



Mary-Kathleen Blanchard

March 23, 2015

The Rev. Dr. Mary-Kathleen Gernant Blanchard died unexpectedly on March 19, 2015, at Trinity Hospital. Born February 16, 1948 in Kalamazoo, Michigan, Mary-Kathleen was the daughter of Leonard and Frances M. Adams Gernant. She graduated Magna Cum Laude from Western Michigan University in 1970 with a BA in French. Her graduate work in French included study at the University of Paris and Middlebury College in Vermont. She received her Ph.D. from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill in 1979. The same year, she married Paul Blanchard whose two children recall that she embraced them as if they were her own. Paul died in 1992 following emergency bypass surgery.

Mary-Kathleen taught French Language and Literature from 1971 to 2006 at Augusta State University. She greatly loved her years of teaching and connecting with students and faculty. In 2006, she returned to Paris as a faculty member for a group of Georgia students enrolled in a summer program. Even after her retirement, she remained in touch with numerous former students who remember her fondly for her teaching but even more for the difference she made in their lives - instilling in them her love of French literature and film and travel, responding to them when they were hurting or in need. They remember her rollicking sense of humor, as does everyone whose life she touched. And they are grateful for her allowing them to express themselves.

For many years, Mary-Kathleen was a vegetarian, thus validating the role of

animals in her life and expressing the importance of all of God's creatures. She considered her pets part of her family and extended to them the same unconditional love and care that she bestowed on her friends and family. Responding to her call to servant ministry, Mary-Kathleen entered discernment in the Diocese of Georgia and was ordained to the Sacred Order of Deacons at St. Paul's on August 19, 2004. As a deacon at St. Paul's, M-K helped those in need and was present with them during times of illness and grief. She enjoyed serving together with her shih tzu, Hope, a trained pet therapy dog. Starting in 2007, she made numerous trips to Our Little Roses in San Pedro Sula, Honduras, a residential home and model ministry for abandoned and abused girls. Speaking of the ministry there, she said, "I feel as though I step into the kingdom of God when I go there." A Facebook post from a person at OLR demonstrates the affection and gratitude felt for her: "It is sad to open your Facebook and realize that someone special in all ways has passed away. Thank you, M-K, for sharing part of your life with places like OLR in Honduras. We all are going to miss you, but we all are going to keep you in our hearts. Rest in peace my Dear Friend!!!!!!!"

At home she served as a hospice volunteer and an Education for Ministry (EfM) mentor. She also worked with the church's Manna Truck and Outreach, and headed the Pastoral Care Team. A person who benefited from her ministry recalls, "She just sat down and chatted and seemed as if she didn't have anything more important to do than spend time with you." She touched countless lives, and her departure has left many with broken hearts.

M-K was also a member of the Augusta Choral Society and was looking forward to singing Mozart's "Requiem" with that chorus on March 28th. Survivors include sister Karen Gernant and life partner Louis Roemer, brothers Paul L. Gernant and companion Barbara, and David Gernant; stepdaughter Carolyn Lindsey (Steven) and grandchildren Aaron, Shane and Katie Grizzle; stepson Paul L. Blanchard (Julie Jestice) and grandchildren Benjamin Blanchard and David and Daniel Jestice; and sister-in-law Nancy B. Stump (Tom), as well as several nieces, nephews, and cousins.

A private committal service will take place at Westover Cemetery. A memorial service will be held at Saint Paul's Church on Thursday, March 26 at 4 p.m. A reception will follow in the River Room. The Rt. Rev. Scott Anson Benhase, bishop of the Episcopal Diocese of Georgia, and The Rev. George D. Muir, rector of St. Paul's Church will officiate. Scripture readers will be David Gernant and Carolyn Dolen.

In lieu of flowers memorials may be sent to St. Paul's Church Outreach Fund or St. Paul's Music Fund, 605 Reynolds St. Augusta, GA 30901; or to Western Michigan University Foundation, 1903 W. Kalamazoo Ave., Kalamazoo, MI 49008-5403 for memorials to either the Leonard & Frances A. Gernant Gerontology Scholarship Fund or the Anna & Harry Gernant Family Performing Arts Fund.

Chance & Hydrick Funeral Directors, 2502 Richmond Hill Rd, Augusta, GA 30906