was at Russell that she met John Spence. The two married in 1999 at Cannon Beach, honeymooning in New Zealand. During their marriage, Karlene and John traveled Internationally (Switzerland, France, the Faroe Islands, Denmark, Norway, England [with Alex]) and across North America. John and Karlene spent countless nights over the years hiking Washington Trails with their dogs Kali and then Eva, sleeping under the stars, and experiencing nature — and most of all, again and again, to Cannon Beach — where Karlene and her family had gone when she was little, and then through Alex-as-a-kid years, and Cannon Beach remained a magical and happy touch-point throughout her life, including during the difficulty of cancer treatment.

Karlene started working on her Masters degree in counseling in 2005 and graduated in 2009. She

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first worked at Sound Mental Health and then joined Youth and Family Services on Mercer island in 2013, working there through her illness and up until her passing. In her 15 years as a mental health counselor, she touched many lives. She helped countless adults and kids and she was a great collaborator with her colleagues, always learning even as she supported others. Karlene was so engaged with each and every person no matter her role, that she was always growing — connecting with people to aid in their healing was Karlene's most powerful ability and her biggest joy.

Karlene did not need to be in the center; what she wanted was to draw a large enough circle to include everyone. She was thrilled to include Anna Ruttan, Alex's fiancée, in this circle. Although they only had a few years to spend together, Karlene enjoyed a very close and caring relationship with her from the first second they met until the time she died. She and Anna had a fast and deep bond. Karlene was so happy for Alex and Anna.

Karlene instigated and fostered biannual 4D Reunions, twenty years of gatherings which

cemented ties across and between generations. She was a great supporter of the arts and brought her sisters, son, nieces and nephews along to the ballet and other events as often as she could. She cultivated many relationships throughout her whole life and on into her extended illness. She held deep conversations and made heart connections, her journey brought much life-giving healing to so many. It is this enrichment of the world that will be her legacy.

Karlene was preceded in death by her parents and survived by her husband of 24 years, John, her son Alex and his fiancée Anna, her sister Elena, the other two of the 4Ds, Becka and Tina, John's sister Jan, nieces and nephews: Eli, Phia, Henry, Nathalie, Charlotte, Teddy, Kate, and Dave, a beloved aunt, many beloved cousins and many close friends and neighbors.

The family would like to thank her healing circle, friends, neighbors, co-workers, and extended family who provided so much support throughout her illness, including her team of caregivers at Swedish Cancer Institute.

+ Memorial contributions may be made to **Washington Trails Association** and **Harmony Hill Healing Retreat** in Union, Washington.



COVER ART by *Becka Lynn Lee*.