



Kathleen A. Gerken

July 17, 1940 - January 5, 2026

Kathleen A. Gerken, age 85, of Napoleon, Ohio, passed away peacefully on Monday, January 5, 2026, at Trustwell Living at Kingsbury Place in Defiance, Ohio, surrounded by her loving family.

Kathleen was born on July 17, 1940, in Freedom Township, Ohio, to the late Fred and Frieda (Bostelman) Damman. On May 27, 1961, she married the love of her life, Kenneth Gerken, at Hope Lutheran Church in Hamler, Ohio. Together they shared over 64 years of marriage, building a life rooted in faith, family, and service.

Affectionately known as “Kae,” she was a graduate of Ridgeville High School. She went on to earn her bachelor’s degree from Defiance College and later achieved her master’s degree from Bowling Green State University.

Kae devoted her life to education and had a true gift for teaching. She began her career as a fourth-grade teacher in Florida schools and then became the kindergarten teacher at C.D. Brillhart Elementary School. Over the course of her 31-year teaching career, Kae touched countless young lives and retired in 2003. She took great joy in running into former students, many of whom fondly remembered her as their favorite teacher.

A woman of deep faith, Kae was a faithful member of Bethlehem Lutheran Church in Okolona. She served her church through the choir, Altar Guild, Project Noel, and her faith guided her daily life as she remained devoted to prayer.

During the winter months spent in Florida, Ken and Kae were active members

of the Spanish Main Mariners Social and Charity Club. They cherished the friendships they formed and always looked forward to the many social gatherings and events.

Kae will be lovingly remembered by her husband, Kenneth Gerken; her children, Michael (Jennifer) Gerken, Julie (James) Miller, and Valerie (Jarrod) Beard; her grandchildren, Ashley (Matthew) Ward, Cody Gerken, Daniel (Claire) Gerken, Bryce (Elizabeth) Baden, and Blake (Ann) Baden; and her great-grandchildren, Kayson and Meadow Baden.

She was preceded in death by her parents; her brothers, Franklin, Henry, Victor, Walter, Arnold, and John Damman; and her sisters, Luella Beck and Pauline Gerken.

Funeral services will be held at 11:00 a.m. on Friday, January 9, 2026, at Bethlehem Lutheran Church in Okolona, Ohio. Interment will follow in the church cemetery.

Visitation will be held on Thursday, January 8, 2026, from 3:00 to 8:00 p.m. at Rodenberger-Gray Funeral Home in Napoleon, and again on Friday from 10:00 to 11:00 a.m. at the church.

In lieu of flowers and gifts, memorial contributions may be made to Bethlehem Lutheran Church or Elara Caring Hospice.

Online condolences may be shared with the family at www.rodenbergergray.com

Cemetery Details

Bethlehem Lutheran Cemetery, Okolona

30997 Gerken Road
Defiance, OH 43512

Previous Events

Visitation

JAN 8. 3:00 PM - 8:00 PM (ET)

Rodenberger Funeral Home - Napoleon
1010 Westmoreland Avenue
Napoleon, OH 43545

Visitation

JAN 9. 10:00 AM - 11:00 AM (ET)

Bethlehem Lutheran Church, Okolona
30997 Gerken Road
Defiance, OH 43512

Service

JAN 9. 11:00 AM (ET)

Bethlehem Lutheran Church, Okolona
30997 Gerken Road
Defiance, OH 43512

Tribute Wall

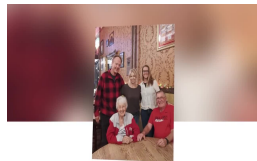
CJ

“ Mrs. Gerken was the kindergarten teacher for both of my children. I volunteered in her classroom weekly, and so I know what a wonderful teacher she was! Please accept my deepest sympathy for your loss.

Cynthia Johnson - January 19 at 11:21 AM



“ 1 file added to the album Tribute Video



Rodenberger Funeral Home - January 14 at 12:13 PM

TA

“ Praying for Peace and Comfort for the family. Kae was a winter "member" with us at Christ Our Redeemer Lutheran and will be missed.

Todd Anderson - January 09 at 03:32 PM

DB

“ so sorry Ken God bless you

Dave&Cookie Bost - January 08 at 08:08 PM

KW

“ Keith Wiemken purchased the Simply Elegant Sp
athiphyllum for the family of Kathleen A. Gerken.



Keith Wiemken - January 08 at 05:36 PM

JO

“ Several years ago at COR's Octoberfest I was selling Avon and Kae
bought a pair of earrings. A few weeks later she asked me if I had
another set as she had lost one of them. I said I didn't & told her to
keep looking. She did & found it between the cushions on the sofa!
We laughed & I'll always remember that when I think of her! Such a
sweet lady.

Judy Owens - January 08 at 12:09 PM

KS

“ Kylene S. planted a grove of 3 [Memorial Trees](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518)
in honor of Kathleen A.
Gerken.

Kylene S. - January 07 at 07:47 PM

CE

“ My prayerful sympathy to Ken. Kae and himself brought joy to my
life as co-members of COR church. Blessings & love, Chaplain
Marilyn Essert

Chaplain Marilyn Essert - January 07 at 04:13 PM

MC

sorry for your loss Ken she was a great friend to have may she rest in
peace

Mary Alice chempanos - January 09 at 10:20 AM

JF

“ Jeff and Kim Frazier purchased the Peaceful White Lilies Basket for the family of Kathleen A. Gerken.



Jeff and Kim Frazier - January 07 at 02:49 PM

TW

“ Kae and her husband Ken were members of our church, in Tampa, during the winter months. I also knew both of them as volunteers at the Florida State Fair, for several years. Kae was a dear sweet lady, who always had a smile and a minute to visit. She will be missed. Our prayers are with Ken and the family.
Tim Williams

Tim Williams - January 07 at 11:23 AM

LF

“ Love, your Attain family planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Kathleen A. Gerken.

Love, your Attain family - January 07 at 11:17 AM

LF

“ Love, your Attain family purchased the Sentiments of Serenity Spray for the family of Kathleen A. Gerken.



Love, your Attain family - January 07 at 11:17 AM



“ *Medium Dish Garden was purchased for the family of Kathleen A. Gerken.*



January 07 at 10:35 AM



“ *My deepest condolences, Ken and family. Although we didn't know each other well, I have cheery, pleasant memories of you both. What a fine life. God's blessings.*

Faith - January 07 at 08:58 AM



“ *Divine Peace Bouquet was purchased for the family of Kathleen A. Gerken.*



January 07 at 06:52 AM



“ *She was a wonderful and sweet lady. Praying for the family love Vicki Schafer*



Vicki Schafer - January 07 at 01:22 AM

RB

“ Kae blessed so many people with her faith and kindness. Praying that you'll find comfort in your memories of her, and in the knowledge that others are missing her, too.

Sincerely,
Rick & Linda Borst

Rick & Linda Borst - January 06 at 11:30 PM

RB

“ Rick B. planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Kathleen A. Gerken.

Rick B. - January 06 at 11:11 PM

TF

“ The Daman Family purchased the Full Of Love Bouquet for the family of Kathleen A. Gerken.



The Daman Family - January 06 at 08:54 PM

MC

“ Mindy & Michael Carico purchased the Enchanted Cottage for the family of Kathleen A. Gerken.



Mindy & Michael Carico - January 06 at 08:31 PM

KH

“ Mrs. Gerken made a lasting impression on my life from the time I was a student in her class and continual check ins throughout my years at CD! She was certainly one of a kind.
My deepest sympathy to her entire family and I pray you find peace and comfort in your memories!

Kristen Huener - January 06 at 07:57 PM

KL

“ One of the best teachers around! She even attended my wedding. A smile no one could ever forget. My sympathys to her family and everyone who's lives she touched while teaching.
Katti (Shumaker) Leitner

Katti Leitner - January 06 at 07:24 PM

MA

“ Monica Acuna purchased the Emerald Garden B asket for the family of Kathleen A. Gerken.



Monica Acuna - January 06 at 05:42 PM



“ Basket Full of Wishes was purchased for the family of Kathleen A. Gerken.



January 06 at 04:27 PM

CL

“ Charles Grizzard and his daughter Laurie planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Kathleen A. Gerken.

Charles Grizzard and his daughter Laurie - January 06 at 04:27 PM

TD

“ Terry D. purchased the Country Basket Blooms for the family of Kathleen A. Gerken.



Terry D. - January 06 at 04:15 PM

PW

“ Ken Michael Julie and Valerie and family's were so sorry for your loss. I always enjoyed our conversations when I would run into your mom Such a caring person !! Will and Pat Wag

pat wagner - January 06 at 04:09 PM

LE

“ We were so happy to see you at our wedding (and have a wonderful picture of the four of us) as we were married two weeks after you. Blessings

Linda & Bernie Erven - January 06 at 03:33 PM

AG

“ Ashley & Matt Ward, Cody & Barb Gerken purchased the Beautiful in Blue for the family of Kathleen A. Gerken.



Ashley & Matt Ward, Cody & Barb Gerken - January 06 at 03:11 PM

PB

“ Pete Bakala purchased the Peaceful White Lilies Basket for the family of Kathleen A. Gerken.



Pete Bakala - January 06 at 03:04 PM

PB

“ Pete Bakala planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Kathleen A. Gerken.

Pete Bakala - January 06 at 03:04 PM

AG

“ Met Kae at Spanish Main loved her to no end she was lots of fun missed not seeing her this year. May you rest in peace my dear friend. Remember the cruise we all went on



Anna Marie Gergen - January 06 at 02:38 PM

AA

“ *Auf Wiedersehen -Love Blake & Anne planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Kathleen A. Gerken.*

Auf Wiedersehen -Love Blake & Anne - January 06 at 02:28 PM



“ *Beautiful in Blue was purchased for the family of Kathleen A. Gerken.*



January 06 at 02:28 PM

DD

“ *She was a very special lady and one of the best teacher and friend*
😭❤️🙏

Donna D - January 06 at 01:37 PM