



The Life of Rev. Dr. David Paul Olson

The Rev. Dr. David Paul Olson, age 73, died on February 12, 2016, after a nine month battle with cancer. He was with his wife and other family members at The Neighborhoods at Brookview in Brookings. A celebration of his life will begin with the visitation on Friday, February 19 at Ascension Lutheran Church in Brookings. Family will be present from 5:00 – 7:00 p.m. A Prayer Service will follow the visitation. Funeral services will be held at 10:00 a.m. Saturday, February 20, 2016, at Ascension Lutheran Church. Burial will be in the Groton (SD) Union Cemetery at 3:00 p.m. Saturday. In lieu of flowers, please consider a donation to Ascension Lutheran Church (Memo Line: Debt Reduction) or SDSU Foundation (Memo Line: Endowed Chair for Dean of Nursing).

David was born in Sioux Falls, SD to Arthur H. and Irma (Israel) Olson on February 7, 1943. He grew up in Groton, SD. David was an excellent student and earned seven degrees in a variety of areas. His four graduate degrees were an

M. Divinity from Concordia Seminary in St. Louis, an MSW (in Community Development) from Washington University, St. Louis, an M. Ed. From Kansas State University, and PhD in Sociology from South Dakota State University (SDSU).

David was employed in a variety of positions over his career. He served as a Community Developer in University City, MO; Development Officer for the Lutheran Music Program; Director of Community Development for the Kansas City Neighborhood Alliance; and Community Development Program Director for SDSU Extension.

He married Roberta (Knickrehm) Olson on August 28, 1965 in Groton, SD. They lived in St. Louis, MO; Overland Park, KS, and returned to Brookings, SD in 1994 when Roberta became Dean of Nursing at SDSU.

David and Roberta have two sons: Aaron and Daniel. Aaron (Katherine), Amelia, and Milo Monagle-Olson, Berkeley, CA. Daniel (Cathryn) and Gregory Olson, Timonium, MD. He leaves behind a sister, Julie Olson Berry and her children, Dr. Tania Berry, Cia and Mackenson; Christopher (Laurie) Berry, Peter and Katie; Nathan (Erin) Berry, Lucy and Caroline; and David Berry. David was preceded in death by his parents, Arthur and Irma Olson, his parents-in-law, Robert and Inez Knickrehm, two stillborn daughters, and brother-in-law Jack Berry.

David will be remembered for his generosity and caregiving to others, love of gardening, and skill with making candles, wine, and beer.

Included in the Christmas/Epiphany letter this season he wrote the following concerning his journey with esophageal cancer that was diagnosed in May 2015:

I'll have to admit that I gave a start when the doctor said, "Well, now we know what you will die from. We just don't know when." However, my next response was, "OK. What's next?" I always know that there is a light at the end tunnel, and it is probably a train. But the train is not the end for me. It is the comfort and hope of the resurrection in Jesus Christ that has sustained me through life, does so now, and will in the future.

So my life question didn't change when I was diagnosed: What do I do until the resurrection comes?

My life journey has been to look for signs of God in other people especially in those who are different than I am and those who have different faiths. I believe God resides and works in them, too. Then I have tried to connect these different gifts of God so that people in their own communities work better together to make their communities better places in which to live.

So I'm still trying to do that. One new thing that I have learned is that I am not the best at being a care receiver. I have always focused on giving. The support of community people, staff, colleagues and the medical community with which we are dealing has been overwhelming. I now pray daily for those who cared about me.