



Oliver Carl Carlson

January 27, 1921 - July 15, 2020

Oliver Carl Carlson, born January 27, 1921 in Fairview, MT passed away peacefully July 15, 2020 at home in Roseville, MN surrounded by family.

"But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be the glory both now and to the day of eternity." Amen. 2 Peter 3:18
Dad loved God, loved people and loved life. But most importantly, he was loved by God, experienced His grace, and through his life grew in that grace and in the knowledge of God. And from that place was able to minister God's grace to others.

He was born on January 27, 1921 in Fairview, MT where his parents, pastor Olaf and Ragna, served a Lutheran church. They soon left to be missionaries in southeast Madagascar, stopping in Paris for a year of language study, and then taking a short trip to Norway to see relatives. The family would add 5 more children: Roald, Arne, Audrey, Laila and Haakon; and serve in Madagascar almost 2 decades. Dad and his school-aged siblings attended the mission boarding school in Fort Dauphin; and when his family returned to Madagascar in 1939, he stayed on in St. Paul to graduate from Mechanic Arts High School and start St. Olaf College in Northfield, MN that fall. His father died in April of 1940 which was very hard for him and the whole family. During WW2, Dad welded submarines in Manitowoc, WI; then entered the Infantry, went to Officer Candidate School, and served in Europe until 1946. While in the Army, he felt a call to the ministry. He returned and graduated from St. Olaf, then went on to Luther Seminary in St. Paul.

While in seminary, he met Gene Kvaalen, and they were married May 29, 1950 in her hometown of Lambert, MT. Their first child, Margit, was born the next year; and after Dad's ordination in 1951, they moved to Shepherd, MT to serve their first parish, which they very much enjoyed. There, Timothy and Greta were added. Soon, however, they felt God calling them to the mission field; and so, in 1954 they went for a year of language study in Paris, then on to Madagascar.

They served 2 terms in Madagascar during the years 1955-1967. Nathan (1957), Camilla (1961) and Christopher (1964) were born during that time, and the towns of Ambovombe, Antanimora, Tsihombe and Manantenina would be their homes and places of ministry. They enjoyed serving the Malagasy alongside their fellow missionaries. Margit, Timothy and Nathan went to the boarding school in Fort Dauphin. While on furlough, in November of 1961, Dad and Mom, seeking healing for Greta, their mentally handicapped daughter, took her to a church meeting led by William S. Reid, MD, an Episcopalian who was involved in healing and Holy Spirit renewal. There they received the baptism of the Holy Spirit, and their lives and ministries were transformed. Their work back in Madagascar was focused more on healing and deliverance, and with the Fifohazana, the Malagasy "awakening" movement, inviting its leader, Nenilava, to minister with them.

In 1968, Dad and Mom felt called to Daystar Ministries, and we moved to Zion Harbor, a Bible camp on Leech Lake in Northern MN, where he became the director, and was involved in teaching and prayer ministry. In 1977 they transferred to the Daystar Gardner center in Fargo, ND, continuing their ministry. In 1978-79 they lived in Strasbourg, France, working with the renewal movement in Alsace/Lorraine.

In 1983, they returned to Madagascar, to Tsihombe, for five more years of mission work with the Malagasy Lutheran Church and the Fifohazana, leaving children and grandchildren behind in the States, but then hosting them for visits.

In 1989, having retired from the mission field, they were invited to live in the

parsonage of North Heights Lutheran Church. Again, they were involved in teaching and prayer ministry, Dad often leading altar ministry Tuesday and/or Thursday mornings at the church. He also taught at the Lay Ministry Training Center, and they hosted a number of students from there and The Master's Institute. They continued to make short-term mission trips back to Madagascar, and also to Russia and India. And as the family grew, Dad and Mom spent a lot of time visiting and hosting them.

In family, Dad valued togetherness and relationship. He was so fond and appreciative of Mom, saying she was the second-best thing that happened to him (after salvation). Family devotions were an important part of the day, where we would read Scripture, discuss, sing and pray together. He and Mom planned family vacations to bring us closer, often involving camping and backpacking. Family councils were called to discuss important decisions. Dad had many interests and special qualities. He was very fond of honey, and beekeeping, and had a dozen or more hives when at Zion Harbor and Fargo. He planted gardens and fruit trees wherever he could, in Madagascar and the US. He was a good mechanic and woodworker, and knife-sharpener. He loved classical music, attended concerts, brought a phonograph and records out to Madagascar, and knew many pieces by heart. He enjoyed camping, backpacking and canoeing, first going to the Boundary Waters in the 1940s and continuing into late 1990s. He and Mom traveled widely in both the US and internationally, often visiting family, relatives and friends - they hardly ever had to stay in a hotel. He was gregarious and friendly, an asset as a missionary, pastor and camp director. He would strike up conversations wherever he went -- in retirement, he developed many friendships in the stores and the gas stations around the parsonage, extending invitations for meals and holidays.

The Scriptures were also very important to Dad. Some of his favorites, which impacted him and his ministry, were:

- 1) Mark 1:4, 15. How both John the Baptist and Jesus began their ministries

with calls for repentance.2) Acts 1:8. The importance of the Holy Spirit for ministry. He would emphasize the power of the Holy Spirit - the dunamis/dynamite power.3) 1 Corinthians 6:19, Colossians 1:27, 1 Corinthians 3:16. Being indwelt by the triune God. This was important for him personally and in ministry to others.4) 2 Corinthians 2:2-5. This was the text for the first sermon that his father preached in Madagascar (in Manambaro). And for dad it highlighted the importance of preaching Christ and having a message not in plausible words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power.5) Romans 8:37. That in Christ Jesus we are more than conquerors. He would like to add "with victories to spare."6) John 16:27. "The Father himself loves you" - how knowing the tender heart of the Father is so important. He would also add Colossians 1:27, how we are accepted in the Beloved.7) James 3:17. About the wisdom from above that is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, easily entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy. He prayed this over us kids every day before going to school.8) Colossians 3:16. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly. He prayed this over us as well. And it was so important for him and he stressed it to others. Spending time in the word, soaking in the word.9) Romans chapters 9, 10 and 11, about Israel and the church, climaxing in 11:25-26: "A partial hardening has come upon Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in. And in this way all Israel shall be saved." He liked Ezekiel 37 as well: "And I will put my Spirit within you, and you shall live, and I will place you in your own land. Then you shall know that I am the Lord."10) Psalm 103. "Bless the Lord O my soul"- the importance of praise. He would often be speaking words of praise to the Lord - "Praise the Lord, praise the Lord."11) Luke 23:34. "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." The importance of unilateral forgiveness. As he received healing for wounds he had received, he was able to help others extend forgiveness, walk in forgiveness and receive healing. He would also talk about the martyr period in Madagascar, how the blood of the martyrs was the seed of the church. 12) Psalm 67. Our family psalm. Given to us by the Lord on New Year's Day,

1967, and it has been a psalm that we as a family have said together over and over again. God is gracious to us and blesses us and causes his face to shine upon us that his way may be known on the earth, his saving power among all nations. We are blessed to be a blessing!

So dad passed away peacefully at home surrounded by family at the ripe old age of 99. He had grown in the grace and knowledge of his Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and will be giving Him glory through all eternity! Hallelujah!

He is survived by his wife Gene Carlson of Roseville, MN, his sister Laila Rogers of Newtonville, MA, children Margit Thorndal of Laurel, MT, Timothy Carlson of Roseville MN, Greta Carlson of Park Rapids MN, Nathan (Jenny) Carlson of Castle Rock CO, Camilla (Todd) Jacobsen of Sioux Falls SD, Christopher (Kim) Carlson of Fridley MN; 16 grandchildren and step-grandchildren, 24 1 great-grandchildren and step-great-grandchildren, and 24 nieces and nephews. He is preceded in death by parents Olaf and Ragna Carlson; siblings Arne, Roald, Haakon and Audrey Carlson; and son-in-law William Thorndal.

A burial service was held at Fort Snelling the morning of July 20th and a small family service that afternoon at North Heights Lutheran Church Roseville. A video of the service, as well as other stories and photos can be viewed at oliverandgenecarlson.com.

In lieu of flowers, memorials may be sent to North Heights Lutheran Church, Global Health Ministries, or Friends of Madagascar Missions. Donations can also be made through the above website to these three organizations.

Tribute Wall

EV

“ I am a friend of Tim and Faith. I went with Oliver to get lumber when visiting the family. Oliver recognized one of the yardworkers as Malagasy and struck up a conversation in the man's native language. They parted friends with an invitation to church. Now, how do you randomly meet a spiritually hungry Malagasy in a chance shopping trip? Coincidence? I doubt it. No , believe it.

Edward Vivian - December 11, 2025 at 08:54 AM

MC

“ Olivier and now Gene who passed away this year were like surrogate parents to me. I met them at Zion Harbour one Summer, then got to know them in Strasbourg were I was then a student. And they came to visit and stay with me and my family many times over the years in the UK. Their genuine love and care are missed greatly and never forgotten. We'll meet again.

Martine Cowley - February 21, 2022 at 12:00 AM

MJ

“ I remember the Luther League hayrides you took us with my brother Robert driving the truck to Pompeys Pillar Rock. We'd hike to the top and roast weenies over a fire of cottonwood. And sing campfire songs. Taught "the birdie song" as they called it to my 4th graders. Also, the "qui, qua madi, madi, madi dash nik" song. The kids called it "that one." Also, remember Pastor giving us a ride in his new blue Studebaker with a little bit of snow on the ground. We got stuck in the Nelson's yard on level ground.Remember us baby sitting Timothy. He stood crying by the door until we took him for a ride to our cousin's place down the road. It was what he needed to quiet him down. I found Pastor Carlson's death notice in the November, 2020, Living Lutheran magazine and shared it with my siblings. Enjoyed all the pictures and stories.. Also enjoyed my visit in 1996 before attending the Churchwide Women's convention.

Martha Heinle Jewell - November 07, 2020 at 12:00 AM

CN

“ I enjoyed reading about Oliver Carlson's life.

Christine Ruth Nelson - September 18, 2020 at 12:00 AM

JB

“*Margit and I have been friends for over 30 years. I have purchased many beautiful gemstones from her and many came from Madagascar. When she came to town we often had lunch together. On one of her visits she asked if her folks could join us for lunch and of course I said- Yes!! We sat outside at a restaurant in Wayzata, on Lake Minnetonka and placed our orders. We were enjoying a very nice visit!*

When our food came, Oliver suddenly stood and in a very clear and commanding voice prayed over our meal, our visit and our country. He then sat down and we started to eat. I realized immediately that Oliver and Gene lived and breathed their deeply held Spiritual convictions, as do I.

From that time, when Margit would come into town, I would ask about her folks and ask if she was staying with them. Yes, of course! I would on occasion send bakery or treats with her, for her folks and ask to pass on my hugs and hellos!

Almost every morning, in my shop as I am opening and getting ready for the day, I ask the Lord to love thru me- to care about the people He sends across my path. Oliver and Gene were two of those people whose example has enriched my life and how God loved ME through them! My life is richer from our friendship.

I pray God's richest blessings over Oliver's and Gene's family.

Jannie Bean

Jannie Bean - August 08, 2020 at 12:00 AM

TR

“ We're thanking our Lord Jesus for Oliver. He had a significant impact in my (Tim's) life from the Russia Mission's trip in 1992 to small groups at Kairos Fellowship to Missions meetings at North Heights and in Oliver and Gene's home and then these past years with occasional visits to their home and helping take care of their yard. Oliver encouraged me so much in the Holy Spirit. I will never forget him sharing about the dynamite power of the Holy Spirit. He also taught me about unilateral forgiveness. I'm going to miss him, but I'm totally looking forward to seeing him with Jesus in the future.



Tim and Laurie Richter - August 06, 2020 at 12:00 AM

GB

“ Thank you for the many guest book posts about Oliver. I learned much about how great this man is in the service to the Lord. I had the honor of being in weekly prayer with him for nearly ten years at North Heights Lutheran Church. He's always singing praise songs in Malagasy and then sing it in English so I could understand it. He's a great man and will be missed for well done good and faithful servant. Blessed be his memory.

Gary Borgendale - August 02, 2020 at 12:00 AM

IS

“ We are so sorry to hear of Oliver's passing but rejoice he's home. What precious memories we have from Daystar. Praying for deep comfort and peace for all of your family.

Ivan and Sandy Sagal - July 23, 2020 at 12:00 AM

BP

“ God bless the memory and fruit that the seeds of healing in Jesus have been planted by this one man and his beloved wife. We have enjoyed hearing him speak in French, heal my niece & sister, prepare me for the birth of my son and even to lead us onward at the local Billy Graham crusade for counselors (when the trainings were cancelled).



The fruit of his labors will be blessed even from heaven as the prayers of the saints are poured out on us all, as the bowls overflow in these times on earth. We will join him soon as he enjoys the worship with the elders, fresh every time, as they fall on their faces before the Father!

Glory be to God our Father, and to the Savior and to the Spirit for all that work that was performed under the blessings of heaven!

Barbara Pelzer` - July 23, 2020 at 12:00 AM

KP

“ Those of us who knew this incredible man of God, know how thoroughly Heaven is rejoicing right now. I have been privileged to have known both Oliver and Gene, my good friend Nathan's parents, for the last couple decades and will never forget, as long as I live, the vacation we two families took in 2008, with them included, to Madagascar where they lived as missionaries spanning decades, and where Nathan was born. The president of Madagascar, Marc Ravalomanana, presented Oliver and Gene with the Chevalier Cross, the highest civilian honor bestowed in Madagascar, for their years of service to the people there. I personally witnessed the fruit of that work, and the love the people still had for them decades later. Oliver was a giant of the faith, and I'm a far better person for having met him. I have often tried to strive to exhibit the faith Ollie had in my own life, but alas, I fall short. He was, in a word, just amazing.

Kirk R Peterson - July 23, 2020 at 12:00 AM

RS

“ Peace be with the Carlson family. Many, many warm and special memories of the Carlson family, Daystar, Zion Harbor and more.

Ray Sherwood - July 21, 2020 at 12:00 AM

DJ

“ Oliver was an extraordinary and humble follower of Jesus. He was a blessing to so many people and will be greatly missed.

David Jondahl - July 21, 2020 at 12:00 AM

BD

“ Oliver gave a sermon one Sunday morning at Zion Harbor when I was on staff there about UNILATERAL FORGIVENESS. I have never heard that exact terminology used to describe THE JESUS KIND OF FORGIVENESS either before or after that time. Think of Jesus on the cross forgiving those who were abusing him to envision an example of this kind of forgiveness.

My sympathies go out to the Carlson family. I hope his wife is getting excellent care.

*Bradley A. Dittman
worshiprestoration.com*

Bradley A. Dittman - July 21, 2020 at 12:00 AM

DS

“ Oliver will always be a very special person to Cindy and me. Perhaps the highlight of knowing him was to have him marry us in 1972. What a dear and wonderful memory that is. It was always a treat to talk with Oliver as he always demonstrated a way of presenting everything with a rich appreciation of the wonder of God's world and the grace of our Savior. He has left a legacy.

David Saari - July 20, 2020 at 12:00 AM

KT

“ Oliver was a great man of God. He and Gene loved and mentored so many people including me. His was a life well lived!

Kirk Thacker - July 20, 2020 at 12:00 AM

MD

“ Thank You Lord for Uncle Oliver's life. I will miss him only on this side of eternity. Love to my family. Miriam

Miriam Dakutak - July 19, 2020 at 12:00 AM

ES

“ Oliver was a wise, kind gentle, unique man. He officiated at my wedding and was a father to me my senior year in high school at Zion Harbor. It is a privilege to have known him and Gene and their wonderful family.

Elaine Dittman Selby

Elaine Selby - July 19, 2020 at 12:00 AM

SP

“ I haven't seen Oliver for many years. It was back when I was cooking at Eden. He was always encouraging and complemented the food etc. I am sorry for the loss to family. I will always remember him as a man of God.

Shelley POTTRIDGE - July 18, 2020 at 12:00 AM

CA

“ Well done, good and faithful man of God! Peace and comfort to Gene and family. I am sorry for your loss and the heartache that comes with losing a loved one. We know that Agnes and Bill Thorndal will be there to greet Oliver as will all the Madagascar saints of Heaven.

Carolyn Akland - July 18, 2020 at 12:00 AM

SS

“ Lots of memories from years past. I was just wondering the other day how Oliver and Gene were. Praying for your family as you grieve the passing of your father ad his long and interesting life. I moved back to Kansas in 85, so did not see them much since then, probably last saw them in in 2011, or later when I went up for a wedding in Mpls several years ago. Used to have long talks with them in Fargo.

Sarah Lloyd Sanneman - July 18, 2020 at 12:00 AM

ST

“ *Our dear Oliver will be missed. So very special to all the Trumps.
Our love to the entire family.*

Sandy Trump - July 18, 2020 at 12:00 AM