

IN LOVING MEMORY OF

Frances Lois Dwelle

DECEMBER 03, 1947 - JULY 24, 2024



BELOVED WIFE, MOTHER, GRANDMOTHER, SISTER, FRIEND

Order of Service

PRELUDE

JoLynn Keller

WELCOME AND OPENING PRAYER

Pastor Josh Skjoldal

SCRIPTURE READINGS

Kaci Bower, daughter

Psalm 130: Gia Bower, granddaughter

Psalm 84: Flora Bower, granddaughter

Psalm 27: Harriet Bold, granddaughter

TRIBUTE

Norene Antin, sister

SONG

"Jesus Led Me All the Way," sung by Cambria Bold, daughter

TRIBUTE

Bonnie Estabrook, friend

SONG

"We Shall Behold Him," sung by Tom & Carol Land

PSALM 42 & TRIBUTE

Jessica Dwelle, daughter

TRIBUTE & MINISTRY OF THE WORD

Greg and Sandie Mundis, friends and missionary colleagues

SONG

"Give me Jesus"

CLOSING

Pastor Josh Skjoldal

From Fran's Daughters

My mother was remarkable in an infinite number of ways. She was gracious, elegant, and unfailingly supportive. She was the most loving mother and grandmother, with a warm, encouraging presence that felt safe and tender. She remembered every birthday. She loved playing the piano, especially hymns, and was a wonderful improviser. She appreciated beauty: a fancy dinner table setting; a beautiful scarf with a sparkling necklace, which was her signature look; a lovely scenic view.

But the most beautiful thing of all, in her estimation, was the character of God, which anchored her faith and focused her ministry her whole life long. As she wrote to me once, "I like telling stories that highlight any aspect of God's faithful character." She delighted in her family, always, and loved her Savior, always. She was, to the very end, joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer (Rom 12:12). I will love and miss her always.

- *Cambria, her youngest daughter*



- *Jessica, her middle daughter, will read her tribute during the service.*



I've heard it said that love is to choose and will the good of the other. That is how my mom loved me. Whatever challenge I faced or crazy idea I wanted to try, she would be there to help or cheer me on, always believing in me, boosting my confidence, and bolstering my resolve. Whenever I got off course in life, whether in my thoughts or actions, she would gently point to the better path, the higher calling, and God's greater good. If I was ever depressed, stressed or overwhelmed, she would lift me up with her words, strengthen my spirit with Scripture, and carry my burdens in prayer.

Her love was 1 Corinthians 13 love: love that is patient, kind and never failing. It was my constant, my anchor, my home. I felt the power of it in person and across the miles. She loved me faithfully and fully from my beginning, and my love for her will go on without end.

- *Kaci, her eldest daughter*

In Memoriam

After sharing life together for 56 years, Fran Dwelle left her husband on July 24, 2024. Her departure had been delayed many times over three decades for his sake and that of their daughters. But at last, the call to come Home could be put on hold no longer, and she bid those she loved farewell...for a while. The grief of separation now grips those she left behind, but they understand, for her arrival at the Place prepared for her was her cherished hope and her determined destination from her childhood on.

Fran lived two lives. The first ended in Vienna, Austria, with a massive heart attack in 1992. Her second life began in that same city that same year with a heart transplant. The transition between those two lifetimes was an ordeal that tested Fran to the depths of her faith, a defining period which is related in the book she co-authored with her brother Joe, *Failing Heart, Unfailing Hope*. Her perspective on life sharpened profoundly through it all, and can be best expressed in the words of St Paul: *Now if I am to go on living...this will mean productive work for me, yet I don't know which I prefer: I feel torn...because I have a desire to depart and be with Christ, which is better by far, but it is more vital for your sake that I remain...and since I am sure of this, I know that I will remain and continue with all of you for the sake of your progress and joy in the faith.* She did remain, for 32 years, and they were "productive" years indeed. And she nurtured "progress and joy in the faith" in her husband, children, grandchildren, friends, and the wide Christian community that she loved and served.

Fran was the second of six children born to Rev. Joseph and Norma Ferrante. She and her siblings grew up in Fostoria, Ohio, where her father was the pastor of a small congregation. The routines of the household revolved around church life, and, watching the devotion and dedication of their parents, the Ferrante children were imbued with a deep sense that God had a part for each of them to play in His plan for this world. To pursue that "calling," Fran enrolled in Central Bible College in Springfield, MO.

Fran's freshman year at CBC coincided with the senior year of Arland Dwelle, who was growing increasingly concerned that he had not yet found a prospect for a wife, even after four years on the campus. Early in the school term, he—along with numerous other unattached male students—took definite notice of this arresting Italian in their midst. In time (and in such matters, he moved painfully slowly), Arland made an overture to become better acquainted, and much to his delight, Fran indicated an interest in the idea. By the time of his graduation, Arland was increasingly thinking he had "found the one."

In the two years that followed, countless letters were exchanged between Fran and Arland, interspersed with much anticipated visits. But it was serving together on a ministry team that cemented their conviction that they were meant for each other. Arland had been involved with a cohort of young ministers in church planting efforts ever since he graduated from CBC. For two months one summer, Fran joined that team in Naperville, IL, an effort that gave rise to Calvary Church, which in time has grown to become one of the largest and most influential congregations in the Chicago area. By the end of that summer, Arland was saving up for an engagement ring.

Fran and Arland were married on June 1, 1968, in Napa, CA, where Fran's father had accepted a call to pastor the church in which they were wed. After a honeymoon in Banff, Alberta, Canada, the

newlyweds settled in the north suburbs of Chicago and Arland began graduate studies at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School. Fran was the breadwinner all the while her husband pursued his degree. Though she was not yet 21, Fran demonstrated exceptional office and leadership skills and was hired as an executive secretary at a prestigious firm, where she earned top commendations throughout her employment.

Upon the completion of Arland's degree at TEDS, the Dwelles accepted a call to plant a new church in New Holstein, WI. Grace Chapel was a labor of love, and the warm bonds that formed within that congregation and with the larger community have endured through the decades that followed. During those Wisconsin years, three daughters—Kaci, Jessica, and Cambria—were given by Heaven to be part of the Dwelle home.

It was there in Calumet County that Fran's abiding concern for ministry to women began to take the shape she would use as a paradigm from then on. Didn't Jesus pray for unity among those who follow Him? So wouldn't He bless and use for His purposes Christian women who would link hands and hearts, reaching over the low fences that too often divide believers, as they find common cause in bearing witness to Him who is the Way, the Truth, and the Life? Fran saw it all as a challenge to bring together women from the area churches who could catch that vision. It would be trans-denominational. They would meet in neutral public venues where those from varying religious traditions could feel comfortable—and even more importantly, where women who had no church ties could feel comfortable. They would invite friends. They would gather around tables. There would be food. Each time, a woman would tell her personal story before the group, and without religious jargon, explain simply what her faith in Christ means for her. Fran named it the Joy Fellowship. And it caught on. And in those gatherings women found encouragement, support, help...and Life!

Even in her adolescence Fran harbored in her heart the conviction that God would at some point in her life direct her into missions service. It was a conviction also carried by Arland. In time, this sense of vocation for them both came to focus on Eastern Europe, a region of the world then firmly in the grip of communist regimes. After a period of discernment and preparation, counseled by missions leaders and supported by a host of churches, the Dwelle family relocated to Zagreb, Yugoslavia, to begin exploring how the Lord might use them in that place where they believed He had sent them. Cambria was six weeks old; Kaci, 10, and Jessica, starting first grade, both had to face the trauma of being thrust into a school where they didn't know the language. It was hard, especially for Fran who, in addition to her own struggles with isolation and culture shock, had to somehow help her daughters cope with the stresses. Prior to the family leaving the States, someone had passed along a word of wisdom to Fran that became for her a life-boat: God's will will never take you where His grace cannot keep you!" She would repeat that over and over, oftentimes in tears.

After the Dwelles had been three years in Yugoslavia, the communist bureaucracy that had always kept Arland on a short leash refused to extend his visa, and he had to move the family to Vienna, Austria. From there, Arland could travel into Yugoslavia on short-term tourist visas, but no longer could he reside there. In Austria, though, other ministry opportunities would open up. Vienna is a cosmopolitan city, one of the three main centers of the United Nations, and a city where there is a lot of English spoken, though German is the national language. This was especially appealing to Fran after the strains of trying to function in the Serbo-Croatian language in Yugoslavia.

Fran found soul-reviving Christian fellowship in Vienna. Dear friends and new friends, many who were also in missions service within Austria or within the iron-curtain countries that bordered Austria, were stationed there. Worshiping together, praying together, sharing encouragement and life together—there was a grateful awareness that this was God's way of strengthening each for the tasks He had assigned.

These were the years when the Communist Bloc nations of Eastern Europe were gasping their last. And Vienna was teeming with expatriates: UN diplomats, international business people, refugees, students, etc. Many of them preferred to speak English rather than German. And there were native German-speakers who wanted to learn or improve their English. Several vibrant English-language congregations were active in the city and wonderfully serving...but the sheer number of English-speakers was beyond what they could address. Seeing this need, a team of missions colleagues, including Fran and Arland, launched an English worship gathering that eventually grew into Vienna Christian Center, which today draws together hundreds of people every week who come from many countries and cultures for worship, witness, and celebration of Christian life. Fran recruited, trained, and led the praise and worship team in the inaugural years of VCC.

But deep within Fran there was a nagging thought that more could be done to reach out to the women of the city. So many had been uprooted from their homelands, for one reason or another, and now found themselves in a strange and different context than the one they had known. Fran remembered all too well the feelings she had to work through in those years in Yugoslavia. These women were loved by God and needed what Christ alone could bring into their lives: of that Fran was passionately convinced. Could something like the Joy Fellowship, that proved to be so fruitful and well-received back in Wisconsin—could that work in Vienna, Austria? It was worth a try. She set out to assemble a leadership team, to be drawn from the different English-speaking churches and missions. They prayed, and planned, and prayed, and planned, and when the groundwork was laid, the endeavor was launched under the name JOY International, to reflect the cosmopolitan character of the women who were the focus of it all. And did it catch on? Did it ever!! The JOY breakfasts and luncheons were hosted in some of Vienna's finest hotel ballrooms and restaurants. Women filled the venues. These were dress-up occasions, and some women came decked out in national costumes. The women represented many different cultures and countries, including even Muslim nations and other places where Christian witness was rarely presented or understood. But at the JOY gatherings, the simple Gospel was explained, and women came to faith in Jesus Christ!

Fran's remarkable recovery following her heart transplant permitted the Dwelle family to continue their missions service, and those succeeding years proved to be a fruitful time for their calling. But the ongoing expense and logistics of Fran's medical care eventually brought the realization that they would have to consider a major change for their life and ministry. It was at that point that an invitation came to Arland to become the pastor at Evangel church in Bismarck, ND, and that brought them to the city that became their happy home for the last chapters of Fran's life.

The role of a pastor's wife was one in which Fran felt at home, one that she felt was in line with the purpose God had assigned to her. Evangel and its congregation were now her mission, and serving them—and serving with them—she regarded as fulfilling the charge in Scripture: *Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart...It is the Lord Christ you are serving.*

And yet, in early 2004, two questions began persistently to insert themselves into her thinking. She could not help but be aware that there were numerous women throughout the community for whom a connection with a church—any church—was either lacking or very tentative. Was there some way to interface with them and acquaint them with the abundant life Christ offers, and then encourage them to connect somewhere they could find Christian nurture? And secondly, could this be attempted in a cooperative effort involving committed Christian women from churches and fellowships throughout the city? An answer to these questions seemed to suggest giving a trial at replicating the JOY International model that the Lord so richly blessed in Vienna. Finding leaders who could both catch the vision and gladly work with others who also did—that would be the key. For months, Fran talked it up in small groups, over coffee, in visits with women's ministry leaders—anywhere and with anyone who expressed some interest. And when the leadership team was finally

assembled, the first JOY Breakfast was hosted in a Bismarck hotel with several hundred women attending. For the next 15 years, those Breakfasts became not-to-miss events, filling the Ramkota Ballroom with the buzz of women enjoying the company of other women: table-talk, laughter, sharing, praying...and always hearing the whispers of the God who loves them. Interspersed with the Breakfasts, Java Joy meetings at a local coffee shop every month brought together dozens of women for mutual encouragement and spiritual growth.

Fran's physical condition had proved remarkably resilient with her transplanted heart. But the last decade of her life brought its challenges. A new medication change, intended to prolong the vitality of the heart, destroyed her lymph system and brought devastating consequences. The resulting, unrelenting cascade of complications eventually eroded her strength, mobility and independence. But even as her ability to intermingle with other women began to wane, she saw additional opportunities to reach out to help others. She launched Pray3.org online, an initiative that underscores the blessing to be found when three women commit to pray together once a week, a discipline in which Fran herself participated with two prayer partners for over twenty years running. One of her last endeavors was to organize the JOY Cancer Support Group for women whose lives are affected by that disease. Though she herself was rarely able to attend the group's meetings, her vision for this ministry was picked up by other women who have faithfully led these gatherings where the bearing of heavy burdens is shared together with others who understand and care.

Fran devotedly read the Bible. She saw it as God's love letter to her. Dozens of her notebooks and journals record the reflections inspired by her readings of the Scriptures. And she loved to pray, to talk to her Lord heart-to-heart. Her husband Arland marvels about the woman who walked by his side for so long: "She simply trusted God. In contrast to me, to whom faith comes hard—often only after wrestling through a tangle of questions and doubts—my Fran had child-like faith. She saw God as 'Father,' and with that pure revelation of His nature and character, she just rested in His love and care."

Her children arise and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praises her. (Prov. 31:28) So speaks the Scripture of the "woman of noble character." Fran's daughters recall with deepest gratitude the legacy received from their mother. "I've heard it said that love is to choose and will the good of the other. That is how my mom loved me," says Kaci, the eldest daughter. "Her love was my constant, my anchor, my home. I felt the power of it in person and across the miles. My mom loved me faithfully and fully from my beginning, and my love for her will go on without end." Jessica expresses it like this: "When I picture Mom, I see the light in her face. It was as much a part of her appearance as her dark hair or her beautiful smile. It was her faith, her love, her joy; and it was inextinguishable." Cambria, the youngest, treasures the memory of her mother this way: "Mom was so gracious, elegant, and unfailingly supportive. Her tender love, felt in every hug, always made me feel safe and cared for. What an incredible gift she was to me. My mom was, to the very end, 'joyful in hope, patient in suffering, faithful in prayer.'" (cf. Rom 12:12) And her husband Arland? He simply says, "She was what I wanted. She was what I needed."

Fran is survived by her husband Arland; her daughters and sons-in-law Kaci & Phillip Bower of Cincinnati, OH; Jessica Dwelle & Miroslav Volf of Woodbridge, CT; Cambria & Tyler Bold of St. Paul, MN; the five twinkling lights in her twilight, granddaughters Gianna Bower, Flora Bower, Harriet Bold, Ruby Bold, and Mira Volf; sister and brother-in-law Norene & Ernie Antin; brothers and sisters-in-law Joe & Mary Jo Ferrante, Mark & Jane Ferrante, Wayne & Deborah Ferrante, and Susan Ferrante; her brother-in-law & sister-in-law Terry & Diana Dwelle.

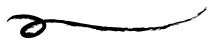
She was preceded in death by her parents, Rev. Joseph & Norma Ferrante, and brother Mario Ferrante.

*Honor her for all that her hands
have done, and let her works bring
her praise at the city gate.*

Proverbs 31:31

Thank You

Fran's family is grateful to you all for your
caring and support during this time of loss.



A light repast follows the service.
The burial will be held at Fairview Cemetery.