



Grace Salome Byler

October 13, 2025

Grace Byler died peacefully in her home on Monday, October 13, 2025, in Lancaster, PA. She was 85.

A fierce champion of peace and reconciliation, Grace affected countless lives. This started with her family, but did not stop there.

At age fifteen, her father died in a tragic accident, and, with her mother already indefinitely bedridden and sick, she became the surrogate mother for her three younger siblings. Grace married young, at nineteen, and shortly after was teaching grades 1-4 in a two-room Mennonite schoolhouse in Denver, PA, near the place of her birth.

Not long after graduating from Lancaster Mennonite High School, where Grace was the first Soprano in the choir and played the piano, she attended Eastern Mennonite College. She quit after one year to work and support her husband in his pursuit of an undergrad and law degrees, and to tend to their two young children in Harrisonburg, VA.

After her eventual separation from her husband, Grace lobbied the Pennsylvania House of Representatives relentlessly for legislation that would finally succeed. It included equitable distribution of property rights in divorces for spouses of men or women who had stayed at home and primarily cared for

their children.

From 1989 to 2004, Grace was executive director at the Lancaster Mediation Center where she mediated domestic, corporate, community, and victim-offender disputes. Grace became a coveted speaker for keynotes on the topic of mediation and reconciliation all over the country.

Grace loved children. She was president of the board at the Lancaster Day Care center for two years. She served as president of the board for the Lancaster Council of Churches, was a founding member of Community Mennonite Church of Lancaster, and was selected as an honoree by Leadership Lancaster.

Immediately after retiring, she took a volunteer position with Corrymeela, an organization that mediates conflict between Catholics and Protestants in Northern Ireland. She lived in Ireland for a year and met the Dalai Lama there.

Grace was a surrogate mother to a Soweto-born South African teen who had been displaced from school for protesting Apartheid there. She supported and housed him for fifteen years during his time in the US and visited him upon his eventual return to Johannesburg.

Grace was a lover of birds. She had a particular affinity for owls—which she appreciated as symbolic wisdom creatures—and had a collection of hundreds of them in her home.

Grace was always welcoming people into her life. She cooked, joked, laughed, sang, encouraged, and listened with a playfulness that those who knew her will not forget.

Grace Byler is survived by, among countless friends and people she influenced, three sons: Marcus Elvin Byler III, William Bryan Byler, Stephen Raleigh Byler; a daughter-in-law Lieke van Huystee-Byler (spouse of Bryan); four grandchildren: Jacqueline S. Lewis, married to Ian Lewis; Katarina A. Clay married to Michael Clay, J. Elizabeth Byler friend to Matt Gavin; William B. Byler husband to Kirsten Byler; and five great-grandchildren: Jocelyn, Charlotte, Theodora, Goldie, Wyatt; and four sisters: Eunice Lehman, Lois Weaver, Mary Louise Hostetter, and Sharon Stoltzfus.

She is preceded in death by her father, Luke Auker Hurst, mother, Sallye Magdeline Rhodes Hurst Gross; and brothers: Luke Rhodes Hurst, and Paul Rhodes Hurst.

A Memorial Service will be held at Community Mennonite Church of Lancaster, 328 W. Orange Street, Lancaster, PA 17603, on Saturday, November 1, 2025, at 12:00 PM.

In lieu of flowers, donations in Grace Byler's name may be sent to the church at the same address.

Previous Events

Memorial Service

NOV 1. 12:00 PM (ET)

Community Mennonite Church Of Lancaster
328 West Orange Street
Lancaster, PA

Tribute Wall

SG

“ Grace was an incredible person. She brought joy and kindness with her wherever she went.
Consistently good in everything she was involved with. A person of great integrity.

Stephen Gibble

Stephen Gibble - December 06, 2025 at 01:01 PM

KK

“ Kathleen Kennel lit a candle in memory of
Grace Salome Byler



Kathleen Kennel - November 01, 2025 at 11:20 AM

KK

Grace was a very special lady to me!! I loved her sweet and loving smile!! She had a soft spirit and spoke softly. She had a sense of humor that I loved!

As a young girl of Gap Hill, we considered Grace and Elvin as our neighbors!! I baby sat her two boys at one time for them.

Grace also had a younger sister who I became close friends as we meet at Lancaster Mennonite High School together. We also went to church together at Maple Grove Mennonite Church, in. Atglen, Pa. Her mother Sally was so precious! I stayed overnight with Sharon during the Ephrata Street Fair!! I remember the next morning getting ready for school, her mother, would be filling the air with beautiful piano music and singing! 🎵! What a wonderful way to start your day!!

After more joyous times together as friends I met more of her family! Graces' brother I met through my father (Earl Kennel) as a hunter at Dutch Master's Hunting Club in Slate Run, Pa. (of course the hunters had a nick name for Paul!!-"Scotty") how he got that name I have no idea!! 😊

I learned too of Mary Louise N Jim. Also through High School and other occasions too.

The whole family was special to me! But, Grace always me feel good about myself! She loved the Lord, and I saw a strong woman of faith! She loved her family and with pride!!

She made an impact in my life, and although I haven't been with her lately, she holds a special place in my heart!! Praying for the family and especially for my dear friend Sharon and Lowell & family!! You do Sharon have a lot of Graces's beautiful soft and sweet features and I love that!! I see Grace when I see Sharon, and that makes me feel so good!! Love you all!! 🙏🕊️✝️ Kathleen Kennel

Kathleen Kennel - November 01, 2025 at 11:45 AM

DT

“ *David Tomarchio purchased the Beautiful in Blue for the family of Grace Salome Byler.*



David Tomarchio - October 31, 2025 at 07:03 PM

YL

“ Your friends at The Aestetix Lounge purchased the Simply Elegant Spathiphyllum for the family of Grace Salome Byler.



Your friends at The Aestetix Lounge - October 29, 2025 at 07:43 PM

LB

“ Grandmommie Grace told me she wanted a sea of color at her celebration of life - no black. She wanted joy and color. If people are comfortable with it, it would be wonderful to see the church filled with bright colors! Greens and blues and oranges and purples, etc. Even if it's just a pop of color with an outfit. Thank you for helping honor Grace's request. Spread the word! 🙏👍🌈

Lisbet Byler - October 26, 2025 at 02:06 PM

DN

“ Aunt Grace was like my 2nd mother. She welcomed me into her home when I really needed somewhere to go and someone to care. My son Justin was born while I lived there, and she was there at his birth! I will miss her immeasurably.
Dawn Hurst-Stultz

Dawn Rose Hurst-Stultz, niece - October 25, 2025 at 04:04 PM