



Stanley Norris Olson

March 17, 1946 - September 12, 2025

Stanley Norris Olson, child of God, died suddenly on Friday afternoon, September 12, 2025. He was 79. In death, as in life, he is surrounded by the love of his family and a vast community.

Stan was born March 17, 1946 in Fort Dodge, Iowa and grew up in Eagle Grove, IA. He was baptized on April 14, 1946 at Evangelical Lutheran Church in Eagle Grove. His parents, Norris Delmar Olson and Joyce Dorothy (Narland) Olson raised their four children to lives of joy, abundant love, and care for others. Faith and learning were family priorities, and they set Stan on a lifelong path of service to God and neighbor.

He began his education in a one room school-house-Pine View School-across the road from his family farm and then graduated from Eagle Grove High School. After attending Waldorf College (A.A. 1966) and St. Olaf College (B.A. 1968), Stan went to Luther Seminary for his M.Div (1972) and then to Yale University, where he earned his Ph.D in New Testament in 1976.

In his ministry as a parish pastor in Duluth and New Ulm, Minnesota; as a teacher at Luther Seminary; as bishop of the Southwestern Minnesota Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA); as Executive Director for Vocation and Education in the ELCA; as President of Wartburg Seminary; as Interim President of Trinity Seminary in Columbus, OH; and, in retirement,

as an active member of Grace University Lutheran Church in Minneapolis, Stan was always a leader with a servant's heart. He built relationships, listened deeply, and reminded those around him of the goodness and kindness of God. Whatever his role--colleague, mentor, spouse, parent, grandparent, and friend--he strove to begin always with grace, and he lived unflinchingly in his confidence, from Romans 8, that nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus.

For 54 wonderful years, Stan shared his life with Nancy Lee (Stuckey) Olson. They met in Suitland, Maryland in 1971, when Stan was a pastoral intern and Nancy the music director. They rapidly fell into a love that sustained them through the years. They were partners in life and often in ministry, caring for their communities, their family, and the world. Together, he and Nancy raised two daughters with great love, teaching them the value of community, faith, kindness, integrity, and curiosity about the world. He instilled in them an abiding delight in words and stories and a begrudging appreciation for terrible puns. Stan and Nancy taught their children and grandchildren to love the outdoors and to notice beauty. The lakes, rocks, and pines of northern Minnesota became a defining family place. At home, Stan and Nancy walked together almost every day, watching eagles soaring over the river and birds at the backyard feeders, witnessing the changing seasons. As he wrote, "We've had a fantastic life together."

True to his Iowa farm boy roots, Stan loved to build and repair things and work with wood; and he took great joy in his garden and house plants. His appreciation for the natural world and his creative spirit led him to watercolor painting, poetry, and pen and ink drawing. He was his daughters' first and best writing teacher and their life-long guide on matters personal, professional, and practical.

In addition to his beloved wife, Stan is survived by his daughters Maren Olson

(Jamie McBride) and Christa Olson (Anna Henning) and grandchildren Finnegan, Freya, Ian, and Sila. He is also survived by his siblings Carmen Peter, Julia Wentz (Chris Simoni), and Kent Olson (Linda), his brother-in-law Richard Stuckey, and cherished nieces and nephews. He is preceded in death by his parents, his aunts and uncles, his brothers-in-law John Wentz and Leonard Peter, his sister-in-law Rusty Stuckey, and his cousins Erik Budd, Eloise (Olson) Cohen, Gary Kist, Mike Kist, and Mark Madson.

In lieu of flowers, please consider donations to Grace University Lutheran, Luther Seminary, Wartburg Seminary, or Lutheran World Relief.

Memorial service will be held on Saturday, September 20th, at 1 PM, at Central Lutheran Church, 333 South 12th Street, Minneapolis MN with visitation at 12 noon.

Previous Events

Visitation

SEP **20**. 12:00 PM - 1:00 PM (CT)

Central Lutheran Church (Mpls)
333 South 12th Street
Minneapolis, MN 55404

Memorial Service

SEP **20**. 1:00 PM - 2:00 PM (CT)

Central Lutheran Church (Mpls)
333 South 12th Street
Minneapolis, MN 55404

Tribute Wall

CR

“ I knew Stan from his years with the ELCA Division for Ministry, when I was on the seminary board at LSTC. He was personable, thoughtful, faithful, and in all ways a lovely person and excellent colleague. My condolences to his family and friends; he will be greatly missed.

Carolyn Riehl - September 26, 2025 at 10:28 AM

RW

“ Stan had a profound impact on Trinity Lutheran Seminary during a time of deep pain, confusion and grief for the seminary. I can't imagine that was easy or fun for him as our interim president. But Grace, love, pastoral presence, a listening ear, and gentle true leadership flowed from his every pore. I was a long term student and witnessed his impact through each future class who came afterward as they became more peaceful and settled. That merger could have wrecked Trinity. But it remains a profoundly transformative, beautiful place of God's work in the world. Stan was absolutely huge in this. I am so very deeply grateful for him, his servant heart for God as well as for us. Truly beyond words and inspiring to me as I pastor & serve others. □

Rev. Sara Wadley - September 18, 2025 at 09:20 AM

KS

“ Stan was a gifted and spirit filled colleague, teacher, bishop and friend. I will remember him for his wisdom, compassion, caring, and sense of humor!

Kathie Schwich - September 17, 2025 at 06:21 PM

PJ

“ He was my mother’s pastor at First Lutheran in Duluth. She adored him and loved his visits when she could no longer get to church.

peg Heidman Johnson - September 17, 2025 at 05:19 PM

MP

“ Stan was a class behind me in school and I was in church, Sunday school and Luther League with him. His legacy of Christian love will live on. Sending sympathy to your family 🙏🙏🙏

Mary Yon Paulsen - September 17, 2025 at 03:38 PM

MC

“ Stan was a wonderful classmate in school and in church! I didn’t see him often over the years, but enjoyed the times we had at class reunions! I especially appreciated the church service he conducted at the church in Vincent one year! My mom also enjoyed that service so much! I send my deepest condolences to the entire family! 🙏🙏🙏🙏🙏🙏



Mary Hanson Christianson - September 17, 2025 at 03:28 PM

LO

“ 2 files added to the album Stanley Norris Olson



Linda Olson - September 16, 2025 at 10:27 PM

IN

“ 2 files added to the album Stanley Norris Olson



Info - September 16, 2025 at 01:45 PM

KF

Stan was a man who added hope to SO MANY people. He had and used many gifts using his talents and kindness. We will celebrate your life on Saturday (and tears too). Thank you for being a friend of all of us @ Grace.

Karen Franzmeier - September 16, 2025 at 05:27 PM

GG

“ *I have fond memories of Stan when he was the bishop in Southwestern Minnesota and I was a pastor in that Synod. He was positive and constructive even in the face of the criticism which naturally comes with that position. Stan was a solid role model for pastors. I do recall that Stan happened to be at Jevnaker Lutheran Church on his fiftieth birthday and that he gamely donned the newspaper hat we made for him on that occasion. I remember Stan with a sense of gratitude.--Greg Gabriel*

Greg Gabriel - September 16, 2025 at 09:27 AM

PH

“ *Nancy and family, my condolences to you on the passing of Stan. I remember when Pastor Stan was called to First in Duluth. I was at Concordia but would drop in and talk w Stan and Mike when I was in town. One word to describe Stan: grace!*

Paul Hadland - September 15, 2025 at 11:17 PM