

Orval L.E. Willimann

February 12, 1933 - June 30, 2023

Orval L.E. Willimann died peacefully at home surrounded by family and friends on Friday, June 30, 2023. He was born in St. Louis, MO to Grace and Oliver Willimann.

Orval graduated from New Haven High School in 1951, and in 1955 graduated with a degree in History from Elmhurst College, married Alby Ruth Baur and attended seminary at Eden Theological Seminary from 1955-1959. Following his ordination he was dually appointed to St. John UCC and Ebenezer Stone Church in Gerald, MO. In 1963 he and Ruth moved their young family to Higginsville, MO where he pastored Salem UCC until 1974. From 1974-1998, Orval served as senior pastor at Bethlehem UCC, in Ann Arbor, MI. He retired from full time ministry in 1998 to Round Lake, Manitou Beach MI. In 1990 he earned a Doctorate of Divinity from Drew University in Madison NJ. He continued to serve parishes as interim or guest pastor in West Adrian and Saline even after retirement. In 2015 He and Ruth moved into the independent living community at Brecon Village in Saline.

Influenced by his mentor, Rev. Roy Albersworth of Berger, MO, Orval felt an intense and undeniable calling into the ministry from an early age. Orval's charismatic nature, profound understanding of fellow humans, and uplifting spirit touched the lives of thousands through marriage, prayer, baptism, funerals, spiritual guidance, and friendship over his years in the ministry.

He is survived by Alby Ruth (Baur) Willimann, the love of his life and wife of 67 years. Sister Bonnie Rau (Bob), brother Harold Bruening (Ann); Daughter,

Kathleen Rice (John), Zachary (Erika), Hannah, Jonathan (Amber), Mary Grace (Austin); Son, James Willimann (Laurie), Kira Levy (Aaron), Kristof, Katie, Karly; Daughter, Kristine Willimann (Roger); Daughter, Jennifer Peters (Wayne), Erin Peters (Tyler); Craig (Firras), Kevin (Lesli); Daughter Kimberley Schneidereit (Fred), Shawn, Zoe. Great grandchildren Henry, Rhys, Brynja, Jago, Shayla and Shamdon. He was preceded in death by his parents, step father Edwin Bruening, and brother William Bruening.

His family was of utmost importance to him and his generous nature and love knew no bounds as the family continued to expand. He loved being near water. The paradise he called Eden on the Lake was their home in Manitou Beach, where he would delight in pulling his children and grandchildren on skis or tubes. He was a voracious reader and consummate connoisseur of chocolate.

Dedicated to his profession, Orval was a humble and faithful servant and strong leader. He touched and inspired many. He is forever remembered and eternally loved.

Friends may join the family for a Celebration of Life Service on Sunday, July 23, 2023 at 1:00 P.M. at Bethlehem United Church of Christ, 423 South 4th Ave, Ann Arbor, MI 48104. Light refreshments will follow the service and will be held at the Church. In lieu of flowers, memorial gifts may be made to the Orval L.E. Willimann Scholarship at Eden Theological Seminary, online at <http://www.eden.edu/donation-form/>. (Please note the "Willimann Scholarship Fund" under "Describe Other Designation"). Donations can also be mailed to Eden Theological Seminary 475 E. Lockwood Ave. St. Louis, MO 63119. To leave a memory you have Orval, to sign his guestbook or for directions please visit www.rbfhsaline.com. Arrangements are entrusted to the Robison-Bahnmler Funeral Home in Saline, per Orval's request.

Cemetery Details

Bethlehem Cemetery

2801 Jackson Ave.
Ann Arbor, MI 48103

Previous Events

Celebration of Life Service

JUL 23. 1:00 PM - 2:00 PM (ET)

Bethlehem United Church of Christ
423 South 4th Ave.
Ann Arbor, MI 48104
<http://www.bethlehem-ucc.org/>

Light Refreshments

JUL 23. 2:00 PM (ET)

Bethlehem United Church of Christ
423 South 4th Ave.
Ann Arbor, MI 48104
<http://www.bethlehem-ucc.org/>

Tribute Wall

BW

“ Dear Ruth and family, This is a late message: I just learned of Orval's death. I was privileged to work with him at Bethlehem Church for those many years. He taught me a lot and shared his strong faith which helped me to grow in my own. My memories are great and I send my heartfelt thoughts and prayers as you continue to remember and grieve. Love to all, Beverly

Beverly Weeden - November 04, 2024 at 11:18 AM



“ Orval L.E. Willimann

October 23, 2023 at 01:07 PM

GS

“ I served as Director of Music at Bethlehem Church for many years. Orval was Senior Pastor when I joined the staff. Always a compassionate leader and guide, he maintained a great rapport with his staff. He started as my supervisor and ended up a dearly beloved friend. I will always remember his staff outings and gatherings, not to mention his Missouri Muleskinner cocktails or the 25 year old fruitcake handed out as a door prize to one of us. You are missed, Orval!

Geoff Stanton

Geoff Stanton - July 23, 2023 at 08:59 PM

DR

“ I was blessed to know Orval and Ruth for over 20 years. He was a wonderful father, husband, friend and mentor. I will always remember his warm welcome and sincere attention when we were together. Powerful memories. He will be truly missed. Denise R. Blessings always

Denise Rabidoux - July 18, 2023 at 02:37 PM



“ Full Of Love Bouquet was purchased for the family of Orval L.E. Willimann.



July 17, 2023 at 01:59 PM

WA

“ I have been blessed to have Orval as my loving father in law for 39 years. It was always a great joy to spend time with Orval and Ruth. They were such wonderful role models to all their family. Life will not be the same without him.

Wayne - July 15, 2023 at 09:25 PM



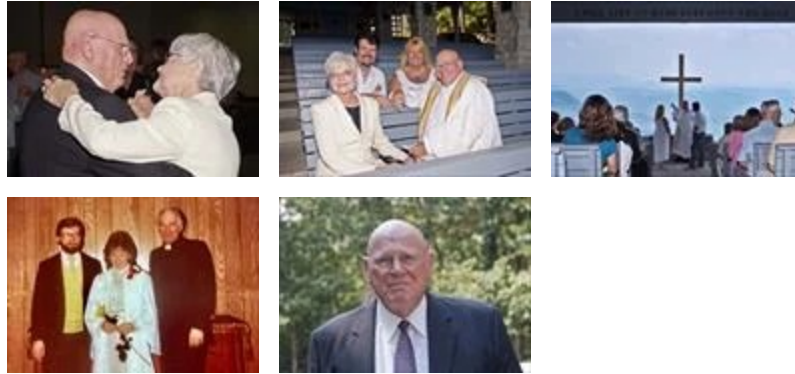
“ Enchanted Cottage was purchased for the family of Orval L.E. Willimann.



July 15, 2023 at 07:36 PM

CB

“Those who have given of themselves will live forever in each heart they have touched.” I'm not sure who wrote that, but I am quite certain that it was written with Orval in mind. 💖 Until we meet again, rest in peace Pastor Willimann.



Chris & Pamela Brown - July 11, 2023 at 10:03 PM

HM

“We're so sorry to learn of Orval's passing. Our condolences to Ruth and the family. He was a great Buddy and an Icon in our family. With Deep Sympathy,
Jackie and Hans Maier

Hans Maier - July 10, 2023 at 10:38 AM

PD

“Peggy D. planted a grove of 3 [Memorial Trees](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Orval L.E. Willimann.

Peggy D. - July 09, 2023 at 10:26 AM

ED

“ Orval Willimann was a beloved pastor to many, but to me he was my very beloved Uncle Orval. I have so many memories but one of my favorites was that he graciously presided over the elaborate "wedding ceremony" of my Barbie and Ken dolls. Love you, Uncle O!

Elise Dewsberry - July 07, 2023 at 12:36 PM

CL

“ I have a strong fondness for Pastor Williaman. His love for his congregation in Salem, at Higginsville was strong. I loved being in band with Kathy. I was later blessed to be in Hermann at the same that she, and John were serving, UMC. It was great to rekindle that friendship. God has unique ways to continue influencing our lives. I am grateful to the Williaman family. Blessings, Connie Long
4902 29th Street Unit 1d
Greeley, CO 80634

Connie Long - July 07, 2023 at 10:43 AM

VK

“ I will forever be thankful of the support and counseling Rev. Willimann provided me during my teen years. I've missed his friendly face and voice since he left Higginsville. His compassion inspired me to share through volunteering and serving those in need of support and understanding. Always in my memory and now with the angels. My prayers are for his family that their memories offer consolation in their grief.

Valerie Kile - July 07, 2023 at 07:44 AM

RG

“ Rebecca G. planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Orval L.E. Willimann.

Rebecca G. - July 07, 2023 at 12:11 AM

FF

“ From Arthur F Dewsberry and his family purchased the Country Basket Blooms for the family of Orval L.E. Willimann.



From Arthur F Dewsberry and his family - July 06, 2023 at 04:46 PM

TE

“ Thom Hosinski, along with all of EHM purchased the Large Basket Garden for the family of Orval L.E. Willimann.



Thom Hosinski, along with all of EHM - July 05, 2023 at 12:34 PM

TE

“ Thom Hosinski, along with all of EHM planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Orval L.E. Willimann.

Thom Hosinski, along with all of EHM - July 05, 2023 at 12:34 PM

TH

“ Thom Hosinski lit a candle in memory of Orval L.E. Willimann



Thom Hosinski - July 05, 2023 at 11:00 AM

KM

“ I have many wonderful memories of Orval from his time at Bethlehem. He did many family baptisms, weddings, and funerals. He will be greatly missed. My sympathy to Ruth and his family.

Karen Moore - July 03, 2023 at 04:46 PM



“ Simply Elegant Spathiphyllum was purchased for the family of Orval L.E. Willimann.



July 02, 2023 at 03:36 PM