



A Legacy  
of Life

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## Obituaries



### **Thomas L. Peterson**, Age 70

Visitation Location: Bethlehem Lutheran Church, St. Cloud, Minnesota  
 Visitation Date/Time: Friday, May 3, 2024 from 10:00 to 11:00 AM  
 Funeral Time: Friday, May 3, 2024 at 11:00 AM  
 Funeral Location: Bethlehem Lutheran Church, St. Cloud, Minnesota

### **Thomas L. Peterson, 70** **St. Peter** **October 22, 1953 – April 20, 2024**

Thomas L. Peterson passed away on Saturday, April 20, 2024, at his home in St. Peter, MN supported by his wife Debbie and surrounded by loved ones after an on and off battle with Leukemia.

As a pastor's son, Tom grew up moving around the Midwest but finished high school in 1971 while in Minnesota and considered the state his home as he continued to move throughout his life. He was recruited by the United States Air Force Academy (USFA) for football and track, a school which set a foundation for aviation - an activity which would become his lifelong career and passion.

Tom's career in aviation began in 1975 and spanned 49 years. He began a 20-year Air Force career as an instructor pilot in the T-38 jet trainer and would later transition to large aircraft such as the RC-135 and E-4. His military career took him all over the world culminating as a commander for a reconnaissance squadron in Omaha, NE. Tom spent the next decade flying for Airborne Express and capped off his career at Minnesota State University in Mankato teaching young aviation students until his passing. Always humble, Tom rarely spoke of his accomplishments, but he affected countless men and women as a leader and mentor referred to by his students as the "Godfather of aviation."

Outside of aviation, Tom loved the outdoors, working out, spending time with family, and Diet Coke. His greatest pleasure was to experience all these at once at his lake cabin on Potato Lake; he would work outside on projects in the morning, go for a run, play with family in the afternoon, and enjoy a "refreshment" in the evening.

Tom is survived by his wife of 49 years, Deb and his sons with

their families: Chad (Emily) and their children, Ava and Elena; Jesse (Nita) and their children, Addi and Sam. Tom is the middle of three children, leaving behind his brothers Paul (Beverly) and Mark (Andy).

A celebration of life service will be held at 11 a.m. on Friday, May 3, 2024, at Bethlehem Lutheran Church, St. Cloud, MN. Visitation will be one hour prior to the service at the church. Arrangements are with Benson Funeral Home, St. Cloud.

In addition, a memorial service will be held at 11 a.m. on Friday, May 10, 2024, at the Mankato Regional Airport Hangar, 3030 Airport Road North, Mankato, MN. Lunch will be served immediately following the service.

*Send your condolences*

Benson Funeral Home invites you to use the form below to share your memories and offer your sympathy to the family of the deceased. We will be honored to pass them along.

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