A Celebration of the Life of

Albertus “Bert” Zwiers

August 20, 1948 - October 22, 2025

January 31, 2026
at one o’clock in the afternoon

SAINT PAUL’S CATHEDRAL
San Diego, California

As a courtesy to others, please silence electronic devices.

St. Paul's Cathedral acknowledges that we gather on unceded Kumeyaay land. We value the knowledge, culture, and worldview of Indigenous people. We commit to the vital work of educating ourselves, increasing community awareness, and promoting reconciliation with our Indigenous neighbors. As we examine actions and practices that perpetuate harm against Indigenous communities, we pledge to work toward a meaningful and respectful relationship as we follow their example in honoring this sacred land.

Approved by the Cathedral Chapter, May 2023

Assisted hearing devices are available from an usher.
This service is being streamed live and if you don't wish to be seen on camera, please ask an usher for appropriate seating.

Welcome and Program Note:

Welcome, friends and family. Thank you for being here with us today to celebrate our Dad in a service that he himself wrote. Dad's wish was for this service to be at St. Paul's Cathedral and to be contemplative, meditative, and personal. Please join us in silent reflection. Beneath some of the musical selections, all of which Dad chose, are reflections he wrote about those particular pieces. This service is a gift from him to all of us.

Please join us after the service outside in the Labyrinth courtyard for conversations, stories about Dad, and to enjoy some of his favorite treats.

Organ Prelude

Look at the World John Rutter

Lord our Lord, Your Glorious Name William F. Sherwin

Reflection: God's glory displayed in the heavens inspires the psalmist and us to proclaim the greatness of God's name. So great is the LORD's name and glory "in all the earth" that praise from even the weakest members of society, infants and children, will silence God's enemies. The starry heaven's majesty shows what puny creatures human beings are, and yet the One who fashioned the moon and stars has also crowned humans with almost godlike glory and honor.

Chorus

Agnus Dei Samuel Barber

Chorus

Thanks be to God, He Laveth the Thirsty Land, from *Elijah* Felix Mendelssohn

Welcome The Very Reverend Penny Bridges,
Dean, St Paul's Cathedral

Family Reflections

Chorus

O Magnum Mysterium Tomás Luis de Victoria

Chorus

O Magnum Mysterium Morten Lauridsen

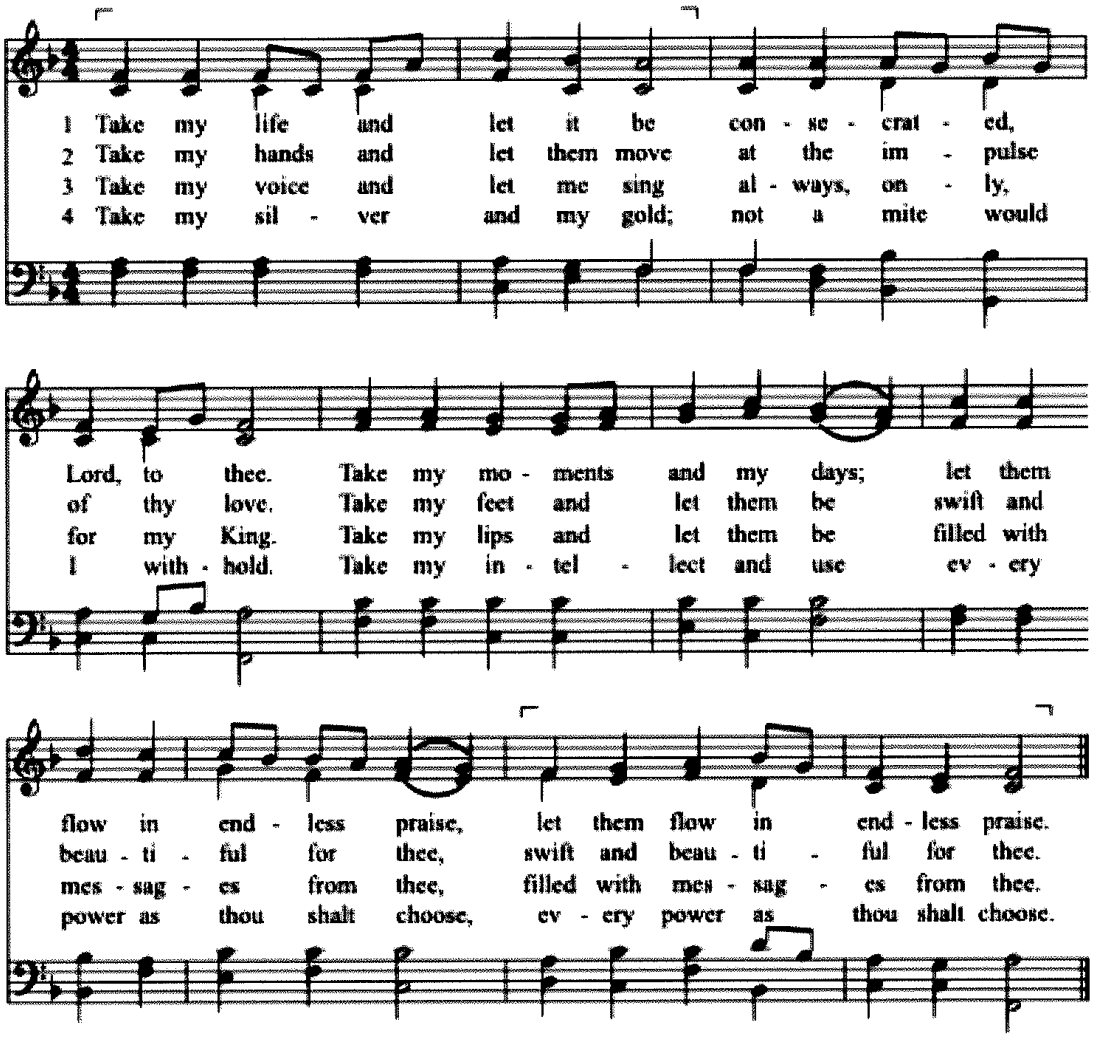
Chorus

Da Pacem Domine Arvo Pärt

§ Please stand as you are able to sing the following hymns.

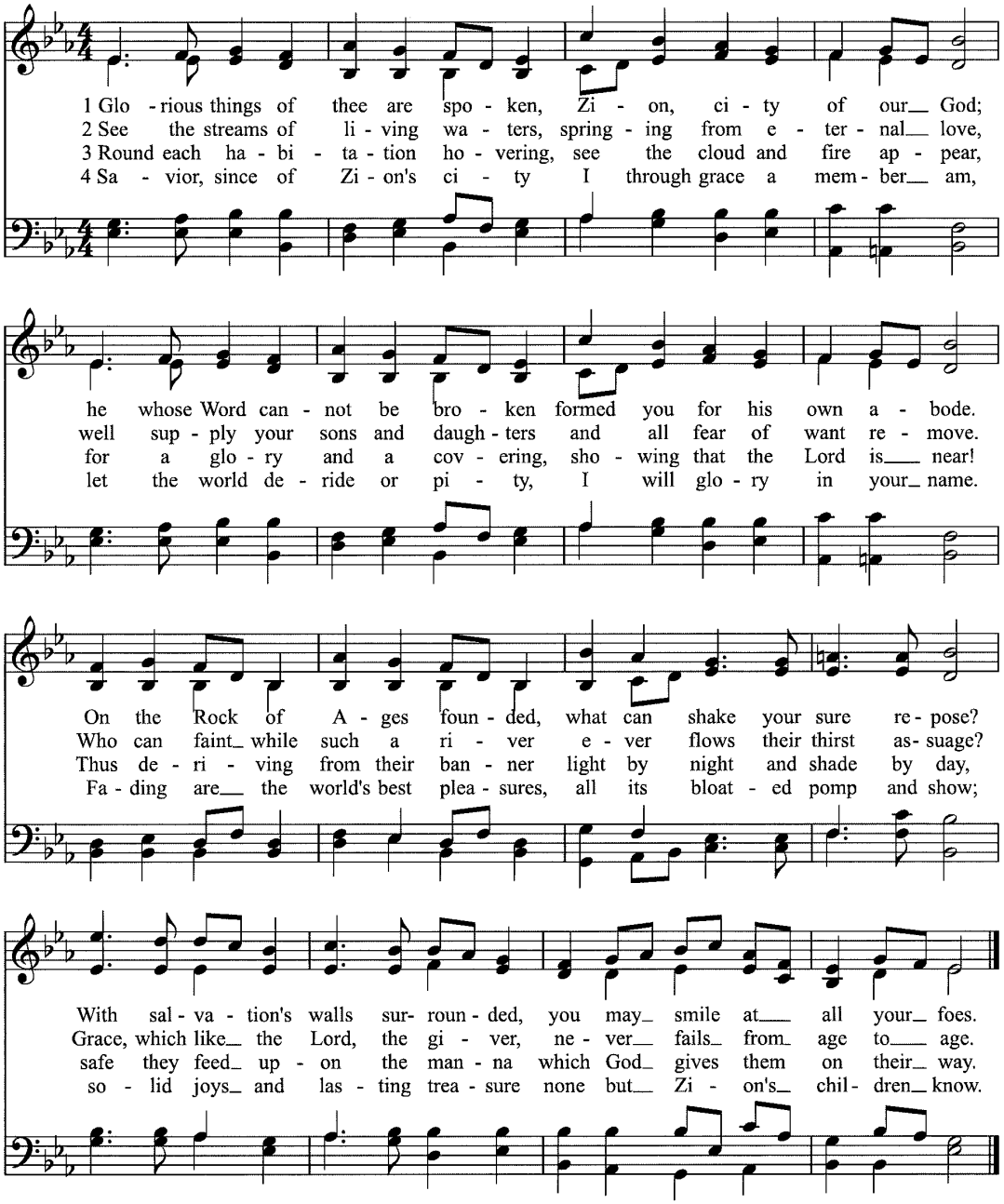
"Take my Life and Let it Be Consecrated, Lord, to Thee" (**verses 1, 2, and 3**)

Reflection: My Profession of Faith in the CRC at age 18 challenged me to present myself always as a "living sacrifice" - as shown in Calvin College's motto as a 'heart' offering.



Text: Frances R. Havergal, 1874
Tune: H.A. Cesar Malan, 1827

"Glorious Things of Thee are Spoken" (**verses 1, 2 and 4**) John Newton



Text: John Newton (1725-1807), alt.
Tune: Franz Joseph Haydn (1732-1809)

§ Please be seated.

Reading

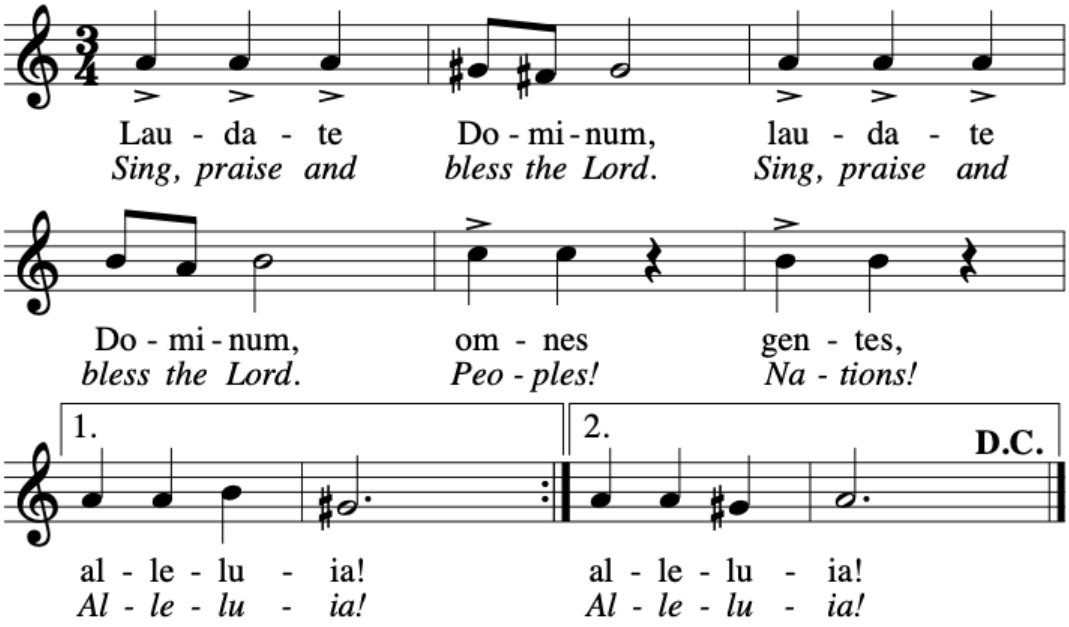
Psalm 46 The Very Rev. Penny Bridges

God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble;
Therefore we will not fear, though the earth be moved, and though the mountains tremble in the heart of the sea;
Though the waters rage and swell, and though the mountains quake at the towering seas.
There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God, the holy place of the dwelling of the Most High.
God is in the midst of her; therefore shall she not be removed; God shall help her at the break of day.
The nations are in uproar and the kingdoms are shaken, but God utters his voice and the earth shall melt away.
The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our stronghold.
Come and behold the works of the Lord, what destruction he has wrought upon the earth.
He makes wars to cease in all the world; he shatters the bow and snaps the spear and burns the chariots in the fire.
'Be still, and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations; I will be exalted in the earth.'
The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our stronghold.

§ Please stand as you are able to sing the following hymn.

Taize hymn sung together, led by chorus

"Laudate Dominum" Jacques Berthier



§ Please be seated.

Reading (pre recorded, read by Bert's sister Rita, from London, Ontario, Canada)

Dutch nighttime child's prayer: "Ik ga slapen, ik ben moe …"

Ik ga slapen, ik ben moe,	*I'm going to sleep, I'm tired,*
'k sluit mijn beide oogjes toe,	*I'm shutting both my eyes,*
Heere houd ook deze nacht,	*Lord, care and watch*
Weder over Bert de wacht.	*over Bert this night.*
't Boze dat ik heb gedaan	*The wrong that I have done,*
ziet het Heere toch niet aan:	*Do no look upon it, O Lord;*
Schoon mijn zonde vale zijn,	*Wash away my many sins,*
Maak om Jezus' wil mij rein.	*May Jesus live in my heart.*
Amen	Amen

Chorus

The Lord Bless You and Keep You Peter C. Lutkin

Silent Reflection

"Writing on Nature" Bert Zwiers

Ah, Nature - my "home", God's Playground - created and sustained by Spirit. Why would l want to spoil it or correct it? - it's perfect! I once wanted to clean up a little area, but now I know to leave it alone. I see myself in all of it; the old cut-down tree stumps with new growth, a dead twig coming out of a living branch, fallen debris on the ground and even caught in the tree further up, multiple living upstarts from long dead trees, twisted and gnarled trunks and branches, the wind (Spirit) whipping through the quivering leaves to and fro not knowing where it came from or where it's going (just like I can't see the face of God, but only the backside [as Moses]), and more…

I want to live here forever! Even when I close my eyes (and when I die), I can still hear and feel the wind/Spirit around me. I'm at home!!!

Across the street from where I live there is a small ravine with a path running through. Because of my physical limitations I cannot reach it. I can't see where it begins or where it leads to. A dry creek runs alongside it and sometimes flows over it in rainstorms (yes, it does rain here in San Diego - rarely!) But I can 'walk' with Spirit in this Playground; even 'floating' above the rain-covered path!

Reading The Reverend Canon Brooks Mason

Psalm 8

LORD, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth!
You have set your glory in the heavens.
Through the praise of children and infants you have established a stronghold against your enemies, to silence the foe and the avenger.
When I consider your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have set in place,
what is mankind that you are mindful of them, human beings that you care for them?
You have made them a little lower than the angels and crowned them with glory and honor.
You made them rulers over the works of your hands; you put everything under their feet:
all flocks and herds, and the animals of the wild,
the birds in the sky, and the fish in the sea, all that swim the paths of the seas.
LORD, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth!

Chorus

Glory to God, from *Messiah* George Frideric Handel

Sung in English, Spanish, Latin and Dutch

Solo

Rejoice greatly, from *Messiah* George Frideric Handel

Hannah Arevalo, *soloist*

Chorus

Achieved is the Glorious Work, from *Creation* Franz Joseph Haydn

Silent Reflection

Spirit says "I am who I am"
Who do you say YOU are?

The question is profoundly personal and took a lifetime for me to answer: "Who am I really?"

GOD IS LOVE, therefore I am.

The Commendation The Very Rev. Penny Bridges

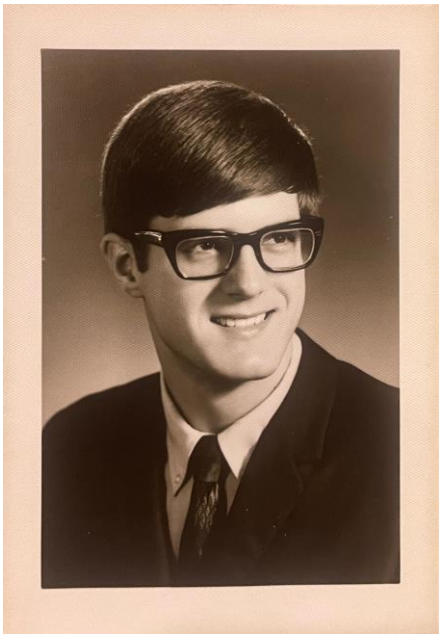
Postlude

What a Wonderful World Bob Thiele and George David Weiss

Reception *Please follow the directions of the ushers.*

Please join us after the service outside in the Labyrinth courtyard for conversations, stories about Dad, and to enjoy some of his favorite treats.
We are very glad you all could be with us today. We would like to give a special thank you to the following people for making this service possible:

Martin Green
Palomar College
San Diego Master Chorale
Our friends in the choir
St Paul's Cathedral
Cindy Williams and Tom Nunns for baking many cookies
John Russell
Dad, for creating this beautiful service to share with us all



Albertus (Bert) Zwiers

Aug 20, 1948 - Oct 22, 2025

Dad was an explorer: of the world, people, his heart and his mind. He was humble, selfless and hard-working - most likely because of his immigrant roots. He was an open-minded Dutchman: inclusive, curious about all people, deeply spiritual, and funny. He was not concerned with the rules he was supposed to follow. He swam upstream. He was okay being himself. He thought outside the box.

Dad was very intelligent - and wise. He looked at the world deeply. He read everything and understood the power of good music. Dad taught his kids the gezellig pastime of playing games together and getting lost in jigsaw puzzles. Many hours of calm quiet were spent around the puzzle table together. You definitely wanted Dad on your trivia team. He also loved words and was very punny. Every Christmas he would create a code we had to crack to know which gifts were whose. Dad loved music. We can remember him laying on the living room floor with his headphones on listening to his classical records, or out loud with the music streaming up the stairs into our bedrooms as we fell asleep. As a Dad, he was eternally patient, a gentle giant, and he was proud of us, but more importantly wanted us to be proud of ourselves.

Dad loved to eat. As much for fun as to fuel his non-stop work ethic especially in his gardens. He ate anything, everything. But especially dessert. Breakfast usually was coffee and cookies. And no one could Dutch clean a plate like Dad. It was always fun to cook or bake for him because everything was lekker. Some of his favorite Dutch foods were dropjes (salted black licorice) and pickled herring. In his gardens, he couldn't pass a stone out of place or an errant weed. They were his sanctuary and place of peace. He would get lost among the plants.

Dad was born in Nijverdal, The Netherlands on August 20, 1948 to Geertruida (Gritter) and Hendrikus Zwiers. He was the first of five children. He remembers his early days in Holland taking long walks in beautiful wooded areas and skating on frozen canals. When he was four, he, his Mom, Dad and siblings Everett and Rita emigrated from Hoek Van Holland and sailed across the Atlantic to land in Nova Scotia settling in London, Ontario, Canada. His family lived a humble immigrant's life in cramped, communal quarters with another Dutch family until they moved into a rental home of their own. During these years his two other siblings Janet and John were born. Dad talked fondly of his years growing up. He had good memories of his parents and siblings and extended family, especially his Aunt Neicia and Uncle Arie and Aunt Jo who were very supportive of him in his early years. He enjoyed school and liked the challenge of being top in his classes. Dad had great memories of going to a family friends' house to watch hockey all together on their tv; of his urban life of walking to school and church; of taking long solo bike rides with a radio tied to his handle bars so he could listen to classical music; having his own paper route; helping his Mom and Dad with their vegetable garden; and ice skating on the park's rink.

When Dad was 18 he adventured again and moved to the United States to attend Calvin College in Grand Rapids, Michigan. He paid for his college tuition with his hard-earned paper route money. Originally Dad thought to become a seminary student and live a single bachelor's life, but halfway through his time at Calvin he met an exciting woman named Jane Van Drunen who happily changed his mind. He then decided to follow his other interests in chemistry and biology. After graduating from Calvin, Dad and Mom were married on December 19, 1970. They moved to Bethesda, Maryland where Dad began his Master's Degree in Biology at George Washington University. He paid for his tuition with a night job as a phlebotomist while Mom worked at the National Institute of Health.

After graduation, they moved to Hinsdale, Illinois where they bought their first home - a true fixer-upper and found one of their shared passions: home and garden projects. Dad hauled and laid countless bricks for walkways and patios, while Mom directed. This became a pattern they followed for the rest of their lives. While living in this home, they started their family. Their first child was stillborn and Dad and Mom lived on with that grief in their hearts. Then along came Jill and Paul and the family enjoyed lovely years together in that cozy home.

Dad's work took the family to Detroit for 6 months and then finally to Kalamazoo, Michigan where he earned his prized job working for UpJohn in drug safety. While living in a rental house on Calhoun street, Mom and Dad planned their dream home which they completed in 1980. Mary was born in 1982 and completed our family. For 34 years Dad worked his dream job at UpJohn, which turned into Pharmacia, and then later Pfizer where he proudly and loyally worked in drug safety until his retirement in 2014. Nothing made him prouder than when the first COVID vaccines rolled out the doors from his former building in Kalamazoo.

Dad was proudly Canadian. As a family, we took many weekend trips across the bridge to Canada to visit family in London, Ontario. Dad always led us in singing "Oh Canada!" every time we crossed the border. Dad had hockey in his blood. He was the most animated when at hockey games - transforming from quiet, patient Bert to cheering, excited hockey fan as soon as he smelled the rink. He knew the calls before the refs did. In 1997 Dad became a US citizen, but we know in his heart he was always Canadian, with deep reaching roots to his Dutch heritage in The Netherlands.

Dad's insatiable quest for adventure took him to visit over 20 countries across 6 continents. While he loved to travel abroad, as a family we also spent a lot of time driving and camping across the US and Canada; from Maine and the Atlantic Provinces to California, and Washington to Florida. We are thankful for the sense of adventure he instilled in us.

Dad and Mom moved to San Diego in 2020 to build and live in a cottage in Jill, John and Parker's backyard. Dad was very sad to see his life partner and wife of 52 years fade before us. The last years of Mom's life were hard and sad, but together we cared for and loved Mom as hard as we could. Dad found support in his family and friends and in grief groups, therapy, music and visits to the ocean.

While Dad's ataxia limited his body and movements in some ways, he took on those limitations with patience and determination. He rode his red electric scooter all over our neighborhood - living a very happy and independent life, making friends in everyone he met from neighbors to the Candy Lady to unhoused people to kids walking their dogs.

Dad's deep quest for adventure and asking questions continued until his last days. His cottage was full of books and newspaper clippings, his head bent over reading deep in thought or journaling. A visit to Dad's cottage meant conversation was going to go deep. He made new circles of friends and had deep conversations about his life journey with people at St Paul's Episcopal Cathedral, Dharma Bum Buddhist Temple, Hillcrest's LGBTQ+ Center and the First Unitarian Universalist Church. He attended many Prayer Circles and silent retreats, always looking deeper into himself and his concepts of faith, spirituality and humanity.

The home and gardens Dad and Mom built in Kalamazoo remain in the family and the kids and grandkids will continue to spend time in the summer there together, walking through the gardens Dad patiently tended, remembering their gentle, unconditionally-loving, hard working, loyal Dad.

We kids know what a different path our thoughts, hearts and lives have taken because of our independent-thinking, questioning Dad. He loved us unconditionally and only dreamed for us to be ourselves.

We miss you and love you Dad.

Family and friends will plan to celebrate their Grandpa, Dad, Brother, Uncle, Cousin and friend Bert in a number of ways: in San Diego on Saturday, January 31 at 1:00pm at St. Paul's Cathedral in Hillcrest. All are invited and the service will be live streamed for those not able to attend. Please contact church for livestream link. Smaller gatherings will be planned in Kalamazoo, Michigan and London, Ontario in the near future. Dates for these are yet to be determined.

Albertus (Bert, Ahzet) Zwiers died on Wednesday, October 22, 2025. He was preceded in death by his wife Jane Ellen Van Drunen, son Eric Zwiers, and parents Geertruida Gritter Zwiers and Hendrikus Zwiers. He will be lovingly remembered by his daughter Jill and her husband John Russell, along with their son Parker; son Paul and his wife Susan Howard, along with their daughters Sydney and Lane; and daughter, Mary Taylor and husband Ben along with their sons William and Cole.

Bert will also be lovingly remembered by his brother Everett and wife Pauline; sister Rita Heersink; brother John; sister Janet and husband Steve Stewardson; and their families.

Family and friends are invited to donate to any number of Dad's favorite places and causes:

-National Park Foundation: www.nationalparks.org
-National Ataxia Foundation: www.ataxia.org
-First Unitarian Universalist Church, San Diego: www.firstuusandiego.org
-St Paul's Episcopal Cathedral, San Diego: stpaulcathedral.org
-The San Diego LGBT Community Center: thecentersd.org
-Dharma Bum Buddhist Temple, San Diego: www.thedharmabums.org

A letter from Bert's sister Rita -

Some of my earliest memories of my brother Bert were when Bert, Everett and I would play up and down the quiet street we lived on, and in the West Lions Park, which was just a short block away. Several neighbours would sit out on their front porch and they would engage in conversations with us. I think this is one of the ways how we first learned English after having immigrated from Holland.

In the Winter, we would spend many hours skating on the outdoor skating rink in the park, and we would go tobogganing, maneuvering around the pussy willows on the medium-sized hill, and avoiding the trees and bumps on the very steep hill. One time one of my brothers didn't stop on time and ended up in the creek at the bottom of the dangerous hill. What a soaker he got!

In the Summer we spent countless hours playing on the park swings and monkey bars, and swimming in the wading pool. The parks and recreation department of the city would hire recreational leaders to run outdoor programs for us every weekday. Boy were we spoiled.

One of the highlights of the week was when we got our weekly allowance of five cents. There was a variety store just a block away, so off we would go with our precious five cents. Bert taught me to spend my money wisely — on candy black balls and bubblegum and liquorice Twizzlers and liquorice cigars. We could get three black balls for a penny, one piece of Double Bubble chewing gum for two cents, one red or black Twizzler for two cents, and once in a while we would blow the whole five cents on one liquorice cigar.

Already back then we learned how to recycle. We would pick up discarded glass pop bottles from the side of the road, and get a two cent deposit back at the variety store which we of course spent wisely, lol.

When my brothers were old enough to have bicycles, one of them would let me sit on the crossbar and off we would ride to Gibbons Park to take swimming lessons or to go to the free public swim time in the afternoon. It seemed like such a long distance away, especially when we had to walk instead of bike, but Google maps tells me it was only 1 mile away from our house at 140 Wharncliffe Rd. North.

Thank you, Bert for being such a good older brother to me, and for giving me such fond memories of my childhood! May you rest in peace.

With love, your younger sister, Rita

In the unlikely event of an emergency requiring us to evacuate the cathedral please follow the directions of the ushers and vergers and remain as quiet and calm as possible.

Please locate an exit nearest you.

The exit doors are:

- ❖*South porch doors at Nutmeg Street and Fifth Avenue*
- ❖*North porch doors to Fifth Avenue Courtyard*
- ❖*South transept east and west doors to Nutmeg Street*
- ❖*Northeast hallway door to Fifth Avenue breezeway*
- ❖ *West chapel (to the left of chapel altar) stairs leading down to landing.*

ST PAUL'S CATHEDRAL

EPISCOPAL