



Rev. Henry "Paul" Widen

January 1, 1951 - November 26, 2021

Paul Widen, age 70, went home to be with his Lord and Savior on November 26, 2021 following a long battle with cancer. He was born January 1, 1951 in St. Paul, Minnesota, where he grew up with his four sisters and parents. He invited the Lord into his heart as a youth at Trout Lake Camp. After graduating from St. Paul Central High School in 1969, he joined the US Air Force and served in the Vietnam War as a crew chief on C-130's. He met the love of his life, JoLayne Marie Swanson, at Bethany Baptist Church and they were married in August of 1975. He worked many years as a security guard at Montgomery Ward, graduated from Bethel College followed by Bethel Seminary, then served as an Air Force chaplain. He joyfully and humbly followed his calling to pastor Valley View Baptist Church (Cedar Rapids, Iowa), Salem Baptist Church (now GracePoint; New Brighton), Lake Sarah Baptist Church (Slayton), and Oak Hill Baptist Church (Columbia Heights). Despite the major challenges that life threw at him, Paul's faith never wavered. During his service in Vietnam he witnessed the death of many friends, but he focused on the blessing of coming home alive, and this experience led to his calling to the ministry. When his family lost their home and material possessions in a 1993 fire, he broke the news to his kids by enthusiastically inviting them to come swimming in the hotel pool (where they were going to "get to" live for the next several months!). After miraculously surviving a serious motorcycle accident in 2006, he expressed gratitude that it happened to him rather than his daughter or her friend. In 2012, he was

diagnosed with Agent Orange-induced angiosarcoma. While the cancer took his right leg, his independence, and eventually his life, it never took his love for his God, his passion to serve, or his determination to be the "hands and foot" of Christ. (He specifically instructed us to "laugh a little" in remembering him!)

Paul's kids - and eventually, grandchildren - were his pride and joy. He was their biggest supporter and number one fan, making it to every game, event, and activity that he possibly could. He was a man of solid and infectious faith, a hugger (of ALL people), and an encourager. He was a lover of strong coffee, chocolate chip cookies, and the North Shore. He never, ever complained and he always put other people's needs ahead of his own. He was stubborn and tenderhearted, compassionate and thoughtful, wise and a lifelong learner. Paul was preceded in death by his parents, H. Stamford and Merle Widen. He dearly loved his family and is survived by his (saint of a) wife of 46 years, JoLayne; daughter Emily (Chad) Anderson; son Josh (Lynnae) Widen; grandchildren Cooper, Riley, Gracie, Paisley, and Ashlee Anderson and Nora and Brin Widen; sisters Gwen (John) Wiens, Jean Widen, Kathy (Randy) Iverson, and Barb Widen; brother-in-law Dana (Marci) Swanson; nieces Amanda (Steve) Guanzini and Mandy (Cory) Champney; nephews Chris (Amy) Wiens, Mike (Meredith) Wiens, Matt (Diane) Swanson, Dan Iverson, and Dave (Kat) Iverson; and many grand-nieces, grand-nephews, and cousins.

Please join us in celebrating Paul's life at the visitation from 5 to 8pm on Tuesday, November 30 at Holcomb-Henry-Boom-Purcell Funeral Home, 515 Highway 96 W, Shoreview. The funeral service will be at 2pm on Wednesday, December 1 at Oak Haven Church, 1555 Constance Blvd NE, Ham Lake. A visitation will precede the service at the church at 1pm, and a luncheon will follow. For those that are unable to join us in person, the memorial service will be live-streamed on the Oak Haven Church YouTube channel.

Tribute Wall

BD

“ *He did much harm to myself and my children.*

BRIAN JAMES SHANLEY, D. DIV. - November 04, 2023 at 12:00 AM

BD

“ *He did much harm to myself and my children.*

BRIAN JAMES SHANLEY, D. DIV. - November 04, 2023 at 12:00 AM

KB

“ *With deepest sympathy. May his family and friends feel the comfort of the arms of our Heavenly Father.*



Kay Benschop - December 02, 2021 at 12:00 AM

BH

“ *To the Widen girls: what a wonderful tribute to your brother. As much time as I spent at your house with Jean, I don't remember Paul specifically - he was just around, always there, but... I am sorry for your loss, for each of you, for his family et al. I do remember Jean and the neighborhood, often! Kind regards, Barbie Hannah*

Barbara Johnson hannah - December 01, 2021 at 12:00 AM

BF

“ *Celebrating with all the angels in the throne room of heaven where he got to hug his savior and Lord Jesus finally! My prayers for his family who will miss him, may that soon go away and be replaced at joy of the life he lived.*

Brian Fautch - December 01, 2021 at 12:00 AM

PE

“ Dear JoLayne,
I am so sorry for your loss. Paul sounds like an amazing man of strong faith, selfless, and beloved by family, friends, and congregants.
I was hoping to attend the visitation today, but I'm not sure I'll make it. You and I have a fun history as music teachers in WBL. I wonder where you went from there. I taught music until 1995 when I became a 3rd grade teacher until my retirement in 2010.
My heart goes out to you as you cope with your loss, comforting your children and grandbabies. May your faith sustain you and bring you peace.
Love,
Pam

Pam Powers Ellis - December 01, 2021 at 12:00 AM

LP

“ Dear JoLayne and Family,
Please accept my sincerest sympathies on the loss of your husband, father & grandfather. I am so sorry, and did not know of his health challenges. Though I have not see you in many years, JoLayne, I have so many fond memories of our teaching together in WBL. I regret that I will be unable to see you at Paul's visitation or funeral service. But I will be there in spirit. God Bless You!
Lynn

Lynn Maiers Paulson - November 30, 2021 at 12:00 AM

SM

“ I am so sorry to learn of your Dads passing, Emily. It is never easy even when you know that he is now free of pain and suffering. Praying that your memories will sustain you as move forward. Big hugs!!



Shelley Montbriand - November 30, 2021 at 12:00 AM

LA

“ We love you so much, my deepest condolences.

Linda Ash - November 30, 2021 at 12:00 AM

RT

“ So sorry Emily! Your family is in our thoughts and prayers!!

Robin Trierweiler - November 29, 2021 at 12:00 AM

KI

“ Love you and miss you, Big Brother. I know you're celebrating your new life and a whole and healthy body along with Mom and Dad, and most importantly with your Lord and Savior! We'll be coming along in a wink of an eye, your time!



Kathy & Randy Iverson - November 29, 2021 at 12:00 AM

BW

“ I love you, big brother, and miss you already.

Barbara Widen - November 29, 2021 at 12:00 AM

TM

“ *We rejoice in God's promise of eternal life and that you are celebrating with him in his glorious Heaven above.*



Tawnya Marek - November 29, 2021 at 12:00 AM

BB

“ *My thoughts and prayers are with you and the kids as you plan to celebrate Paul's life, Layney. It no doubt is a mix of grief and relief. Rest in His everlasting arms, and get some rest! In His great love, Barb*

Barb Brandes - November 28, 2021 at 12:00 AM