



## Robert Oliphant III

December 18, 1943 - February 23, 2025

In loving memory of Robert Oliphant III. December 18, 1943 - February 23, 2025.

Robert Oliphant III was born, as he, himself, would say with a smile, “a week before Jesus,” that being December 18, 1943, in Kearny, NJ. He was the first born of two sons to Robert Jr. and Marion Bayne Oliphant.

As a young boy, Bob would set up a movie projector in his backyard, with a sheet for a screen, and charge the neighborhood kids admission. His love for classic films continued throughout his 81 years. There was hardly one programmed by Turner Classic Movies on television that he had not seen numerous times. Especially, his musical ear relished the soundtracks, such as those by Erich Wolfgang Korngold.

He, his brother, Ronald, and his parents often took to the water. His father, being a Sea Scout leader, had a small yacht moored at the Nyack Boat Club on the Hudson River, from where the family would sail. Later in life, when his parents moved to Toms River, Bob and Ron continued their water escapades in a boat with an outboard motor. He would laugh as he told the story of when they gave his Aunt Muriel a ride, and purposely steered head on into a wave to give her a splash!

Bob's father, being musical himself, no doubt inspired Bob's passion for music. As a high school student, Bob took an interest in the pipe organ, and played the resident Skinner at Kearny High School. Bob went on to major in music education at Montclair State College (1969, K-12 NJ certification). After his service in the US Army as a chaplain's assistant, Bob graduated from Union Theological Seminary, with his Masters in Sacred Music in 1973.

Bob served as the Organist and Director of Music at Union Congregational Church, Montclair, NJ, for 23 years (1971-1994). His organ music, together with the choral and handbell choirs he directed, enriched Sunday worship services. Bob would also invite guest vocal and instrumental soloists and ensembles to enhance the music ministry, including the Canby Singers (of which he had been one), the Montclair Oratorio Society, and the New Jersey Chamber Music Society. In addition, he collaborated with church and community members to present at least 10 major choral works, including "Noye's Fludde" by Benjamin Britten. He joined the Union Church Choir with the choirs of Montclair State College and St. James Church, Montclair, to present Mozart's "Requiem" to a full house.

Ecumenically, Bob and his colleague, Ken Rapp, organist of First United Methodist, Montclair, combined choirs for special programs and worship services.

From 1994-2005, Bob served as Organist and Music Director at the Pompton Reformed Church (RCA), Pompton Lakes, NJ. Along with his conduct of the adult choir, he coordinated a staff of music associates who led children's and handbell ministries, inspiring the worship of congregation and community.

Bob was one of a team of technicians for Konzelman Pipe Organs of Hoboken, NJ. Later, through his own small business, Restoration Associates, Bob also designed, built, repaired, tuned, restored, improved and maintained

organs throughout the NYC metropolitan area. He was the consultant and chief technician for the new organ of the Church of the Holy Spirit in Verona, NJ (1989), and also for the organ of Church of the Transfiguration in Towaco, NJ. He maintained and improved pipe organs for many churches, including Christ Church in East Orange, NJ, whose organ accompanied many concerts of the Essex Chorale, with whom he also sang.

Surviving him are his sister-in-law, Carol Oliphant; his nephew and niece, Ryan and Lauren Oliphant, and their daughter, Addison Lee, and son, "Bo" (short for Robert Thomas), all residing in Statesville, NC; his cousins, Lois Oliphant and Earl Jackson, and Glenn and Pat Oliphant; and his beloved friend, Kathy Jo Blaske.

Rev. Kathy Jo Blaske, will conduct a musical memorial service and inter his ashes in the Memorial Garden of Union Congregational Church, Upper Montclair, NJ, on Saturday, July 19, at 2:00 pm. Colleagues Dr. DeCosta Dawson, Kenneth Rapp, and William Blue will serve as organists. A bagpiper, heralding Bob's Scottish ancestry, will play. The interment will follow immediately upon the memorial service, and include a military ceremony, after which there will be a light reception at the church. Your memories would be cherished. They may be extended through either the Prout Funeral Home of Verona, NJ (<https://proutfuneralhome.com/contact-us/>) or the Langeland Sterenberg Funeral Home of Holland, MI, ([www.langelandsterenberg.com](http://www.langelandsterenberg.com)) where a full obituary and slide presentation will be found.

The service will be livestreamed and may be reached through the Union Congregational Church website: [unioncong.org](http://unioncong.org).

Memorial contributions in Bob's honor may be given to the following:

Union Congregational Church  
176 Cooper Avenue  
Upper Montclair, NJ 07043

Pompton Reformed Church  
59 Hamburg Turnpike  
Pompton Lakes, NJ 07442

# Previous Events

## Memorial Service

JUL 19. 2:00 PM (ET)

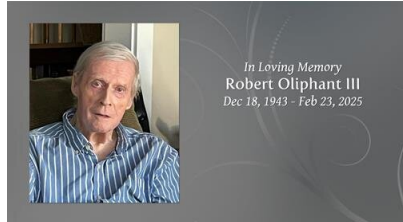
Union Congregational Church  
176 Cooper Ave.  
Upper Montclair, NJ 07043

*Union Congregational Church 176 Cooper Ave. Upper Montclair, NJ 07043*

# Tribute Wall



“ *Langeland-Sterenberg Yntema Funeral Homes created a Tribute Video in memory of Robert Oliphant III*



**Langeland-Sterenberg Yntema Funeral Homes** - July 05, 2025 at 07:24 PM

CI

“ *Kathy Jo, our sincere condolences to you from Nicole and I. Our love and prayers go out to you and his family during the difficult time.*

**Ciro** - March 07, 2025 at 10:23 PM

KB

*Thanks Nicole and Ciro. Your prayers mean a lot.*

**Kathy Jo Blaske** - March 09, 2025 at 02:16 PM

RE

“ *Kathy Jo and family, on behalf of myself and the churches across the Classis of the Greater Palisades, I want to offer my condolences upon Bob's passing. Katy Jo, I will share your news with your colleagues and friends of classis. Peace, -Richard Bierwas*

**Rev** - March 06, 2025 at 04:22 PM

KB

*Thanks so very much, Richard and classis. Bob's life was in service of the church and our God. We are blessed. Kathy Jo*

**Kathy Jo Blaske** - March 07, 2025 at 01:49 PM

KB

“ 1 file added to the tribute wall



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**kathy jo blaske** - March 01, 2025 at 07:30 AM

DL

“ *Debby Limoncelli lit a candle in memory of Robert Oliphant III*



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**Debby Limoncelli** - February 26, 2025 at 06:32 PM

LJ

“ *Bob was my cousin. My Dads older brother Robert was his Dad. Bob was an accomplished and beautiful organist. My mom wanted no one but Bob to play at my Dads funeral. Bob had an exceptional memory, and was my go to person about family history. Kathy Jo, you did a great job of keeping us connected through the years. Thank you.*

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**Lois Oliphant Jackson** - February 26, 2025 at 07:15 AM

KB

*My honor to be at Bob's side since I first met him as the new interim minister at Pompton Lakes Reformed Church where he was organist and music director. The way he registered and played hymns, particularly "Children of the Heavenly Father," moved me to tears on the first worship service I conducted with him. And on "911," after he had witnessed the 2nd plane strike from the organ workshop in Hoboken, he managed to drive that evening to Pompton Lakes for a prayer service, and suggested closing the service with simply 3 chimes. What a beautifully spiritual person was he.*

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**Kathy Jo Blaske** - February 26, 2025 at 08:49 AM

OL

*Being part of the elfin family through marriage to Ron was the most blessed time of my life. Bob and I would always get together and laugh about the antics. Those two boys played on their family having lost my husband five years ago. It was always a joy to reminisce with Bob. His music always inspired me and I always have to bring a tissue for the tears. Our family always thanked our wonderful Kathy Jo for the love and care. She bestowed on Bob. How blessed we truly are to have her in our lives. They have come down to North Carolina and many a time*

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**Oliphant** - February 26, 2025 at 10:21 AM

TB

*It was a gift to serve alongside Bob for several years at Pompton Reformed Church. He was faithful and gifted, with a warm sense of humor to match his musical abilities. He was well-loved by Pompton's choir and congregation. Truly a wonderful fellow!*  
*Rev. Thomas and Mary Bartha*

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**Thomas J Bartha** - February 27, 2025 at 02:13 PM

KB

*With Don's permission, I share this tribute to Bob:*

*Bob Oliphant was the organist and choir director at Union Congregational Church in the 1970's, when I was a young trumpeter growing up in Montclair. Bob supported and nurtured my musical life, while I was in high school and during my years at Juilliard. We played together at Union Church many times. I've been going through sheet music and old recordings, and I have found several that remind me of collaborations with Bob. I remember that he presented me with several musical arrangements for organ and trumpet, which we performed together and which I kept. This past week, looking for a piece to perform on an upcoming recital, I pulled out the Albinoni Sonata in F and remembered that Bob had given it to me nearly 50 years ago. I've also recently found a recording of a concert some young brass-playing colleagues gave with Bob and me in November, 1978. That event was a tribute to Bob's great-uncle, Roland Henry Behrens, who was himself a prominent vocalist in the New York area. It seems appropriate to recall that memorial performance as friends and colleagues remember Bob and his rich musical life.*

*Don Batchelder  
Assistant Professor of Trumpet  
Montclair State University*

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**Kathy Jo Blaske** - June 11, 2025 at 03:49 PM