

Phyllis Naomi Kulp Eller - 1931-2026

Phyllis Eller passed away on January 13, 2026, after a fall at her independent living apartment at Hillcrest and brief stay at Woods Convalescent Care. She had turned 95 less than two weeks before.

Phyllis Naomi Kulp was born on January 2, 1931; her parents, C. Rudolf “Rudy” and Mary Jane raised Phyllis and her older brothers, Harold and Paul, on a dairy farm outside of Pottstown, PA. She attended Juniata College, and earned a degree in home economics. She taught Jr. High students in PA until she met Vernard Eller on a Brethren history tour. Phyllis and Vernard were married on July 7, 1955, lived in Elgin, IL, and then moved to Berkeley, CA, for Vernard’s post-graduate studies. In 1958 they moved to La Verne, CA, for Vernard to take a faculty position at then La Verne College. In 1959 they bought a house on Third Street where they raised three children, Sander, Enten (Mary Alice Burd) and Rosanna (Tim McFadden). Phyllis had five grandchildren and nine great grandchildren. Phyllis cared for Vernard at home during his decline with Alzheimer’s until his death in 2007. She lived in the house on Third Street with Sander until 2021, when she moved to Hillcrest.



Phyllis was involved in her children’s school activities and Parent Teacher organizations. She enjoyed sewing, and later quilting, and camping in the family VW bus on the way to Church of the Brethren Annual Conferences and to visit family in PA and Wenatchee, WA. She attended the Fellowship Church of the Brethren, where she taught Sunday School and wrote and directed Christmas plays for children. When the Fellowship Church merged with the Pomona Church of the Brethren in 1980, she continued to teach, lead worship and congregational singing, sing in the choir, and attend a weekly Bible study. She was chair of the service and outreach commission until the end of 2025.

Phyllis was a proponent for health, the environment, and sustainability. She swam—outdoors—for nine months of the year into her late 80’s; she was a certified master gardener; she recycled newspapers, aluminum cans, and gray water. She was a distinctive combination of frugality and generosity. She loved to pick other people’s fruit. Persimmons were her favorite, but she happily

collected oranges, grapefruit, figs, avocados, apricots, and windfall apples to make apple butter, jelly, or baked goods to share with her neighbors and friends.

Phyllis was a Pennsylvania transplant who flourished in California and thrived on her activities and Brethren connections. She will be remembered for her dedication to church and family, her independence and curiosity, and her tasty contributions to every potluck and family gathering she attended.

Phyllis donated her body to the USC Anatomical Gift program. Her final resting place will be the East Coventry Mennonite Cemetery in Pennsylvania, where she and Vernard will join her parents.

A Celebration of Life service will be held on Saturday, February 14, 2026 at 2:00pm PST at the Hillcrest Meeting House (2705 Mountain View Drive, La Verne, CA). For those not able to attend in person, the service will be streamed live online and recorded--see <http://tiny.cc/Phyllis-Elle-Service>. Pastor Julie Wheeler will officiate. Memorial donations may be made to the Pomona Fellowship Church of the Brethren, 242 E. Alvarado Street, Pomona CA 91767.