



Charlene Rae Ellis was born on January 18, 1939, in Evansville, Indiana, to Raymond Fredrick Diekmann and Esther Muriel (née Brown) Diekmann, both of whom preceded her in death.

Charlene entered the presence of her Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, on April 17, 2026, at 2:08 a.m., at her home in Wichita, Kansas.

She is survived by her beloved husband of 68 years, James “Jim” Richard Ellis; her children, Mark A. (Diane) Ellis, Beth E. (J.D.) Hite, and John R. Ellis; twelve grandchildren and sixteen great-grandchildren; and her younger brothers, Michael

Wayne and Stanley Ray Diekmann.

Raised in Evansville, Charlene graduated from Benjamin Bosse High School in 1956. She later attended Bob Jones University, where she met Jim. In the summer of 1957, during a brief visit as Jim passed through Evansville, Charlene—accompanied by her brother Michael—and Jim, on a whim, crossed into Kentucky for a rapid blood test, then continued to Illinois, known for same-day marriages, to elope.

After their marriage, Jim and Charlene moved to Kansas City to be near Jim’s parents and later settled in Olathe, Kansas, where all three of their children were born. Following Jim’s graduation from the University of Missouri–Kansas City, the family moved to Lincoln, Nebraska, in the summer of 1964 for Jim to begin his Ph.D. at the University of Nebraska. While in Lincoln, Charlene worked as a legal secretary for the firm of Hasselbach and Friedman from 1964 to 1971.

Charlene was deeply involved in her children’s activities, serving as a Girl Scout leader, delivering *The Sun* newspaper alongside her children, and teaching Sunday school. In 1971, the family began attending Lincoln Berean Church, where Charlene and Jim became pillars of the community. Together, they served in AWANA and the church’s singles ministry, and both served on the state AWANA board. Charlene also served as an evangelism trainer and counselor and worked for a decade at Back to the Bible Broadcast in counseling and secretarial services.

Throughout their lives in both Nebraska and Kansas, Jim and Charlene were heavily committed to the ministry of The Gideons International. Charlene served faithfully in the Gideons Auxiliary, sharing her deep passion for the distribution of God’s Word.

Jim and Charlene also shared a love of travel, especially when it involved family and ministry. They visited nearly all fifty states and regularly traveled to see their children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren. During a work trip that took them to Hungary while it was still behind the Iron Curtain, they extended their travels to visit missionaries throughout Europe. They also twice visited their son Mark and his family during their missionary work in Brazil, traveled to China with their son John, and spent a year living in Australia.

In 2002, Jim and Charlene moved to Wichita, Kansas, to be near their daughter Beth and her family. Charlene served as a counselor and hospital chaplain with Marketplace Ministries while attending Country Acres Baptist Church. She also volunteered with Victory in the Valley at the St. Francis Cancer Institute, offering hope and encouragement to those undergoing cancer treatment.

A devoted prayer warrior, Charlene filled more than a hundred journals with notes from sermons and daily devotions. Her prayer journals carefully recorded life events and prayers for her children, grandchildren, extended family, and missionaries. Her faith was anchored in her favorite scriptures, John 10:27–28 and Philippians 4:6–7. She was known for her faithful letter-writing ministry; no birthday or holiday ever went unrecognized.

Her greatest desire was that others would know Christ. She lived by the motto she often shared with her children: “Only one life will soon be past; only what’s done for Christ will last.”

In her final years, Charlene continued to serve others. After moving into an independent living community, she volunteered in the bookstore and remained active as a hospital chaplain for as long as she was able.

Details of the memorial service at Country Acres Baptist Church in Wichita, Kansas, and the graveside arrangements at Holden Cemetery in Holden, Missouri, are pending and will be shared when available. In lieu of flowers, memorial gifts may be made to The Gideons International of Wichita, 1637 W. May St., Wichita, KS, 67213 and Victory in the Valley, 3755 E. Douglas, Wichita, KS, 67218.

Services in care of Downing & Lahey Mortuary – East Chapel.