



## Rev. Dr. John H. Siefken

May 21, 1939 - December 30, 2022

If you have been blessed, you must go forth and be a blessing.

On December 30th of this year my dad, the Rev. Dr. John Siefken, known also as dad, grandpa, John, Johnny, Reverend and Pastor John, passed from this world. He was surrounded by his family, and his pastor, and I believe he smiled when we all sang "Jesus Loves Me." His heart had fought valiantly for 2 months, for it was a good heart, though perhaps not the strongest heart. But the heart belonged to a person who loved people, gardens, football, McDonald's fries, chatting, coffee, hot cocoas and who had the biggest laugh of anyone you ever knew. So that heart just kept working, just kept giving more, until it couldn't, and somewhere in the quiet of a year that was ending, we said he could let go, that we loved him and that we would be ok, and he believed us, and so he moved on to be with his beloved momma, his strong-hearted dad, and his precious sister Joan, who died just 2 days earlier. He went to be with Jesus, who he loved with a courage and grace that made it impossible not to believe there was so much more to life than what you can hold in your hand.

John Siefken was a junior, born to John Siefken and Florence Ekblad. He was the brother of Joan and Jean Siefken. They played together, made plays together, ate pies together, and grew in faith together. My grandpa walked to church each day by himself as a boy, and Florence's mom was an organist for

the local church. His dad was Mayor of the city, a speech writer for John Deere and an inventor/business owner. John called him "my best friend." His beloved mother would be the first female President of the School Board, something her youngest child was immensely proud of. Florence also graduated with a major in math from Augustana College, and John was fond of pulling out her report cards and showing everyone how remarkable his momma was. His sisters were brilliant, kind and strongly involved with community service. It is hard to talk about John without talking about the family he so deeply adored.

John Jr. attended Sunday School, and a church camp where, on Team Philemon, he led his fellow campers to the gold trophy in all-around sporting events. Growing up he learned to play tennis with his sister Joan on the courts of Butterworth Park, where his sister also ran the local games club. He would go on to play #1 at his beloved John Deere High School, where he was also a captain of his football team. A gentle soul, he wasn't much for tackling, but tennis would stay with my dad all his life, winning various adult leagues and playing through college. Joan and John's love of tennis would carry on to their grandchildren, where their patient instruction and encouragement transformed to love of the game. My dad was raised in a strong tradition of love and faith, of community service and laughter, on seven magical acres, where he spent his days sliding town clay hills and running with his sisters from Freddie the Goose.

My dad went on to win the National Championship in debate at his beloved Augustana College, where he has since established a scholarship fund. Debate was a great passion of his, and he would continue it as coach of Augustana College, and even going across the pond to debate against Cambridge. Called to ministry, John moved to Detroit in the 1960s and mentored under Conrad Trued at Immanuel Lutheran. My dad was in charge of youth outreach, helped run the youth bible program, was chaplain for the

Mother's Club at the Parkside Housing Project, and started a tutoring program at Northeastern High School. He was honored to receive the Volunteer of the Month Award for Detroit. He started Head Start programs, being a strong advocate of early childhood education and its accessibility for all children. I think today of all the children who received affordable, quality early childhood education, and I think of the legacy of compassion and the incredible work put forth in the optimism of 60s-70s era young people.

John stayed in Michigan, married his wife of 49 years, Mary Lou Siefken, and raised his children Todd and Heather with a kindness and grace that would have made his mom proud. He stayed home with his children during the days, working from a home office, and watched his young son run wild around the backyard, taking him in the afternoons to play tennis at the Clawson courts. He made open faced peanut butter sandwiches for me, walked me daily to the library and post-office, and often joined me for my 1:00 viewing of Sesame Street. Mary Lou was his partner in all things. A talented pianist, dad was always so thankful and inspired by her talents. She played the organ and piano and started the Junior Choir. Dad loved her so deeply, and where you know it's the little things, she told me she will forever miss the way he always made sure her Starbucks card was full, and she had a new coat. They loved each other with the simple grace, characteristic of the life they lived.

A pastor of 37 years at Prince of Glory Lutheran Church in Madison Heights, John, with the help of so many wonderful friends, installed the HVAC system, put on a new roof, built an accredited preschool program, and became a pioneer in adult education. Prince of Glory was a labor of love. Love of Christ, love of good works, and love of humanity. My fondest memories were monthly workdays, where dad and so many like-minded friends would wax the floors, fix the driveway and end it all with a hearty pizza. He loved everyone and would have told us that he was blessed by the wealth of talent and

graciousness in Christ's congregation, and it truly was a special place to grow up. It was a church filled with song (dad was tone deaf and his patient friends still encouraged him to sing), laughter, and the love of Christ. And being Lutheran, it was also filled with casseroles, coffee, Jell-O salads, and excellent brownie deserts. In his later year he found himself burying the friends he found at POG, and beyond. His heart was heavy with these losses, but he always returned to the altar for them. He had been blessed by their graces, and his voice, always strong and true, echoed with thanks and the love he knew from Christ.

In his retirement, he continued his work in church outreach, and was a passionate advocate of charitable giving. He loved being in his woodworking room. Anyone could ask, and dad would make them something. So many friends can point to a piece of furniture John made for them. For his grandchildren he built armoires, desks, bedside tables, and everything else he thought they needed. And in the spring and summer he was in his garden, a beautiful space teeming with roses, and wildflowers he excitedly found, bleeding hearts and moon flowers. The garden was a space where all things were offered a helping hand and allowed to thrive. Quietly, each morning, he would garden, and his bunny would sit beside him. The bunny was a passionate advocate of eating John's flowers, and John was fine with letting him eat. So John grew things, the bunny ate things, and the garden grew to be a beautiful, gracious place that he was so proud of, and we all loved.

If you needed a friend, or someone who wouldn't judge you, he was there. If you needed a hug and a cup of coffee, he was there. If you thought your dog was awful because it ate a pound of turkey meatballs, he would tell you it's really a good dog. And when your beloved dog died, he would tell you there was a place in heaven for it too, and he would tell you this right away, because he would leave right away to get to you. To hug you and buy you a pizza.

John is survived by his dear wife Mary Lou, his son Todd, his wife Jen and their son Liam, his daughter Heather, her husband Justin and their three children Brody, Rory and Sophia. He was a kind, devoted and loving spouse, a father blessed with infinite patience and empathy, who continued to encourage and support his children up to his last moments on earth. He knew the location of every ice cream store in Clawson, MI, and loved to walk with his kids to get milk and an orange popsicle. He was a grandfather who took so much joy in every moment spent with his grandchildren. He loved to watch their tennis tournaments and hockey games. He ran up and down their lawns on knees he had long since replaced, and that still caused him pain, chasing after baseballs a child had probably lobbed ten feet from his glove, encouragingly shouting "Good pass. Good pass." He watched princess movies and made lovie talk. He loved to put sticks in the fence. If a chocolate bar was dropped on the floor, a new one was bought. And perhaps another and another. If a grandchild was sad, there was an ear to listen, and a heart to care. And always their feelings were important, their opinions respected.

Just like how you never know it will be the last sugar cookie you eat from your grandma, or the last time your dad tells you that same story once more, that story about Freddie the Goose that he has told you a thousand times, I encourage you to sit for the story, because just as my dad was so precious, he always reminded me how precious we all are, and how precious a gift life is. And please forgive my editing. My dad always edited for me.

There will be a memorial gathering Saturday, January 7, 2023 from 9:00 a.m. until the time of the memorial service at 10:30 a.m. at Beautiful Savior Lutheran Church, 5631 N. Adams Road, Bloomfield Hills, MI 48304.

# Previous Events

## Memorial Gathering

JAN 7. 9:00 AM - 10:30 AM (ET)

Beautiful Savior Lutheran Church  
5631 N. Adams Road  
Bloomfield Hills, MI 48304

## Memorial Service

JAN 7. 10:30 AM (ET)

Beautiful Savior Lutheran Church  
5631 N. Adams Road  
Bloomfield Hills, MI 48304

# Tribute Wall

CB

“ We are so saddened to hear of the passing of Rev. Siefken. Just this past August he officiated at the funeral of our nephew. His calm and loving eulogy was very comforting to us. Wishing you the same comfort that he gave to us.

Charlotte Bruce - January 24, 2023 at 03:31 PM



“ "On Angel's Wings" Sympathy Gift Wind Chime to Send for Funeral Or Memorial was purchased for the family of Rev. Dr. John H. Siefken.



January 06, 2023 at 09:47 PM

RW

“ Sending hugs to MaryLou, Todd, Heather and families. My family was so blessed to enjoy John as a spiritual leader and as a friend for so many years. Randy Wanttaja

Randy Wanttaja - January 06, 2023 at 08:06 AM



“ Peaceful White Lilies Basket was purchased for the family of Rev. Dr. John H. Siefken.



January 05, 2023 at 06:13 PM

SP

“ I will always remember Pastor John and his lovely wife Mary Lou using the work-out room at Red Run. Many people always start the new year with grand intentions, but of course only a few continue throughout the entire year. John and Mary Lou had such dedication. Becoming a "sweat-hog" was a badge of honor. Pastor John and Mary Lou would always inquire about my Family. Two of the few people who would be genuinely interested in my Life. Pastor John will be sorely missed. A Life Well Lived John.

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**Scott L Pyykkonen** - January 05, 2023 at 02:09 PM

JW

“ I attended Immanuel in Detroit as a kid and was there when John was the Vicar. We had fun together with his great sense of humor. He took me to Moline in his van to pick up an organ to bring back to Michigan. He has a green Ford van with a stick shift. He let me drive part way to learn how to drive a stick. Not fun. Visited his church in Madison Heights then lost touch until Facebook a while back. You will be missed, John. Well done good and faithful servant. You influenced my walk with Christ like no other. Thank You!!

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**Jim Westlake** - January 04, 2023 at 12:27 PM



“ Divine Peace Bouquet was purchased for the family of Rev. Dr. John H. Siefken.



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January 03, 2023 at 09:34 PM

CC

“ I first met John in the early 2000's at a pastoral colleagues' weekly Bible study which he hosted at his church in Madison Heights. I always appreciated his wise insight and his deep knowledge of church history. A few years later, at the church I was then serving, John provided pastoral supply (with Mary Lou often simultaneously at the keyboard) which they drove all the way from Birmingham to Lapeer to provide! I was graced during those years with a beautiful piece of John's woodworking, which remains in a prominent place in our home today. Mary Lou and family, we pray God's comfort, strength and peace for you as you mourn your losses, even as we celebrate the lives of two very special people - John and his sister Joan.

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**Carol (Wright) Christiansen** - January 03, 2023 at 05:03 PM

NT

“ I met John and Mary Lou at the Red Run gym. I truly enjoyed hearing John's stories about his youth and his work. John was a wonderful man that will be missed. RIP

Take care,  
Nick Tomasek

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**Nick Tomasek** - January 03, 2023 at 03:59 PM

DR

“ As the Chaplain for Red Run Golf Club, John was always a calming influence and brightened the day of anyone running into him in the gym as he read his newspaper while riding the stationary bike. He offered the invocation at the club's annual meeting for more than 40 years and he did so with wisdom & grace. RIP John!

*David Robinson*

*President*

*Red Run G.C.*

*2005-06*

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**David Robinson** - January 03, 2023 at 02:39 PM

KF

“ *Karla Larson and family purchased the Basket Full of Wishes for the family of Rev. Dr. John H. Siefken.*



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**Karla Larson and family** - January 03, 2023 at 02:00 PM

CG

“ *Carol and Ken Gold purchased the Beautiful Dreams for the family of Rev. Dr. John H. Siefken.*



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**Carol and Ken Gold** - January 03, 2023 at 10:08 AM

WG

“ I’m grateful to have been confirmed by Pastor & married by him as well. My husband and I learned so much from him during our wedding classes we attended almost 22 years ago. We got to know him on a personal level with great stories we both shared. Most importantly I will never forget how much it meant to us that he came to the hospital to see us & our son who was born 9 weeks early. He even baptized our son while in critical care in the NICU. I will remember him for his stories, his laughter, his compassion, his sermons & his love of his family. My heart & prayers go out to his wonderful family.

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**Wendy Guy-Brewster** - January 02, 2023 at 09:40 PM

PV

“ We met Pastor Siefken 36 years ago when we moved to the area and visited Prince of Glory. There was something special about him and the church. A few weeks later we returned and he remembered us by name. We became members of POG and raised our children there. I asked him on several occasions if he was looking thru our windows because so many of his sermons spoke to the struggles we faced that week. He told us he had it on good authority that the sermon was just what people needed to hear as he was pointing up to heaven. May God bless you, Pastor and Mary Lou and your family as well. You will be sorely missed. Well done good and faithful servant. Love and prayers, Dan and Peg Vandenhemel

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**Peggy Vandenhemel** - January 02, 2023 at 09:04 PM

RW

“ It was our privilege to introduce John to a member of our choir at Calvary Lutheran Church in Clarkston. Her name was Mary Lou. He stole her away and they married. We celebrated that joy every year on the anniversary of that meeting. God bless him in Jesus' nearer presence, and strengthen Mary Lou and their family in this challenging time. With our love, Pastor Bob and Beverly Walters

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**Robert Walters** - January 02, 2023 at 08:51 PM

CP

“ Pastor John always knew what words were needed to comfort or direct. His love of his family and friends included loyalty and endless compassion. He will be greatly missed by so many . Much love to Mary Lou and his entire family.

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**Chris Purtell** - January 02, 2023 at 07:14 PM

BE

“ I so enjoyed his sermons and how he could always tie scripture to events that had recently happened. He was so smart and he read many genres.

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**BetsySwanson** - January 02, 2023 at 04:51 PM