



## Rev. Elizabeth D. Heller

August 22, 1926 - July 27, 2019

Heller, Rev. Elizabeth Downing Age 92, died on July 27, 2019. The Rev. Elizabeth Downing Heller will be remembered as a dedicated pastor, faithful mentor to university students, role model for women in ministry, cherished friend who opened her home to all, and caring sister and aunt. Her legacy lives on in the lives of those she knew and through her collection of sacred art that fills the walls of Westminster Presbyterian Church in Minneapolis. Born in Circleville, Ohio, in 1926, Liz graduated from Ohio State University in 1948. She was a youth delegate to the World Conference of Christian Youth in Norway in 1947, after which she was elected to the leadership team of Westminster Fellowship, the national Presbyterian youth movement. She graduated in 1950 from McCormick Theological Seminary in Chicago with a master of arts degree, having studied under Professor Hulda Niebuhr who inspired Liz's life-long love of the arts. Upon graduation, Liz served as Assistant Director of the Westminster Foundation, which later merged with several other organizations to form the United Ministries in Higher Education at the University of Minnesota. At the Twin Cities campuses, she worked with students to incorporate art, fabric design, music, dance, and drama into worship and ministry programs. As part of the early wave of women ordained to pastoral ministry in the United Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), Liz was the first woman ordained as clergy from Westminster Church. She played a vital role in raising awareness about the ministry needs of women and older adults during her many years as both an Assistant and Associate Pastor at

Westminster. In 2007, she was named Associate Pastor Emerita. Westminster's Heller Commons was named for her, and she co-founded the Westminster Gallery to which most of her sacred art collection has been donated. Over the years Liz also served as interim pastor at First Presbyterian Church in Pine City, College Staff Coordinator at Ghost Ranch Conference Center in New Mexico, moderator of the Presbytery of the Twin Cities, & commissioner to the World Alliance of Reformed Churches. Liz's educational experiences and passion for travel inspired many deep friendships with ministry colleagues and artists across the world and in Minnesota, including a decades-long friendship with Warren MacKenzie. In her later years, her love of art and travel was shared with her close friend and fellow art collector, Jerry Evenrud. Liz is preceded in death by her parents, Ruth and Walter Downing, sister, Joan Downing Dreiling, brother, Thomas Downing, and former husband, Keith Heller. She is survived by her sister, Anne Downing LaFollette, eleven nieces and nephews, and many cherished friends. A memorial service will be held at Westminster Presbyterian Church on Saturday, August 24 at 2 p.m. Burial will be at a later date in Circleville, Ohio. In lieu of flowers, memorials may be given to the Westminster Gallery.

# Previous Events

## Memorial Service

AUG **24**. 2:00 PM - 3:00 PM (CT)

Westminster Presbyterian Church  
1200 Marquette Avenue South  
Minneapolis, MN 55403