



Nancy Gebben

October 15, 1945 - May 3, 2026

Nancy Gebben, 80, of Zeeland, passed away peacefully surrounded by her family on Sunday, May 3, 2026.

Nancy met the world with empathy and a drive to care for others. Her husband, children, grandchildren, friends, family, and her many young students were gifted the deep care she extended.

Nancy was born on October 15, 1945, in Holland, MI to Donald and Ada Ver Hulst. She grew up in the city of Holland and attended Van Raalte Elementary School, E.E. Fell Junior High, and graduated from Holland High School in 1963. She still has cherished friendships from her HPS days. She then attended Hope College for one year, (and enjoyed a Vienna May Term) before transferring to Grand Valley State College where she was a part of the first graduating class in 1967. Nancy and Dennis met on a ski trip in college and were married within a year, as they knew they had found their person. They supported each other through graduate school, field work in New Mexico (living in a pop-up tent tailor in the desert with a toddler!), career changes, raising and launching their children, and sprinkled in their somewhere, dance lessons. It was always a joy to see Dennis and Nancy dance together. Dennis and Nancy were active members of Third Reformed Church in Holland. Nancy supported Third's Children's Ministry her whole life. She was baptized and raised at Third Reformed and cherished the community there. In retirement,

Nancy and Dennis thrived on their farm where they nurtured their love of horses. Riding, breeding, grooming, and cleaning the barn together brought them great joy. Nancy loved all animals, and her horses, barn cats, and beloved dogs over the years benefited from her unwavering devotion. Nancy took riding lessons into her late seventies and made many “barn friends” who grew to be much more.

Nancy loved her grandchildren. She was always there with a hug, a song, a craft, or a beloved book. Her presence was felt and cherished by her little crew of six. Nancy loved her children. She walked alongside them through many seasons, always listening, and always advocating. She was an awesome mom.

Nancy took her calling to teach and to provide a strong and loving foundation for her students seriously. While her children were young, she taught at Cherry Lane Preschool. She then went on to get her Masters in Early Childhood Education from Western Michigan University and returned back to her alma mater, HPS. Nancy was a brilliant early childhood educator who wanted the best for all students and their families. She also met some life-long friends. Nancy taught for HPS for 17 years, from 1987 to her retirement in 2004. In her retirement interview she wrote that “although I have participated in many conferences over the years, I believe I always learned the most from the children and staff at HPS.” When asked what her special plans were for retirement she wrote, “Learn to play like a 2-year-old, learn to ride like the wind (or at least a gentle breeze), learn to cook as well as her husband (once a week)...and enjoy Sunday evenings with a book other than her lesson plan book.”

She is greatly missed by her family, who are thankful for all she brought to us and to the world. She loved well, and she was deeply loved.

Dennis preceded her in death on March 16, 2025. Nancy is survived by her children, and grandchildren, Dan Gebben, Katie and Dayne Jarvis (Josie Kotowski and her fiancé Erek Pilarski, Stella Kotowski, Addy and Julio Torres, and Gabe Jarvis), Kristin and Duncan Jackson (Lily Jackson), Kara and John Green (Penny Green, Lucy Green, and Owen Green), sisters-in-law and brothers-in-law: Helen Ver Hulst, Barb Schmidt, Ruth and Ron Grassmid, John and Jan Gebben, Steve and Bev Gebben and many extended family members.

A memorial service will be held at 10:00 am, Friday, May 8, 2026, at Third Reformed Church, 111 W. 13th Street, Holland MI 49423. A time of visitation and refreshments will follow the service in the church fellowship area. In lieu of flowers, please make contributions to the Holland Public Schools Education Foundation. <https://www.hollandeducationalfoundation.org/giving>

Arrangements are by the Yntema Funeral Home, 251 South State Street, Zeeland MI 49464.

www.yntemafh.com

Previous Events

Memorial Service

MAY 8. 10:00 AM - 11:00 AM (ET)

Third Reformed Church
111 West 13th St.
Holland, MI 49423

Tribute Wall



“ *Langeland-Sterenberg Yntema Funeral Homes created a Tribute Video in memory of Nancy Gebben*



Langeland-Sterenberg Yntema Funeral Homes - May 07 at 08:33 PM

DN

“ *She was a wonderful teacher at van raalte elementary school. She would help me with anything I was one of her students and she was helpful and now she's with the lord in heaven and I'm daniel na by the way i use to live on 19th street close to the school*

Daniel Na - June 04 at 04:17 PM

JR

“ *I am so sorry to hear about the loss of your mom, and also your dad in such a short amount of time. The obituary of your mom was beautifully written...what a special person she was! Keeping you all in my thoughts.*

Jolanta Rynsburger - May 14 at 12:55 PM

KT

“ I’m so sad to hear this news!! I would’ve been at the celebration of her life today if I would’ve known. Nancy had my daughter in preschool at Cherry Lane and was always kind and compassionate with her, especially after her burns when she was 4. Then I was blessed to teach with her at Van Raalte and her daughters swam for my husband Mike at Zeeland. She will be missed by all whose life she touched. May all her family and friends find comfort and peace knowing her memory lives on through all the people and children touched by her loving care!!

Kathy and Mike Torrey - May 08 at 09:43 PM

CK

“ So sorry to hear about the loss of your Mom. I always enjoyed talking to her and your Grandma at Bosch’s. Hugs and Prayers to you all.

Cheryl Wasson Klingenberg - May 06 at 07:59 AM

MI

“ Nancy and I taught at Cherry Lane Preschool back in the early 80’s. We so enjoyed our teaching days there before we all went full time. Glad to have shared time with her and her creativity.

MaryJo Iverson - May 05 at 06:32 PM

BF

“ Working across the hall from Nancy was such a joy. Her love and enthusiasm for teaching the DK (Developmental Kindergarten) littles was fun to watch. I loved collaborating with her, not only because she was so dedicated to the children, but more so because she was such a joy to be around. Her smile, warmth and kindness were second to none. Her willingness to share her educational knowledge and experience was done in a kind and respectful manner. But yet, I am drawn to reflect that my memories of working with her are based on our friendship and her kind, loving heart. Nancy was my colleague, but that pales in comparison as to what her friendship means to me. After transferring from Lincoln Elementary to Van Raalte, we still kept in touch, though not on a daily basis. And as often is the case, time away creates a void and years pass. But those years of not seeing Nancy have not dulled the respect, love and care that I have for her. I am honored and blessed to have had the privilege of knowing her and being a part of her life. Her legacy lives on through the children and grandchildren that she and Dennis have raised. Their children and grandchildren are a true testament of how wonderful they were as parents and grandparents and as people. It will be easy to see Nancy and Dennis again when I see Dan, Katie and Kara; because they too have the same kindness, and warmth that their parents had. And just as importantly they have the same kind of hugs that Nancy gave. Full of sincerity and genuineness. We love you all!

Bob Medellin and Family - May 05 at 09:09 AM

JZ

“ I have fond memories of Nancy when we were in Junior Welfare League more than 50 years ago. Then too, she shared her love for children and her servant heart! Judie Zylman

Judie Zylman - May 05 at 08:54 AM

KL

“ *Katherine, Sandy and Betty Lou purchased the Sweetest Sunrise Bouquet for the family of Nancy Gebben.*



Katherine, Sandy and Betty Lou - May 04 at 09:46 PM