

What is your only comfort in life and death?  
That I am not my own, but belong –  
*body and soul,*  
in life and in death –  
to my faithful Savior, JESUS CHRIST.

He has fully paid for all my sins  
with His precious blood,  
And has set me free from the tyranny of the devil.  
He also watches over me in such a way  
that not a hair can fall from my head  
without the will of my father in heaven:  
in fact, all things must work together for  
*my salvation.*

Because I belong to Him, Christ, by His Holy Spirit,  
assures me of *eternal life*  
and makes me whole-heartedly  
**WILLING AND READY**  
from now on to live for Him.



Scan the QR code to view  
George's Life Tribute video.

In Loving Memory of  
**George Bonnema**

**Funeral Service**

Saturday, December 30, 2023 - 2:30 PM  
American Reformed Church  
Luverne, Minnesota

**Officiant**

Pastor Mike Altena

**Message Theme**

George's Letter to the Church in Luverne

**Scripture**

John 15:13 Romans 8:28

**Organist**

Glenda Jacobsma

Processional - "10,000 Reasons (Bless The Lord)"

Recessional - "Hallelujah Chorus"

**Congregational Hymns**

"Love Lifted Me"

"Blessed Assurance"

**Casket Bearers**

Lance Arp	Joshua Van Engen	Marlo Arp
Nicholas Davey	Jonathan Van Engen	Megan Eaton
Aaron Davey	Jacob Van Engen	Jenae Hommes
Cody Van Tol		Megan Abbas

**Interment**

Maplewood Cemetery  
Luverne, Minnesota

Following the service, friends are invited to join the family  
for food and sharing in the church fellowship hall.

**Arrangements By**  
HARTQUIST FUNERAL HOME



In Loving Memory of

**George Bonnema**

July 18, 1949 - December 26, 2023



**George A. Bonnema** was born on July 18, 1949 in Canton, South Dakota to Jay and Jennie (Baker) Bonnema. He grew up on a farm near Inwood, Iowa. He learned about farming and the saving work of Jesus from his family and fellow church members. During his youth he raised sheep, chicken, ducks, geese, hogs, cattle, and a horse.

George met his school friends at Inwood Christian, Western Christian, and West Lyon high school. After graduation George attended Kirkwood College in Cedar Rapids, Iowa for horticulture and floral design.

His first job as a florist was in Le Mars, Iowa. It was there that he first demonstrated his career work ethic. George was looking for a job after graduating school. He walked into the local flower shop and asked if there were any job opportunities. The owner said he was too busy to talk because of a large funeral flower order. George said, "Give me a work space and a floral knife and I'll help you get the order done." He was hired.

One of his high school classmates, Corrine Van Tol, became his wife in 1970. They moved to Boone, Iowa where Corrine worked as an elementary school teacher and George worked at the local flower shop. It was in Boone where George learned to play the piano. His teacher did not want to take adult students, but he convinced her anyway. She taught him briefly, but was unable to continue due to a stroke. George continued learning on his own because he wanted to be able to praise God using music.

George's aunt, Ruth Caswell, from Rock Rapids, Iowa had an acquaintance in Luverne, Minnesota who told her the local flower shop was going to be up for sale. The business had been run poorly and was not in good condition. Aunt Ruth considered her nephew George to be the ideal new owner. The only problem was George and Corrine had just recently purchased and remodeled their first home and did not have the finances to purchase a business.

With aunt Ruth vouching for George, the local bank agreed to finance 100% of the purchase if George's dad Jay would cosign on the loan. Jay was willing to do that even though he wasn't convinced it would be a success. The purchase of the business (Luverne Flowers) was arranged with the date of ownership set by the bank as the week after Mother's Day. George said, "No, the ownership transfer will be the week before Mother's Day or the deal is off." The bank agreed to the change. George was able to start operating the business in time to serve his new customers for Mother's Day. Those customers came back to purchase bedding plants for the growing season. This was in 1974.

In Luverne, they joined the American Reformed Church and met many new siblings in Christ. They welcomed their son Grant in 1976. Their residence was a mobile home on a permanent foundation and basement which was attached to the flower shop. This home was shared by their two poodles, first Mitchell, and later Jackie.

Their next-door neighbors to the east were Leonard and Edna Wulf. Leonard and Edna had originally farmed the land where the flower shop was built. They taught George and Corrine much of the community

history. Even more importantly, Leonard and Edna had extensive knowledge of Maplewood Cemetery. This helped George and Corrine achieve the daunting task of delivering the large volume of Memorial Day flowers and plants at the time.

This friendship led to the construction of the first white wooden bridge built across the creek to make visiting easier. The bridge was built by George's father, Jay. A number of people will remember the bridge because they used it in photographs for special times in their lives.

In 1980, Leonard sold an acre and a half of land south of the flower shop to Grant. George planted 100 fruit trees to make the land into an orchard. George taught Grant how to care for the fruit trees as he grew. When the trees matured, Grant harvested and sold fruit to help pay for college.

The orchard provided a place for raising a small number of White Embden domesticated geese each season. The geese could enjoy the creek, pond, and the grass under the trees as well as any fallen fruit.

As the business grew so did George's involvement in the community. During the 1980's, the City of Luverne invested in planting many trees throughout the city and in areas such as the city park and along Blue Mound Avenue. George helped plan these efforts. He also became more and more involved at the American Reformed Church through singing, playing piano, serving on consistory, and teaching Sunday school.

In 1987, George and Corrine purchased Leonard and Edna's house and property. They remodeled the house into its current configuration. The property had room for more garden space. As George's gardens grew so did the population of unwelcomed wildlife (rabbits, muskrats, raccoons, woodchucks, possums, squirrels, etc.). His efforts to curb their enthusiasm was the subject of many funny stories.

After completing the house, the flower shop remodeling began. New construction provided additional display space and greenhouses. The mobile home was adopted by a new family and moved to a different property.

It was also around this time one of the detached garages near the house was converted to a residence for chickens. Raising chickens became an important hobby for George. Relatives enjoyed searching for chicken themed gifts for him.

George's well-known carrot cake was first used in 1993 when he began a new chapter of delivering care packages to church widows/widowers. He continued doing this every year after.

In the winter of 1994, George found himself butchering two hogs with brother-in-law, Mark Van Tol, when the price of hogs was extremely low.

A few years later, George began taking steps to transition from fully

employed with his business to retired, but still fully employed serving people. The major steps of this process were in 2002 when the landscape business was sold and in 2012 when the flower shop was sold. After retirement George was known for raising annual flowers from seed to use at community gardens, such as the Sanford Luverne healing garden which he also maintained. He shared this work with family and friends who had special gardens also.

As a thank you to his aunt, Ruth Caswell, he maintained a flower garden on her farm after her husband passed away. Aunt Ruth loved looking at the flowers. However, the appearance of the nearby barn was not up to the same standard of beauty in her opinion. In her own subtle way she made her thoughts clear to one of her sons. Some painting of the barn happened soon after. This is one of many good ways the Caswell cousins remember George.

George was a familiar face to almost everyone in Luverne and the surrounding area. In 2013, George began working part-time at Hartquist Funeral Home in Luverne where he used his gift of serving, comforting, and ministering to people. One of his many volunteer activities was helping to maintain the grounds and holiday decorations of the Luverne Hospice Cottage. Mentoring young people continued to be important to him.

As an avid gardener he and Corrine raised produce and fruit for the farmer's market, a multitude of care packages, and to supply the Rock County Food Shelf.

In 2018, George became involved with the Luverne Senior Center. There he encouraged people to imagine how their organization could transform itself and enhance its mission into the future. Today the organization is known as Generations with a growing presence in the community and a bright future ahead.

What he wanted everyone to know is that he did all of these things out of gratitude for the saving work of Jesus Christ that he accepted as a young man. All of the good things he did for other people were not an attempt to accumulate enough good works during his life or an attempt to be good enough to earn a place in heaven. Those who knew him could attest to this because of the peace and joy he shared while being so busy.

On Tuesday evening, December 26, 2023, George passed away peacefully at Sanford USD Medical Center in Sioux Falls, South Dakota at the age of 74 years, 5 months, and 8 days. George finished his time on this earth, but not in heaven.

George is survived by his wife, Corrine of Luverne; his son, Grant of Dearborn, Michigan; his siblings, Bev (Marvin) Arp of Inwood, Iowa, Sharon (Glenn) Davey of Sheldon, Iowa, and Judy (Jay) Van Engen of Tea, South Dakota; as well as many nieces, nephews, and friends. He was preceded in death by his parents, Jay and Jennie Bonnema.

Memorials may be directed to the Luverne Area Community Foundation – Generations Endowment Fund or the Rock County Food Shelf.