

John Gary Nordstrom Sr.

September 13, 1940 – September 1, 2025

Christ Community Church
807 LaSalle Street, Ottawa, Illinois

Pallbearers Benjamin Bagwell
Jacob Bowlin
Kaedon Cronkright
Tommy Reynolds
Joshua Schmidt
Andrew Terry
Gentry Nordstrom
Hudson Nordstrom
Nelson Nordstrom
Noah Nordstrom
Leonidas Williams

*Honorary
Pallbearers* Michael Bachmeyer
Greg Davis
Greg Eilders
Dan Hennenfent
Ron Lovins
Gary Modessit
Gil Michel
Karl Norem
Paul Russell
Shaker Samuel
Joe Sullivan
Wilbur Zeal

Thank you, Christ Community Church, for loving John Sr. so well.

Interment will take place at Oakwood Memorial Park following the service.

Family and out-of-town guests are invited to a luncheon at the Ottawa YMCA at 2 o'clock. While you're there, please be sure to visit the Seed Chapel, named in honor of John and Phyllis.

Order of Service

You'll Never Walk Alone

Sung by John at his Senior Prom, 1958

Kristen Propp

Opening Prayer and Remarks

Duane Flemming, friend and Overseer

Obituary Reading

Natalie Nordstrom

Eulogy

Pamela Cronkright

Eulogy

Philip Nordstrom

Eulogy

Paul Nordstrom

The Lord's Prayer

Glenda Nordstrom

Meditation and Eulogy

John Nordstrom

Hope on the Horizon

Kaedon Cronkright

Remarks

Dave Norris, a son in the ministry

Remarks and Closing Prayer

Brian Wangler, grateful fellow traveler
and CCC Overseer

Congregational Song —

Great is Thy Faithfulness

Philip Nordstrom

Reflections

from John's grandchildren

A few weeks ago, Grandpa said, almost in passing, “Melissa, you make me feel like a grandpa.” I’m so glad I circled back to clarify his intent. Sure enough, he wasn’t saying I made him feel old. He just loved who he was as a grandpa. There’s no doubt he also loved who he was as a husband, dad, great-grandpa, son, brother, pastor, friend and more. The loss of grandpa feels especially big because he joyfully filled those roles and was loved by so many.

In his role as grandpa and great-grandpa, his love showed up in so many small but meaningful ways. Hikes at Starved Rock, always followed by ice cream cones his stomach couldn’t handle. Sitting proudly through grueling beginner band concerts. Swimming and road trips—to the Covered Bridge in Princeton (RIP), the Spillway, Alexandria, the Indiana Dunes, and Nebraska. Teaching me how to spell and how to get the semis to honk their horns. Slipping us quarters, dollar bills, lemon drops, and yes—more ice cream cones. Tea parties and tractor rides/crashes. Graduations from preschool all the way through graduate school. Singing “The Lord’s Prayer,” unforgettable and beautiful, at my wedding and many to follow. Delighting in, and repeating many of the same activities with his great grandkids. I got the sense that his favorite hobby was just being with us. What a gift!

Woven throughout all of my memories isn’t just what Grandpa did, but what he didn’t do. He never pontificated with unsolicited advice or lectures, even when I’m sure I made choices that raised his internal eyebrow. He never turned to criticism or pressure. Instead, he just kept showing up— at events big and small—always sweet and full of faith in God and us. Grandpa modeled how to love God, family, and countless others with gentle and dignified determination. There was room enough in his heart for all of us, just as we were, and for that, I’m eternally grateful.

Forever his granddaughter,

Melissa Nordstrom Terry

It feels next to impossible to sum up what to say about Grampy as I have sweet memories from him throughout my life. Apparently I chose him over my dad to do the honors of baptizing me because he was also the preferred tooth puller. Fast forward a few decades, he and Gramma worked so hard to make their back yard the perfect spot for my wedding to Josh. The sermon that day (preached by the preferred officiant, my dad) was titled “Gardens & Trees”. That yard represented the lush security I felt in the love of my grandparents, shaded by a strong heritage full of story. Their faithfulness has developed the rich soil from which I, my marriage, and countless others far beyond our family have grown from.

Hearing so many stories about him in the last few weeks has confirmed what we already knew: whatever role he played in your life and at any stage—grandpa, brother, pastor, mentor, or friend—he knew who and how to be. Wise words in a tough moment, a quiet hug when your heart was broken, genuine curiosity when you might’ve felt overlooked, or a perfectly timed one-liner to cut the tension; Grandpa’s life work was to embody love. He was a silent legend, quietly transforming those around him with his mere presence. While he never sought the spotlight, he rose to the occasion when needed. And he’d take any chance to direct attention to someone else.

Each and every one of us is fortunate to have experienced his love. And we’ll continue to honor his life as we learn how to love like Jesus—which is exactly what he was aiming for. That, and maybe one more trip to Tone’s Cones.

Andrea Nordstrom Schmidt

Grandpa understood that his grandkids needed him to just be “Grandpa,” and he leaned into that role. When I was young that looked like taking me to my first Notre Dame football game, touring me through the ND hall of fame, driving me and my sisters around on his little John Deere, hosting me for week-long summer getaways, and constantly inquiring about my little league baseball career. As an adult, it became more about loving on my kids, commiserating about family, business, and health challenges, discussing the Cubs/Bears/Irish or the most recent Sunday finish of golf’s major tournaments, and a constant affirmation of just how proud he was of all of us. At each stage, the interactions were natural and warm; there was never an agenda or an anxiety about making sure he taught me all the lessons I needed to learn. He was just happy to see and be with me, every single time. I’m so thankful that he gave that to me and that he stuck around long enough for my wife and kids to receive the same.

Gentry Nordstrom

This month, my legend of a grandfather left his cane behind to run on streets of gold. When Grandma asked what I wanted of his, I knew instantly it was his cane, because I’m working on earning my limp, too.

Last summer Grandpa came for his last visit to Arkansas and my 2-year-old twins fell in love with him and his cane. They made their own canes out of sticks they found and they followed him all over the living room learning to walk like him. They look for canes on every walk now, and when they find them, they mimic his limp.

His limp didn’t come on suddenly from one moment. It came from a life of tireless striving to walk like Jesus and love His people. It came from chasing a girl way out of his league who had the same

passion for God as he did, and building a life with her that was marked by affection, authenticity, determination, holiness, and love. It came from planting a church just after being diagnosed with a terminal disease that was supposed to take his life in months. He pressed on with his calling, and went to Mayo Clinic where he survived double kidney transplants. It came from holding onto hope while watching all of his hospital roommates die. It came from raising his family to love the Lord and make their lives count. It came from moving to our town to help my dad pastor a church, where they worked side by side in ministry and in raising me and my siblings. It came from the long walk down our school hallway to tell our class what had just happened on September 11th. It came from me and my sister wearing out his knees on his tractor, from holding me tight at the casket of my first friend that ever died young; from running donuts to us every Saturday, and from returning to the church he planted all those years ago to continue to help it thrive under the leadership of their new pastor, his oldest son. It came from riding the chairlift down and back up the stairs to bring my Grandma coffee every morning. It came from holding his great grandbabies while he sang over them. It came from our the deep waters we waded through on our calls when I was diagnosed with a deadly disease at the same age as he was when he went to Mayo Clinic to fight for his life. He was my first call when I needed to sob or look for answers in my pain or remember that I'll get through this. He got it from loving and taking care of all of us who were lucky enough to be loved by him.

So Grandpa, thanks for going into heaven limping. Worn out. Out of breath. Thank you for making every last second count. Thank you for those last beautiful words you mouthed to me before you left... "I love you, baby."

I love you, Grandpa. I promise I'll teach my kids to keep earning their limps too.

Kristiana Bowlin

If you knew him longer than about 10 minutes, you knew my grandpa had a voice of an angel. It wasn't the kind of voice that demanded attention, but one that invited it, warm and rich, with a natural melody that seemed to come from deep within him. I remember how his voice filled the house every family gathering, inviting the rest of us to join as he sang songs of hope and faith, usually old hymns.

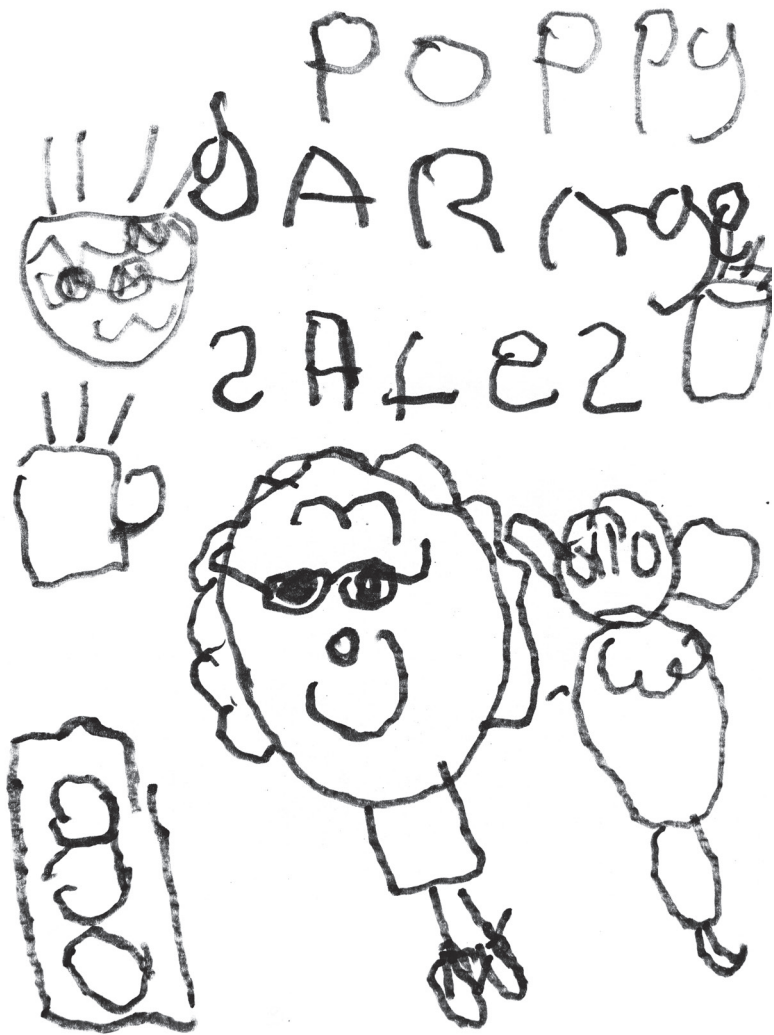
His love for music was contagious and I caught it. He taught me to listen, to truly listen. He taught me to be intentional with words, rhythm, melody and harmony, and the silences in between. Every detail matters. He nurtured his voice and music with care, and in return, it became a gift to everyone who had the chance to hear him.

Even though Gramps is no longer with us, his voice still lingers in the corners of my heart. When I sing, I can feel his influence. And now, as I pass down the songs he taught me to my own kids, I know that his love for music will live on. The beauty of his voice may have faded from this world, but its echo continues to inspire those who remember, and it will continue to be carried on for generations to come.

One of the most heavenly experiences I ever had on this earth was in the context of a choir. My hope is it was just a glimpse of what is to come. Grandpa, I look forward to the day when we sing together again!

I love you, Grandpa.

Kristen Propp



“Poppy garage sales with his dog, Mac and cheese, coffee, and a cake.”

Madison Cronkright

It is easy to tell the stories of how strong and resilient my grandpa was. He overcame so much by trusting in God and trusting in God's greater plan. So it is ironic that as we approach the days of the funeral, I am being forced to practice my patience and trust in God as my husband and I anticipate the arrival of our baby girl. Literally the timing of her arrival will determine whether or not I will be able to attend the celebration of his life. There were many days and nights over the last few weeks where I pleaded with God to bring our daughter sooner, so I could be with family during Grandpa's final days. But God's plans were different. And just like my grandpa, I am trusting God with each day.

You can be sure my daughter will know of the strength, faith, and trust that my grandpa had in God. But I will also share the stories of how he loved people, and even animals with tender love.

I spent the days before Poppy passed thinking of all of the things I wanted to say to him before he left us and went to be with Jesus. But when the time came for me to say good-bye, the only thing to say was, "I love you and I am so thankful for the life you lived. I am so blessed to be loved by you.'

Carleigh Williams

A week before Poppy passed, I woke up for my morning run. As I stepped outside, I noticed a cow's loud "moo" off in the cow yard. It was followed by multiple other loud and drawn out "moos". This was abnormal. After my run, I went over and noticed the calves were separated from their mommas. The owner was preparing them for sale. This separation was agonizing, but I guess it was something that needed to be done. Now a week later, I find myself identifying with that separation and agony. I am now separated from my grandfather John Nordstrom Sr. I lost my Poppy.

My Pops was and is my biggest role model. James says, "Faith without works is dead." My grandpa lived his life in full pursuit of Jesus. Not because he wanted to earn God's love, but because he wanted to know the man who loved him more than anyone else could. My Grandpa lived the gospel.

If you think I have a tinge of a voice, then you shoulda heard Pops. He had vocal strength even on his deathbed. But he didn't use his instrument for anything other than the Lord. He knew his voice was a gift and he chose to honor the gift giver with it. I'm going to miss him singing whatever old hymn was stuck in his head as he walked throughout his house.

I was fortunate to have been able to be close to Pops these last few years as I've embarked into ministry. He shared wisdom and insight whenever I'd ask, and he was my biggest encourager. He loved me. I loved him. I've been dreading this day for a while, but I'm so thankful he's with the One who loves him more than anyone else.

In my grieving, Poppy's life has inspired me to live out this verse from 1 Corinthians 15:58. "Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain." Grandpa was steadfast, immovable, and abounded in the work of the Lord. When my life is done, I want the same to be said about me.

Kaedon John Cronkright

Two years into knowing Poppy, he called me over at church one day, sat me down, and held my hand. He then asked me something along the lines of, “I love having you around—will you join my family?” and I said, “Yes!” not realizing at the time what a blessing being part of his family would be, and what a special moment it was between the two of us.

Poppy was full of love, and so was his family. He led them well, loved the Lord, and poured encouragement into the people around him—especially me. He encouraged me in my role at the church, often reminding me that he was proud of the work I was doing. It’s hard to put our relationship into words, but it was easy and natural.

He loved me like I was one of his own, and I will always be grateful to have had him as a grandpa. He was there to celebrate some of my biggest moments, and he offered the right words of comfort when life was hard. Every moment with him was a good one—from dinners and dominoes, singing “The Lord’s Prayer” at my wedding, to listening to the stories he had to share.

I’m so thankful I had the chance to witness the kind of man he was and to share in his story. He radiated joy everywhere he went—and he told me I did too. Maybe that’s why we connected the way we did. He often called me “Shelly” to be silly and bring a smile to my face, but nothing compares to what it felt like to call him my Poppy.

Shelbi Cronkright



Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.

Philippians 1:6 (KJV)