



James L. Wilke

April 12, 1945 - March 26, 2026

Jim was born April 12, 1945 in Hastings, Minnesota. He grew up in Columbia Heights. graduated from Mankato State in 1968 with a B.A. in music education, and a Masters of Music Education, from VanderCook College of Music in Chicago.

In 1969 he was hired by the St. Anthony/New Brighton School District as a music teacher and junior high band director, eventually becoming the high school band director. Jim was also involved with the Patriots Marching Band and enjoyed many wonderful marching band trips over the years in Minnesota and across the country. He loved his work and the students. A talented musician, Jim played the bassoon and was a member of the Minnesota Symphonic Winds for many years.

Jim met Margaret Wessel at Salem Baptist Church in New Brighton. They were married in 1973. For 52 years they made their home together in New Brighton, adding a daughter Laura, and son Joel. Jim had a natural talent for working with tools, especially woodworking. He was good at fixing things, which Margaret really appreciated!

Jim was an avid boater. In the summer of 1980, he joined the United States Coast Guard Auxiliary in Stillwater. He enjoyed patrolling the river and did so for ten years. In 1984 he was elected Flotilla Commander for two terms.

After retirement, Jim continued to play his bassoon almost every day. He liked watching orchestras on YouTube. It was not unusual to see him in tears because the music was so beautiful.

Jim was officially diagnosed with Alzheimer's. He was able to live at home with Margaret's care until 2024 when it became necessary to place him in a memory care/medical facility. He adapted well, and the staff loved him because of his cooperative and gentle nature. Jim passed away on March 26, 2026.

Jim is survived by his wife Margaret, his daughter Laura Turner, son Joel Wilke, son-in-law Adam Turner, granddaughter Addison Turner, and brother and sister-in-law Bill Jr. and Tia Wilke. He is preceded in death by his parents, William J. and LeDoris L. Wilke.

Funeral will be Monday, April 13 at 10:30 AM, St. John the Baptist Catholic Church, 835 2nd Ave. NW, New Brighton, MN. Visitation at 9:30.

Previous Events

Visitation

APR **13**. 9:30 AM - 10:30 AM (CT)

St. John the Baptist Catholic Church
835 2nd Avenue NW
New Brighton, MN 55112

Mass of Christian Burial

APR **13**. 10:30 AM - 11:30 AM (CT)

St. John the Baptist Catholic Church
835 2nd Avenue NW
New Brighton, MN 55112

Tribute Wall



“ *Enchanted Cottage was purchased for the family of James L. Wilke.* ”



April 05 at 01:36 PM