

February Member Interview

This month we feature our longtime member and friend, Hilde Smith. Hilde joined in 1956 when Rev. Reid led the congregation and UPC was growing in leaps and bounds. The friendliness of the congregation made it an easy choice. They raised their children in UPC and the youngest daughter, Jeanette was married at UPC. So now Hilde considers it her home and as long as she can drive from Clarence you will see her in the pews on Sunday morning.

Hilde was born in Frankfurt am Main, Germany and lived there through the war. Hilde began her career in Germany teaching mandatory German to an ROTC class. She went on to teach German at the Dependents School in Frankfurt, where she started with Adult Education and as a substitute. In 1951 she arrived in the USA on a scholarship and studied for one year in Keuka College, NY. While attending she met her future husband Ray through his sister. Ray and Hilde went back to Germany in April of 1955 where they were married in her church, and then she returned here in July (after all the paper work) as an immigrant.

She became certified as a High School teacher and joined the faculty in North Tonawanda in 1969 till 1990. She still leads a German class at the Clarence Senior Center. Besides teaching she enjoys photography in her retirement. She also enjoys seeing new sights and live theater productions. Hilde and Ray loved all of the 20 Elderhostels (now called Road Scholar) they attended. She feels they broadened their horizons and learned many new things.

In Germany, Hilde was brought up Lutheran. Since Ray was a member at UPC Hilde joined also after settling in her new home. UPC has helped her faith grow and has been a blessing and great comfort at many difficult times. Her faith helped her deal with the 2 year separation from her parents during WWII. It also was a strong comfort during Ray's illness and death. Her faith growth has been a strong factor in making her the caring, compassionate person she is today.

Hilde is an ordained deacon and elder and served at one time as chair of the Worship and House Committee. She currently takes care of the Endowment Funds reports and is part of the counting team. This year is her 24th anniversary working at the Food Pantry.

The hard work and dedication of members like Hilde have been the back bone of the life of UPC. She is an inspiration to everyone in our congregation.