

Good morning, everyone.

Thank you all so much for being here today. On behalf of my family, I want to welcome you and express our deepest gratitude for your presence. It means so much to us to be surrounded by people who knew and loved my mom — Yolanda C. Hamm—Ms. Yolanda to some, Yoly, Hermana Yoly o Señor Yoly to others, Mamy to me. We appreciate all who have come today to honor her life, her legacy, and the deep impact she had on each of us.

This is a space for remembering. For grieving. For celebrating. And for holding each other up. My mom was a woman of deep faith, strength, compassion, and wisdom — and today we gather not only to mourn her loss, but to reflect on the love she gave so freely, the lives she touched, and the lessons she leaves behind.

Whether you are joining our livestream or in person, whether you traveled from far away or live close by, whether you knew her as a friend, teacher, pastor, colleague, or as family — we're so glad you're here. This service is a reflection of her: full of heart, faith, and community. We invite you to join us in prayer, in memory, in song, and in celebration of a life so beautifully lived.

Buenos días a todos.

Muchas gracias por estar aquí hoy. En nombre de mi familia, quiero darles la bienvenida y expresar nuestra más profunda gratitud por su presencia. Significa mucho para nosotros estar rodeados de personas que conocieron y amaron a mi mamá — Yolanda C. Hamm — Ms. Yolanda para algunos, y la Señora Yoly o Hermana Yoly para otros. Agradecemos a todos los que han venido hoy para honrar su vida y el profundo impacto que tuvo en cada uno de nosotros.

Este es un espacio para recordar. Para llorar. Para celebrar. Y para apoyarnos mutuamente. Mi mamá fue una mujer de profunda fe, fortaleza, compasión y sabiduría — y hoy nos reunimos no solo para lamentar su partida, sino para reflexionar sobre el amor que dio tan generosamente, las vidas que tocó y las enseñanzas que nos deja.

Ya sea que estén siguiendo la transmisión en vivo o que estén presentes aquí, ya sea que hayan viajado desde lejos o vivan cerca, ya sea que la hayan conocido como amiga, maestra, pastora, compañera o como parte de la familia — nos alegra profundamente que estén aquí. Este servicio es un reflejo de ella: lleno de corazón, fe y comunidad. Les invitamos a acompañarnos en oración, en memoria, en canto y en la celebración de una vida tan hermosamente vivida.

Although we are not offering translation for the full service, we invite you to join us in whatever language is most comfortable for you when we read scripture and sing. English, Spanish, and Khmer versions are provided in your program. After the service, we will transition outside for the burial and you are welcome to join us there. Please join us also at the reception, details are on the back of your program.

Thank you again for being here.

Let us begin. I invite Joe Shabel up to open up in a word of prayer, followed by Joe Ginder who will share words of meditation with us.

Aunque no ofreceremos traducción durante todo el servicio, les invitamos a participar en el idioma que les sea más cómodo durante la lectura de las Escrituras y los cantos. En su programa encontrarán versiones en inglés, español y Khmer. Después del servicio, nos trasladaremos al exterior para el entierro. También los invitamos a la recepción; los detalles están al reverso de su programa.

Gracias nuevamente por estar aquí.

Comencemos. Voy a invitar a Hermano Joe Shabel a que pase al frente para abrir con una oración, seguido por el Pastor Joe Ginder, quien compartirá unas palabras de meditación con nosotros.

Over the past few weeks, I've had the sacred opportunity to sit with many of my mom's closest friends, family, loved ones, and colleagues to listen to their stories and reflections about who she was. The messages and comments have come from across the city, the state, the country, and even the world. They serve as reminders of how far her reach extended and how deeply she loved.

My mom was born on May 3, 1946, in Guatemala City, the daughter of Alfonso Castañeda Carrillo and Virgilia Méndez de Castañeda. She grew up in Quezaltepeque, in a humble but vibrant home, one shaped by ingenuity, resilience, and warmth. She often shared a memory from when she was just five years old, eager to sell oranges from their house whenever visitors arrived. Her entrepreneurial spirit didn't stop there. Soon, she wanted to sell "tartaritas," little sweets filled with dulce de leche, and she would sing songs in the streets to sell them.

Her early life, however, was also marked by hardship and profound loss. Her younger brother tragically passed away in an accident at home when she was 12. Her father was out of the country due to political reasons for part of her childhood, and her mother, my abuelita, lost her teaching job due to political shifts. To make ends meet, my grandmother started selling food from their home and renting out every room in the house. My mom, still a child, would once again, boldly go through the neighborhood selling food with a strong voice and even stronger determination. In those years, my mom, her siblings, and her mother often slept together on the dirt floor in the kitchen, the only space left in their home. But despite the tight quarters, they made a life. They laughed. They dreamed. They worked. And they never gave up.

It was these formative years, marked by grief, economic uncertainty, and deep familial love, that shaped my mother. It was in these moments that she learned the importance of caring for others during difficult times—a lesson she carried with her for the rest of her life.

At 14, my mom moved to the capital, Guatemala City, to continue her education — a brave and bold step. She earned an education at a time when few women from her community had the opportunity, and she carried that determination into her 35+-year career as a teacher, both in Guatemala and in California. Her journey as an educator deeply inspired me. It's because of her that I became an educator myself. She was my original model of what it means to teach with both heart and conviction. And she never stopped encouraging me. She read my master's thesis and later my doctoral dissertation — not just to say she had, but to engage. She'd ask thoughtful questions and want to talk about the ideas.

My parents met in Guatemala and married in 1981. They married in Chiquimula and hosted over 1,000 wedding guests. Together, they built a life anchored in love and ministry — a partnership rooted in mutual support, prayer, and purpose. I remember seeing the way she looked at him, how they worked side by side, whether in the home or in the community. Their love was quiet and enduring — the kind that speaks volumes without many words. My brother Daniel and I were blessed to call her our mom. She taught us not only through her words, but through how she lived — with humility, discipline, grace, and a deep compassion for others. Mom's love for my father was the foundation of everything in our family. She always spoke so highly of him, calling him her "best friend," and she encouraged me to seek a partner who would give me the same love and devotion. So when my husband, Danny, and I finally got together after years of friendship, Mom was thrilled. She knew, without a doubt, that he respected me, cared for me, and would always treat me right. She became our biggest fan, always supporting and caring for us.

As her daughter, I had the privilege of experiencing her love and care firsthand. She taught me not just how to be strong, but how to be kind, compassionate, and firm in my beliefs. She was always there for me—through my accomplishments, my struggles, my victories, and my losses. Whenever I needed someone to lean on, it was always her. I remember how she would drive out to meet me when I was overwhelmed in college, just to buy me a coffee and talk. For anyone who ever rode in the car with my mom, you know how much of a labor of love that drive to Los Angeles was. But she did it without a second thought because that was who she was.

I also recall when we first arrived in the U.S., we were so close. Maybe it was the mother-daughter bond, or perhaps the fact that we were both in a new country, but I remember countless moments of playing together in our backyard. One of my favorite memories is of us tying a jump rope to a pole, and her turning it so I could jump. She was always there, a constant, calming presence. I remember standing next to her at events when I was nervous to meet new people. Although I spoke English, I felt culture shock for several years, and I remember the feeling of her holding me close and offering comfort in those moments.

As I've mentioned, mom was deeply committed to education. Although her college degree, teaching license, Seminary studies, and master's degree from Guatemala were not fully recognized in the U.S., she was undeterred. She took child development and English classes to restart her career. I remember a time when we didn't have childcare, and she brought me with her to one of her classes. I was probably about five years old, trying my best not to make noise in the lecture hall. At one point, the professor asked me to leave, and I had to sit outside. But my mom never stopped checking on me, and we went through it together, side by side. Her commitment to her studies was unwavering, and I witnessed that dedication throughout my life.

When I was a senior in high school, she was finishing her last prerequisite English course. I marveled at how far she had come—starting from basic English classes to preparing to enroll in college-level English alongside me. It was a humbling reminder of her resilience, and even while working full-time, managing church responsibilities, and taking care of us, she did it all with grace.

When I became a teacher, she came to help me set up my classroom at the beginning of the school year. My principal would have long conversations with her and he invited her to speak with parents during workshops. Later, when I became a principal, she continued to show up — not just for me, but for my school community. She even joined me at advocacy events, where we stood with families asking city leaders for better produce at local markets and stronger protections for affordable housing. She always

expressed awe at my resolve as an educator — but I always had to remind her: Mom, you were the one who lit that fire in me. She was the blueprint. I only carried forward what she started.

But more than a teacher, my mom was a woman of deep faith. She told us that even as a little girl, she desired to walk with God. But it was at 22 that she says her real commitment to Christ took root. She attended seminary and served as a pastor for so long and formed deep relationships with so many of you here today.

My mom's love of stories was also a bond we shared. We spent years reading "Lluvia de Oro" (Rain of Gold) by Victor Villaseñor together. We read it slowly, always sharing our thoughts and reflecting on how much it mirrored our own lives. We never got to read the follow-up book, but I did read her a few chapters on her last day and promised her I would finish it in her honor. That was the connection we had—a deep love of life, a passion for family, and a shared love of stories.

But beyond all of this, my mom's greatest joy came from being a grandmother, or "Abuelita." As soon as my daughter, Amelia, was born, she insisted I order a custom sticker for her car that read "Promoted to Abuelita" in pink, of course. She was so proud of this new chapter in her life. She adored her grandkids with all her heart, and seeing her with them was one of the greatest gifts I could witness.

For nearly 30 years, my mom battled cancer. It was a part of our lives, but she never let it define her. I remember when my dad told my brother and me about her diagnosis. I was young and scared, asking if she was going to die. My parents explained that we never know when our time will come, but their hope was that she would live a long life. Throughout my childhood and well into adulthood, my mom had countless doctor's appointments, hospital visits, and medical check-ups—sometimes multiple times a week. The demands of her health, work, church, and family were monumental, but she managed it all with love and dedication. She never let her struggles define her. One of my mom's prayers after her diagnosis was that she would see me and my brother finish school, begin our careers, and grow into adulthood. She saw all of that and more. She even got to spend years with her grandchildren, and in recent years, she shared with me that she was so thankful to have had the chance to see all of her dreams realized. When my daughter was born, my mom took care of her every day. She used her child development skills, and when I returned to work, she had a full report ready for me each day. But as her health declined, I began to take care of her in a more tangible way. I took time off from work to drive her to medical appointments and support her through difficult treatments. I saw her endure so much pain and suffering. I watched her cover herself with Amelia's baby blanket because she was hot but still

wanted to feel cozy. It was bittersweet. Of course, she was never by herself. My father was with her through it all, always supporting her, loving her, and tending to her needs.

Her final months were difficult. As her health took another serious turn, we began to have more honest conversations about what would come next. It wasn't easy to talk about, but we did. She reminded me of preparations she'd made years ago for this moment—choosing a photo for her service, selecting a pink casket, and giving me clear instructions for what she wanted. She wanted to make sure I knew what to do, and that's exactly what we're doing.

For those who don't know, she was in Guatemala about a month ago. This last trip was a special moment for her. Despite her health challenges, she was determined to visit family to mourn the loss of my Tia Albita, her cuñada. I helped arrange her travel, knowing it might be her final journey. She and my dad went and spent time with her sisters, nephews and nieces and visited her mother's home in the Quezaltepeque. It was a difficult but beautiful time, surrounded by love, as she saw her extended family once more.

And then, in her final days, she was surrounded by her loved ones. We made video calls to my brother in Florida and to my tia in Guatemala as each prepared to fly out to see her. A few hours before she passed, we had Guatemalan food—just the way she liked it. I sat next to her, telling her about the food I was eating—hilachas, platanos fritos, frijoles volteados con crema. I'm not sure if she could hear me, but I spoke to her, sharing the meal and feeling connected with her in that moment. Later that night, my children held her hand and sang lullabies. As they said goodnight, I noticed her breathing change, and as soon as the door closed behind them, she peacefully passed away.

In these past two weeks since her passing, I've heard countless stories from family, friends, and colleagues about how she led, served, gifted, and loved. My mom was deeply generous. She didn't give for recognition or to be seen. She gave because she knew what it was like to go without, and she never wanted others to feel alone in that. She was a woman of great faith, deeply rooted in her love for God, and that faith shaped how she loved us. These past weeks have been painful, but they've also been filled with beauty. In every act of kindness, in every bold step toward justice, in every meal shared, I'm reminded that my mom's legacy lives on in all of us.

I miss her terribly. But I'm also filled with gratitude to have known her for so long and to know her suffering has passed. Thank you, Mamy, for everything.