

## Connie (Bruess) Lukes, 66



May 6, 1958- April 16,2025

**PROTIVIN** Connie (Bruess) Lukes, 66, of Protivin, Iowa, passed away peacefully, surrounded by those who loved her most on April 16, 2025, after a courageous battle with cancer. Born May 6, 1958, Connie was the sixth of ten children born to Art and Irene Bruess, and from day one, she had a big heart, a quick wit, and a personality that drew people in.

Mass of Christian Burial was held at 10:30 a.m. Monday, April 21, 2025 at Holy Trinity Catholic Church with Fr. Nick Radloff and Deacon Jim Zajicek presiding. Visitation was held on Sunday, April 20, 2025 from 4:00 to 7:00 p.m. at the Holy Trinity Church, and continued from 9:00 a.m. until 10:15 a.m. on Monday before the service.

Connie was known for her kindness, her honesty, and her sharp sense of humor. If vou met her once, you remembered her. She made people laugh, feel seen, and feel loved - and she didn't take life too seriously, even when it threw challenges her way.

Connie graduated from Turkey Valley High School, where she was a standout student and athlete, excelling in six-on-six basketball and softball. Her athletic talent took her to Ellsworth College and later to the University of Northern Iowa, where she helped lead her team to a national championship in softball. Connie was later inducted into the UNI Hall of Fame - an honor she rarely mentioned but

deeply cherished. She continued playing softball well into her 40s, and was famously known for her flexibility and her signature move: doing the splits at first base while making the play.

Connie didn't just play sports –she coached them too. She always brought out the best in her players. The kids respected and adored her both on and off the field, whether it was telling jokes, giving pep talks or throwing her left handed "spin-

After moving back to Protivin, Connie worked at Larson's - a local bar and grill. Eventually, Connie took over the business and called it "Connie's Place" - many drinks and laughs were shared during these years.

Connie went on to work at Donaldson's in Cresco, Iowa for 32 years, where she was known for her strong work ethic, sense of humor, and ability to form lasting friendships. Her presence brought warmth and laughter to the workplace, and her coworkers became like family. Creative to her core, Connie was the queen of throwing together candy bar posters and hilarious custom books for birthdays, retirements, and special events. If Connie made you one of her signature gifts, you knew it was going to be the highlight of the event and talked about long after the party ended.

Every year, Connie eagerly anticipated one of her favorite holidays-Halloween. Her home quickly became a favorite stop for all the Protivin trick-ortreaters, who looked forward to seeing what imaginative (and sometimes scary) costumes Connie would unveil each year. infectious excitement made Halloween a little more magical for everyone in town.

She was also the heart of family gatherings - always the one bringing open-faced ham sandwiches, chip dip, broccoli and rice, and her famous breaded pork. Everyone looked forward to her food and her presence in equal measure.

But more than anything, Connie loved her family. She was the beloved wife of Keith Lukes, proud mom to Megan (Panos) and mother-in-law to Kyle Panos, and the best 'Nana" to Ryder, Lainey, and Ellie. Her grandkids lit up her world, and she lit up theirs She is survived by the above

along with her siblings Donna (Doug) Reiseck, Kathy (Dale) Ryan, Diane Sullivan, Jan Hansmeier, Larry Bruess, Randy (Zita) Bruess, Betty (Doug) Soukup, and Cindy (Ed) Behr along with her mother-inlaw, Agnes Lukes, sisters/brothers-in-law Julie Schwade (Al Bagby), Lori Lukes (Dean Graven), Lynn (Rodney) Franzen, Greg (Lori) Lukes, Randy (Dawn) Lukes, and Carla Lukes (Paul Johnson), as well as many nieces, nephews, great-nieces,

Connie was preceded in death by her parents, Art and Irene Bruess; her sister, Susie Bruess: brother-in-law, Bill Sullivan; and father-in-law, Russell Lukes.

Connie was truly one of a kind. She was the kind of person who made everything more fun, more heartfelt, and more meaningful. She leaves behind a huge group of family, friends, and former teammates who will miss her terribly - and remember her forever.

In lieu of flowers, memorials may be directed to the family.

## Janice "Penny" Erickson, 88



1936- April 11, 2025

SUMNER- Janice "Penny" Virginia Erickson age 88 of New Hampton, IA, formerly of Superior, WI, died Friday, April 11, 2025, at Hillcrest Living Campus in Sumner, IA.

An informal Celebration of Life will be held at 10:30 a.m. Saturday, May 17, 2025, at the Bertha Community Center, 205 2nd Ave NW, Bertha, MN 56437. Inurnment will be held at the Germania-Moran cemetery in Bertha, MN.

Janice was born to Margaret Schneider) and Gustav Carl Messer in Staples, MN in 1936. When her baby brother couldn't pronounce "Janice," she became Penny, a nickname she went by all her life. She grew up surrounded by family, siblings, and neighbors on a busy family farm in German-American Bertha, MN. Although the Great Depression was ever-present, it was a time of happy memories: sneaking sugar to make fudge (thinking mother Margaret wouldn't notice the scent of chocolate in the air), driving the Model T, or stealing a pie meant for company from

After graduating from Staples High School and Business School, Penny moved to Minneapolis and worked as a bookkeeper, including a stint on the typists' floor at the Northwestern National Life Insurance on Loring Park. (This was later renovated into apartments, which was discovered when grandchild Max rented one!) She married Lou Harpel in 1956 and welcomed Joni Lynn (1958-1959), Lee (1960), Lon (1964), and Holly (1966). After they divorced in 1979, Penny's life entered a new chapter. Penny met Vernon Erickson on a blind date. After their marriage in 1982 and eventual retirement, they moved to their beloved lake home on Lake Amnicon in Superior, WI. They spent many good years participating in the Tri-Lakes Civic Club, where they hosted many a fish fry, meat raffle, and pontoon boat regatta; worked on craft projects together; and made many good friends. All who lived around the lakes in that era knew Penny and Vern!

Upon Vern's passing in 2014, Penny moved to New Hampton to be closer to daughter Holly and son-in-law Reed. She lived with Holly and Reed near Mikkelson Park for 11 years, enjoying the Christmas lights especially. Penny enjoyed "Crafterday" (full days of crafts!), penny slot machines, classic country music, Vikings football, shopping (especially making up boxes of little gifts for loved ones), and "making memories" (something she said often). She never met a casino buffet, an As Seen on TV kitchen gadget, or a Pink Squirrel she didn't like. Although full of life here on Earth, she was excited to return home to the family farm and see her mother and dad once again, including reuniting with baby Joni Lynn and hus band Vern on the other side.

After surviving multiple cancers and COPD, Janice sustained several strokes and was called home peacefully on April 11, just a few days shy of her 89th birthday. The family thanks the staff of MercyOne New Hampton Medical Center, Senior Life Solutions, Northern Iowa Therapy, and Hillcrest in Sumner, IA.

Penny is survived by her children, Lee Harpel, Lon Harpel, Holly (Reed) Palo; grandchild, Max (Chris) Winebrenner-Palo; best friend and sister Joan Stark, brother Roger "Butch" (Carol) Messer; and childhood friend of the family, Sonny Dovenmuehler.

She was preceded in death by her parents, Margaret and Gustav Messer; daughter Joni Lynn Harpel; spouse, Vernon Erickson; siblings DeNola (Ed) Pearre, Barbara (Al) Smith, Evangeline "Pat" (Bob) Williams, Bob (June) Messer (Bob) Anna (Bill) Shea, Donna Messer, and Gordon "Swede Messer; brother-in-law Dean Stark; and soul dog Katie.

## ~ Pastor's Column ~

Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe." (John 20:29b)

For churches using the Common Lectionary (the Bible readings chosen for all Sundays and Holy Days in the Christian year) the story of Doubting Thomas, John 20:24-31, is recounted the Sunday after Easter – every year...for decades.....maybe for cen-

Every year we hear again how the disciples saw the risen Jesus, Thomas states, "Unless I see the mark of the nails in his hands...I will not believe" Jesus appears next time and Thomas declares faith, then Jesus says, "Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe."

I confess the story does seem to contain a little catch. The disciples got to see Jesus, to touch him and talk with him. Thomas, after initial doubts, got to see Jesus. Others in those earliest years, such as Paul, got to see Jesus. Centuries later we Christians "have come to believe" but, as Jesus himself said, we "have

Or haven't we? One major image for the Church is that it is the Body of Christ. As members of the Church, as members of that Body, we are the hands, the feet, the eyes, the ears of Christ in the world. When we see and touch, support and serve one another, we are

Christ visible to one another. And we are Christ visible to

the world. If the world is to SEE Jesus today, they will see him first in the Church that is his body, or they won't see him In this Easter season that

celebrates the presence of the living Lord among us, may our neighbors, communities and world see Jesus, hear his voice and touch his hands in our words and deeds, in our compassion and graciousness, in our reconciliation and peacemaking, in our selflessness, service and love.

Pastor Jeff Jacob Unity Lutheran Parish

# Tonya Delatorre, 59



Oct. 19, 1965 - Apr. 13, 2025

CRESCO - Tonya Delatorre, age 59, of Cresco, Iowa, died on Sunday, April 13, 2025, at Regional Health Services of Howard County, in Cresco, A Public Visitation will be

held on Sunday, April 27, 2025, from 11:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m. at the Hindt-Hudek Funeral Home in Cresco, Iowa.

Tonya was born on October 19. 1965 in California, to Jimmy and Sharon (Barnhart) Matsutani. She married Ricky Delatorre and they were together for over 30 years. Tonva was always a fighter, she didn't have the easiest life, but she never gave up. She was com-

pletely family oriented and loved her children profoundly; they were her entire world. She also loved delicious food and a good nap. Tonya will be dearly missed. Tonya is survived by her par-

ents, children Kati Schultz of Cresco, IA, Michelle Scott of Dyersville, IA, Robert Scott of Aurora, CO, Ricky Delatorre Jr. of Cresco, IA, Summer Delatorre of Cresco, IA, sister Rhonda Lechuga, grandchildren Dylan, Maci, Manual, Tayshawn, Makenna, Tayshawn, Makenna, Cheyanne, Kayden, Allie, Jaxson, Lucy, and niece Alicia. She will forever be with us in our hearts.

## Arnold Leff, 70

LEROY - Funeral services for Arnold L. Leff 9:30 – 11:00 A.M. Saturday at the Church. will be held 11:00 A.M. Saturday April 26, 2025 at LeRoy Lutheran Church LeRoy, MN with Pasthe Saratoga Cemetery. Visitation will be from charge of arrangements.

Arnold Leff, age 70, of Riceville died Sunday tor Herman Bakker officiating. Burial will be at IA. Hindt Funeral Home of LeRoy, MN is in

# **Church/Activities**

#### <u>Lawler Immanuel Crane Creek</u>

Luth.

Pastor Sue Cira Sunday: 9:30 a.m. - Lawler

### <u>Christ Our Hope Cluster</u>

Tuesday to Sunday: Daily offerings on https://face-book.com/ChristOurHopeCluster/
Saturday, April 26: 4 p.m - OLMC; 6 p.m. - SJN Sunday, April 27: 8:30 a.m. - HT Protivin, 10:30 - St.

#### Cresco Community Chapel

Pastor Gordon Eggleston

Sundays: 9 a.m. - Sunday School for all ages; 10 a.m. Morning Service; TBD - Aletheia Youth Group Wednesdays: 6 p.m. - AWANA

## <u>Cresco First Lutheran Church</u>

Pastor Leo Combs-Lay
Wednesday, April 23: 7 p.m. - No Confirmation
Sunday, April 27: 9 a.m. - Worship Service (sunday school after children's message) coffee fellowship following the service Tuesday, April 29: 11 a.m. - Cresco Area Text Study; 8

p.m. - NA Meeting

## Cresco First/Zion UMC Rev. Melissa Warren

#### Cresco Immanuel Lutheran

Pastor Dan Baldwin Sundays: 9 a.m. Worship with Communion; 10 a.m. -Fellowship "Devotions to Begin Your Day" on KCZQ Monday, Wednesday and Friday at 8:05 a.m.

Wednesdays: 5:15 p.m. - GLOW Meal; 6 p.m. - GLOW Class and Confirmation Class; 7 p.m. - WoW (Worship on Wednesday) Service with Communion

Bible Study options: WELCA "Circle of Grace" - second Wednesday each month at 9:30 a.m.; Men's Breakfast Bible Study - Every Thursday at 7 a.m.; Sunday Adult Bible Study with Pastor Dan every Sunday at 6 p.m.; Mid-Month Communion - second Thursday of the Month at 2 p.m.; "Coffee with Pastor" call the office; Review of "The Chosen" each Sunday at 7:45 a.m.

#### **Cresco Notre Dame Church**

Fr. Jacob Rouse Mass is open to the public Thursdays: 9 a.m. - Mass Fridays: 8 a.m. - Mass Saturdays: 4 p.m. - Mass Sundays: 8 a.m. & 10 a.m. - Mass Tuesdays: 5:15 p.m. - Mass Wednesdays: 8 a.m. - Mass

#### First Congregational/Saratoga Pastor Tim Sir

Audio & video on website: www.disciplemaker.org

KCZQ: Saturdays at 7:30 a.m. and Sundays at 8 a.m.; Tuesdays & Thursdays at 8:05 a.m. Saratoga Community — Sundays at 8:30 a.m., No Sunday School Until September First Congregational — Sundays: 10:30 a.m. - Worship, No Sunday School Until September

## Greenfield Lutheran Church

Pastor Kurt Bockoven at Harmony, Minn. Sunday: 10:30 a.m. - Facebook/YouTube; 11 a.m. broadcast on KFIL 103.1

## **Holy Rosary Cluster**

Fr. Telesphore Dusabe Saturday, April 26: 4 p.m. - OLL; No AV Sunday, April 27: 7:15 a.m. - Elma; 9 a.m. - RV; 10:45 -

#### <u>Jerico/Saude/Redeemer Lutheran</u>

Pastor Peter Faugstad www.saudejerico.com

Sunday, April 27: 8:30 a.m. - Divine Service at Saude: 9:15 a.m. - Bible Class at Saude; 9:15 a.m. - Sunday School at Jerico and Saude; 10:30 a.m. - Divine Service at Jerico

Wednesday, April 30: 6 p.m. - Catechism Class at Saude

## Saturdays, 7:30 a.m.: Disciple Maker w/Pastor Tim Sir

On Sundays TFN: 7 a.m.: Music and The Spoken Word

8 a.m.: Disciple Maker with Pastor Tim Sir 8:30 a.m.: Radio Rosary sponsored by local churches 9 a.m.: Immanuel Lutheran Church

10 a.m.: Greenleafton Reformed Church

## Lime Springs / Chester UMC

Worship schedule updates can be found on Chester and Lime Springs United Methodist Churches Facebook page

McIntire Methodist Church

Pastor Dr. Donna Ihns Sunday: 8:30 a.m. - Social Time; 9 a.m. - Worship

## Riceville First Congregational/ **United Church of Christ**

PASTOR MIKE SIMIELE Sundays: 10 a.m. - Service

#### Ridgeway Lutheran Churches Pastor Nathan Wicks Sunday, April 27: 9 a.m. - Madison/HC & Confirma-

tion; 10:30 - Orleasns/HC, Confirmation & Graduate Recognition

#### St. Peter Lutheran - Elma Rev. Bruce Miller

Sunday: 9 a.m. - Service; 10:15 a.m. - Bible Study

#### Unity Lutheran Parish

PASTOR JEFF JACOBS (L.S., SAETERSDAL, GRANGER) Sundays - 8:30 a.m. - St. Matthew (Granger); 9:45 a.m. -St. Paul (Lime Springs); 11 a.m. - Saetersdal (rural Harmony). Devotions on facebook.com/St. PaulLutheranChurch.LimeSprings

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