



Mrs. Betty Baggett

October 15, 1934 - February 22, 2025

Betty Stephens Baggett has passed away at the age of 90 at her beloved family home in Madras, just north of Newnan, Georgia.

She leaves behind a legacy of love, service and compassion through her 35 years as an educator and through the works of her cherished Newnan First United Methodist Church.

Betty was born on October 15, 1934 in Richland, Georgia, the daughter of Willie Lee and Annie Lizzie Stephens. She was the youngest of six children. In the wake of the Great Depression, her parents had moved from Atlanta back to the Stephens family homeplace in south Georgia. Her birth was assisted by Mrs. Lillian Carter, a nearby neighbor and the mother of President Jimmy Carter.

Seeking a new start, her father relocated the family to Carrollton, Georgia where he began a lifelong career as a water works plant manager, with Mrs. Stephens running the household. The home served as the new foundation and care place for many of the extended family and Betty grew up surrounded by several brothers, sisters, grandparents, aunts and uncles. Carrollton was her true place of upbringing, where she learned the arts of homemaking, cooking, sewing and caretaking from her mother.

Growing up, her extreme caring nature was developed further as she witnessed her mother suffer the devastating injuries and illnesses inflicted on her older brothers in World War II.

After graduating from Carrollton High School, she attended Georgia State College for Women, forging lifelong friendships and continuing the passion for education instilled by her parents. As was the case for so many young women of the time, romance intervened. While visiting home, she met her lifelong love and partner Jay Baggett, from nearby Ranburne, Alabama. A recent graduate of Jacksonville State College and Auburn University, Jay was embarking on his career as an educator and guidance counselor. They shared much in common, including a great love of dancing.

Jay and Betty were married on June 11, 1955 and moved to Anniston, AL, where they started their family with the birth of Jan Michelle in 1956. Shortly thereafter, Jay was recruited to teach in College Park, GA, which would be home for years as they raised their family. There, she gave birth to her son Stephen Jay in 1957, and Lisa Ann in 1962.

Betty was the consummate loving mother, homemaker and community servant. Her life revolved around nurturing her children, and supporting Jay's teaching at Lakeshore High School. She was recognized as a gifted cook, baker and seamstress. She made all of the clothes for Jan and Lisa, and for many others. She especially enjoyed crafting beautiful uniforms for the Lakeshore Lancer cheerleaders.

Cherished family activities included camping, traveling, Lakeshore Lancer and Auburn Tiger football. Cross country trips pulling the family pop-up camper and travel trailer created lifelong memories that influence her children and grandchildren to this day.

Throughout her life, she stood upon the foundation of her Christian Faith and

served wholeheartedly with the United Methodist Church.

Having raised her children, and being inspired to seek higher education, she completed her Undergraduate, Masters and Advanced Degrees in Education at West Georgia College and Georgia State College. She embarked on a 35 year career as a teacher in the Fulton County School System, beginning in Special Education and then as an elementary school teacher at M.P. Word School in Fairburn, GA.

The many amazing attributes shown as a mother and homemaker translated directly into her classroom. With her love and compassion at the core, she was a tremendous encourager and motivator, highly creative, and intellectually sharp. She paid meticulous attention to detail and possessed superb organizational skills. She was fiercely dedicated, loyal and accountable to her students, colleagues, friends and family. Importantly, she held all of them to a very high standard as well, insisting that they push to the highest level and never settle for any form of mediocrity.

In 1984, Betty and Jay purchased a pastoral spread of property in Madras, Georgia and built a new homeplace where they would spend the rest of their lives. The Newnan First United Methodist Church quickly became their spiritual and community center. The home became the central gathering place where she served as a magnificently strong and loving family Matriarch.

After retirement, all of her focus was on her husband Jay, her children, grandchildren, extended family and church family. The degree to which she gave of herself was extraordinary. Her prowess as a baker became legendary, making hundreds of birthday cakes, cookies and apple pies for everyone she knew. No one was to ever be forgotten or left out. A fresh delivery of her famous crockpot candy could create a mad dash in the back hallways of the

church. Cards, phone calls, letters, and gifts showered every single person in her life. Along with sharing in the joyous times, she was especially sensitive to those who were hurting or suffering with loss. She literally felt the aching spirit of others and used her unique talents to minister and love.

Church passions included her Choir, “The Celebration Singers..aka The Singing, Swinging Seniors”...The Henry Kitchens Sunday School Class...The Feast Group...Meal Preparation...countless Fun and Frolic Adventures, and the cherished “O Holy Night” Christmas Concert. But most importantly, it was the people within, her Pastors and friends, her pew mates and the weekly blessing of worship in the beautiful sanctuary.

Betty’s faith and religious practice was a 24/7 experience. Her routine was highly structured, with focused devotional readings beginning and ending each day.

Watching the sunset over the pasture and gazing at the stars from her “sleepy chair” was a place of special reflection and communion. Feeding the beautiful birds was a great joy. Cardinals were especially symbolic, along with every other variety, including her infamous woodpecker “Scooper Dooper”. Her small garden plot of vegetables and flowers were also given special care.

Everything had to be “just right”...and so it was!

Fly with Christ in the Heavenly Realms dearest, loving Mom...as we reach higher to represent you well on this part of our Eternal Journey.

Betty Stephens Baggett was preceded in death by
Husband: W. Jay Baggett

Father and Mother: Willie Lee Stephens and Annie Lizzie Stephens

Brothers and Sisters:

George Wilford Stephens, Nell

William Wayne Stephens, Johnnie

Albia Nannette Stephens Thome

Loula Margaret Stephens McLendon, Lovvorn

Hugh Lee Stephens, Mary

She is survived by Children:

Jan Baggett Barnes, Rob,

Stephen Jay Baggett, Rhonda

Lisa Baggett Wolpert, Marc

Grandchildren:

Stephen Kyle Baggett, Jamie Alexander Baggett

Jake Logan Challingsworth

Zackary Shay Whitetree, Chase Ryan Whitetree

Scott David Wolpert, Ryan Matthew Wolpert, Ross Stephen Wolpert

Great Grandchild:

Sadie Nicole Wolpert

Services Wednesday, February 26, 2025 (All Times Eastern)

11:00am Newnan First United Methodist Church, with reception following.

3:00pm Eastern, Homecoming Service and Interment

Ranburne, Alabama First United Methodist Church

In lieu of flowers, please consider a loving donation to Newnan First United Methodist Church or Ranburne First United Methodist Church.

Previous Events

Memorial Service

FEB **26**. 11:00 AM (ET)

Newnan First United Methodist Church
33 Greenville St
Newnan, GA 30263

Service

FEB **26**. 2:00 PM (CT)

Ranburne First United Methodist Church
21041 Main Street
Ranburne, AL 36273

The service in Ranburne will be at 2:00 p.m. CST (3:00 p.m. EST)