

*Celebrating* THE *Life* OF

*Stephen James Van Kempen*

FEBRUARY 7, 1953 – DECEMBER 25, 2023

**Services At:**

First Lutheran Church — Morris, Minnesota  
Friday — December 29, 2023 — 1:00 p.m.

**Officiating Clergy:**

Pastor Per Nilsen  
Pastor Chris Richards

**Musician:**

Lois Strei

**Family Remembrances:**

Jamie Van Kempen  
Keith Lindor

**Urnbearer:**

Jamie Van Kempen

**Honorary Pallbearers:**

*Steve's Grandchildren:*

Kye Suess, Abram Suess, Maela Suess  
Shiloh Knochenmus, Honor Knochenmus  
Andi Van Kempen, Everett Van Kempen, Cal Knochenmus

**Interment:**

Scandia East Cemetery  
rural Cyrus, Minnesota

If these walls could talk,  
They would speak of a man  
Who has worked with *great heart*  
To accomplish his plan.

They'd speak of the times  
That he's prayed in the night  
For the strength to go on  
And to **DO WHAT IS RIGHT**

They'd speak of sweet moments,  
Of laughter and fun,  
The times with his children,  
His *love* for each one.

Oh, if they could talk,  
It would be just the start  
Of a story of love,  
**A GREAT MAN & HIS HEART**

Stephen James Edward Van Kempen was born in Morris on February 7, 1953, to Blanche (Bresson) and James Van Kempen. As the second of nine children, Steve said he “usually” followed the rules, often pedaling furiously to get home by the 6 o’clock church bell. He graduated from Morris High School in 1971 and attended the University of Minnesota Crookston, earning a degree in parks and recreation. Steve took a job with the USDA Agricultural Research Service in Morris, where he worked for 35 years.

Steve met Jill Lindor on a blind date when they went bowling with friends. They were married on June 9, 1979, and were blessed with four children: Heidi, Jacob, Jamie, and Katie. Their beloved Jacob Stephen passed away in 1984 at the age of six months. Steve and Jill gave their children the ideal country upbringing on a 20-acre hobby farm north of Cyrus. When Steve wasn’t working on a project, he was playing games or ball with his kids. Over the years, the family made many special memories at their summer cabin rental on Rush Lake and on road trips throughout a total of 37 states.

Along with lending a hand to anyone who ever asked (and often even those who didn’t!), Steve was proud to be involved in community organizations including the Stevens County Historical Society, First Lutheran Church, Meals on Wheels, and the Lions Club, to name a few. He loved hockey so much that he and a couple friends started the Morris hockey program in 1979. Steve really enjoyed chaperoning several New Wine church group mission trips and driving them all over the country.

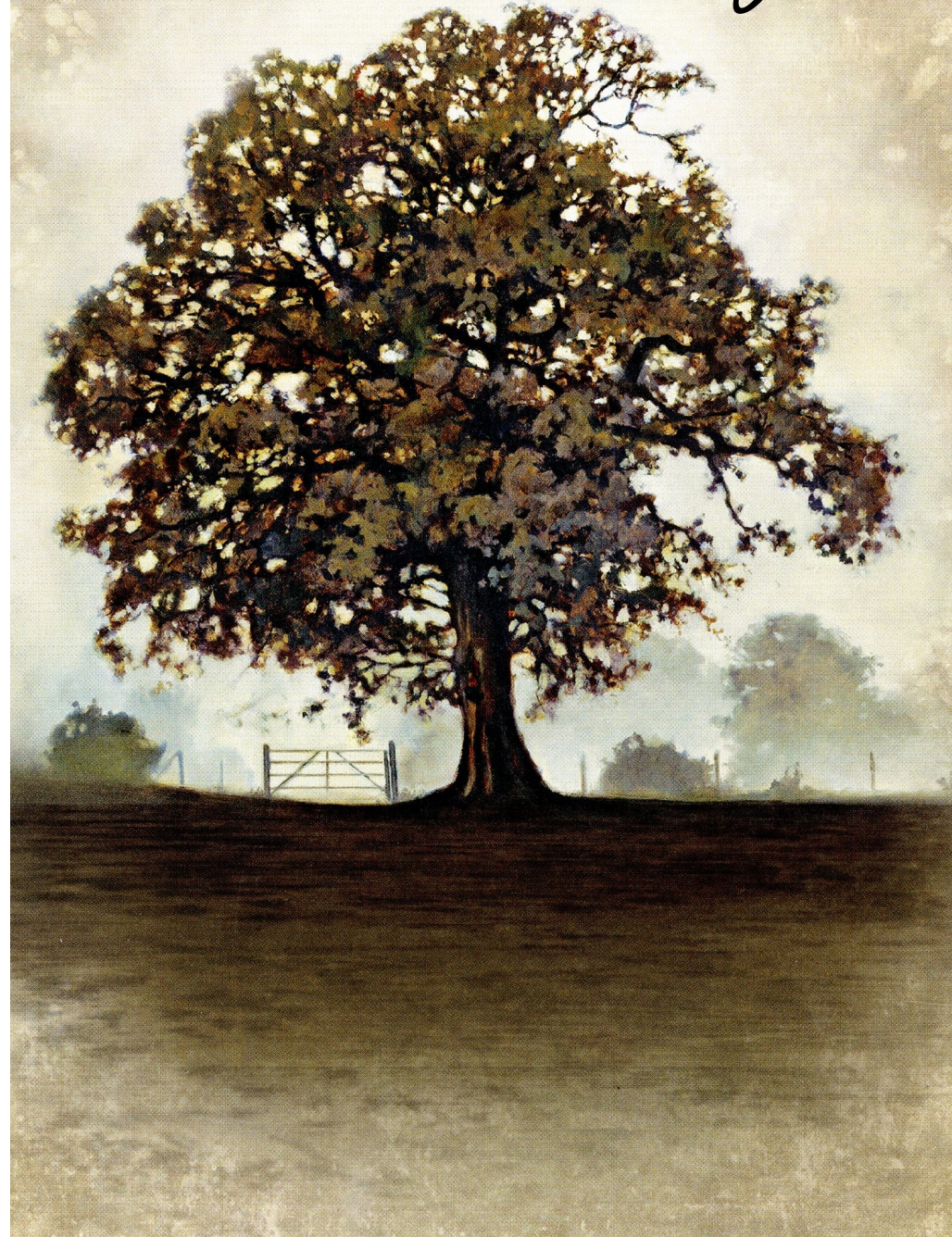
In addition to losing his son, Steve experienced the death of his father and brother at a young age, but facing tragedies gave him the remarkable gift of perspective. Steve was always his siblings’ rock; they say he offered them unconditional love and acceptance, along with wisdom and guidance. He truly understood the value of living each day to the fullest, and he measured success by the love of his family.

Steve’s joy came from the simpler things in life, such as a sunrise over the calm lake, a cup of coffee with an apple fritter, or a cool fall night in the deer stand, whether he saw the big one or not. He also had a knack for passing positivity to others while shooting the breeze. Steve got his sense of humor from his mom and spent many hours trying to beat her in Cribbage over the years. Above all, his grandchildren were first and foremost. He didn’t miss an activity, and they will very much miss Grandpa’s teasing and hugs. Until the very end, Steve had so much gratitude for life, faith in Jesus, and peace in his heart.

Steve passed away peacefully at home on December 25, 2023, his favorite day of the year. He was 70 years old.

Steve is preceded in death by his son, Jacob; mom, Blanche; dad, James; brother, Tom; and sister, Vicki. Left to carry on Steve’s legacy are his wife, Jill; son, Jamie (Rochelle) Van Kempen; daughters, Heidi (Neil) Suess and Katie (Craig) Knochenmus; grandchildren, Kye, Abram, Maela, Shiloh, Honor, Andi, Everett, and Cal; brother, John; sisters, Judy, Lulu, Jane, Nancy, and Mary; and many cherished nieces and nephews.

# I N L O V I N G *Memory*



Guestbook QR Code



Tribute Video QR Code

**Pedersen**   
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