



REMEMBERING
Maria Tiessen

September 28, 1937 - February 5, 2025



Maria Janzen was born on September 28, 1937 as the third of five children to her parents Heinrich and Katharina (nee Funk) Janzen in Osterwick, Ukraine. In 1943, family life was disrupted when circumstances of war and Soviet oppression, led them to flee their home, by train to Germany.

In October 1943, at age 6, Maria arrived with her family in Kartscher Oberschlesian, with her parents, older siblings, Heinrich & Tina, and younger sisters Annie and Neta, as well as her maternal grandmother Oma Funk, who needed personal care due to Parkinson's Disease. Here they settled, as refugees, for a while.

In November of 1944, Maria's father Heinrich was conscripted by force into the German Army. As a pacifist he struggled with delivering ammunition for the German tanks. There, in 1945, he was wounded by a grenade, and apart from a short letter delivered from his hospital bed, was never heard from again.

In May of 1948, with the help of Mennonite Central Committee, the remaining Janzen family members left Germany and travelled to South America on a ship named Charlton Monarch. Eventually they settled into the Paraguayan Colony, Volendam. Life in Paraguay was full of hard work. Despite this, they were thankful that they could live in peace and have freedom.

In Volendam Maria completed her formal education in grade 6, and at age 14 started working as a House maid (Mädchen für alles).

In 1957 upon her confession of faith, that Jesus Christ was her personal Savior, she was baptized by Rev. Jakob Pries and was accepted as a member into the Mennonite Church. There she was actively engaged in choir, and youth group. Her social connections soon led her to fall in love with Jakob Tiessen. In 1959, after accepting Jakob's marriage proposal, Maria emigrated to Canada (Winnipeg, Manitoba) with her siblings and mother.

A year later, in 1960, 10 days after Jakob had landed in Canada, Maria and Jakob Tiessen were married in a double wedding together with her older sister Tina, who married Jakob's older brother Heinrich.

Maria and Jakob were blessed with three healthy children, Mary-Anne (1966), Robert (1967) and Ruth (1970). In 1966 they moved to Vancouver where they joined Sherbrooke Mennonite Church. Maria was very active in Frauen Verein (Ladies Aid), Sewing Circles, Church Choirs, Music groups, Sunday School singing and the planning of many programs and drama presentations. She loved volunteering with the MCC thrift store in Vancouver and later the Fraser Valley Gleaners.

In 2004 Jakob and Maria moved to Abbotsford BC, where they joined the Eben-Ezer Mennonite Church. God blessed them with over 52 years of happy married life before her beloved husband died at age 79 of a heart attack in 2013.

As a widow, Maria continued to stay active in the lives of her extended family, both personal and church. She maintained an open house policy welcoming grandchildren with their friends into her home whenever the occasion allowed. Extending Hospitality and serving others is where Maria shone. She was a faithful encourager, known for her letter writing and sharing of inspirational poems. She was a caregiver who loved visiting shut ins.

In 2021 she transitioned to Independent living at Terrace West and joyfully joined the Menno Place Community. On Good Friday, 2024, Maria suffered a debilitating stroke which led to her transition into full extended care at Menno Home. Despite early concerted efforts at rehabilitation she would not regain the use of her left side and eventually succumbed to a bedridden life of dependance on others. Although Maria found this last stage of her life extremely challenging, she rarely complained. As her body continued to decline she expressed her longing to be called Home by her Lord and Savior. And on February 5th, with her daughter Ruth holding her hand, she peacefully, breathed her last, crossing the finish line into Glory!

Among those who remain to mourn her absence are children Mary-Anne (Dan), Rob (Kim), and Ruth (Al); her grandchildren, Benjamin (Marina), Noah, Linnaea (Noah), Levi (Allison), Lukas (Gabrielle), Raelene (Orrin), Joel, Josiah, Eli and Nyah; 3 great grandbabies, Jacob, Eleanor, and Sawyer; sisters Tina, Annie (Henry), Neta; sisters (in-law) Mische, Herta, and Ursula, close cousins Hein and Kåhte, nephews, nieces and other dear relatives and friends.

In lieu of flowers, the family respectfully requests donations be submitted to either Fraser Valley Gleaners, MCC, Camp Squeah, or Menno Home.

The family would like to extend their heartfelt thanks to the devoted Menno Home staff, chaplains, care-aids, and nurses who so compassionately cared for and loved Maria in her last months there as well as those who were able to visit and encourage her in her final months.

