

*Let us execute the
responsibility of our lives
before the sovereign Lord
of every future, who
demands that we bear the
burden of the whole world,
and before whom all things are
possible.*

*Damn everything that is grim,
dull, motionless, unrisking,
inward-turning,
damn everything that won't get
into the circle, that won't enjoy,
that won't throw its heart into the
tension, surprise, fear and delight
of the circus, the round world,
the full existence...
Damn everything but the circus!*

**A Celebration of the Completed Life
of
Byrne Lee Johnson**

December 20, 1929 – December 2, 2023



**Wednesday, December 20, 2023
11:00 am**

**Faith United Church of Christ
1001 5th Street
International Falls, MN 56649**

Prelude
Processional Hymn

Joe Belanger

All Creatures of Our God and King

All creatures of our God and King,
Lift up your voice and with us sing, Alleluia! Alleluia!
Thou burning sun with golden beam,
Thou silver moon with softer gleam,
O praise him, O praise him!
Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!

Thou rushing wind that art so strong,
Ye clouds that sail in heaven along, O praise him! Alleluia!
Thou rising morn, in praise rejoice,
Ye lights of evening, find a voice!
O praise him, O praise him!
Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!

Thou flowing water, pure and clear,
Make music for thy Lord to hear, Alleluia! Alleluia!
Thou fire so masterful and bright,
Thou givest man both warmth and light!
O praise him, O praise him!
Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!

And thou, most kind and gentle death,
Waiting to hush our latest breath, O praise him, Alleluia!
Thou ledest home the child of God,
And Christ our Lord the way hath trod,
O praise him, O praise him!
Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!

Let all things their Creator bless,
And worship him in humbleness, O praise him! Alleluia!
Praise, praise the Father, praise the Son,
And praise the Spirit, three in one!
O praise him, O praise him!
Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!

Welcome

Joe Belanger

Reading **Prologue to *The Saviors of God*** Don Johnson

Opening Address

Karen Gustafson

Scripture Readings

Joe Belanger

Psalm 39:4-13

4 “LORD, let me know my end
and what is the measure of my days;
let me know how fleeting my life is.

5 You have made my days a few handbreadths,
and my lifetime is as nothing in your sight.
Surely everyone stands as a mere breath.

6 Surely everyone goes about like a shadow.
Surely for nothing they are in turmoil;
they heap up and do not know who will gather.

7 “And now, O Lord, what do I wait for?
My hope is in you.

8 Deliver me from all my transgressions.
Do not make me the scorn of the fool.

9 I am silent; I do not open my mouth,
for it is you who have done it.

10 Remove your stroke from me;
I am worn down by the blows of your hand.

11 “You chastise mortals
in punishment for sin,
consuming like a moth what is dear to them;
surely everyone is a mere breath.

¹² “Hear my prayer, O LORD,
and give ear to my cry;
do not hold your peace at my tears.
For I am your passing guest,
an alien, like all my forebears.
¹³ Turn your gaze away from me, that I may smile again,
before I depart and am no more.”

Romans 12:9-18

⁹ Let love be genuine; hate what is evil; hold fast to what is good; ¹⁰ love one another with mutual affection; outdo one another in showing honor. ¹¹ Do not lag in zeal; be ardent in spirit; serve the Lord. ¹² Rejoice in hope; be patient in affliction; persevere in prayer. ¹³ Contribute to the needs of the saints; pursue hospitality to strangers.

¹⁴ Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them. ¹⁵ Rejoice with those who rejoice; weep with those who weep. ¹⁶ Live in harmony with one another; do not be arrogant, but associate with the lowly; do not claim to be wiser than you are. ¹⁷ Do not repay anyone evil for evil, but take thought for what is noble in the sight of all. ¹⁸ If it is possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all.

Luke 6:37-38

³⁷ “Do not judge, and you will not be judged; do not condemn, and you will not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven; ³⁸ give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap, for the measure you give will be the measure you get back.”

Prayer

Joe Belanger

Congregational Hymn *Spirit of Gentleness*

Refrain



Spir - it, Spir - it of gen - tle - ness, blow through the wil - der - ness




call - ing and free; Spir - it, Spir - it of rest - less - ness,



stir me from plac - id - ness, wind, wind on the sea.



- 1 You moved on the wa - ters, you called to the deep,
- 2 You swept through the des - ert, you stung with the sand,
- 3 You sang in a sta - ble, you cried from a hill,
- 4 You call from to - mor - row, you break an - cient schemes.



then you coaxed up the moun - tains from the val - leys of sleep;
and you goad - ed your peo - ple with a law and a land;
then you whis - pered in si - lence when the whole world was still;
From the bond - age of sor - row all the cap - tives dream dreams;



and o - ver the e - ons you called to each thing:
and when they were blind - ed with i - dols and lies,
and down in the cit - y you called once a - gain,
our wom - en see vi - sions, our men clear their eyes.



Refrain

“A - wake from your slum - bers and rise on your wings.”
then you spoke through your proph - ets to o - pen their eyes.
when you blew through your peo - ple on the rush of the wind.
With . . . bold new de - ci - sions your peo - ple a - rise.

Remembrance & Reading *Abou Ben Adhem* Etta Johnson-Millard

Eulogy Karen Gustafson

Vocal Solo *The King of May* Darcy Sullivan

Remembrances Marva Fairchild
Lee Grim
Beth Waterhouse

Congregational Hymn *Amazing Grace*

Amazing grace! How sweet the sound
That saved a wretch like me!
I once was lost, but now am found;
Was blind, but now I see.

'Twas grace that taught my heart to fear,
And grace my fears relieved;
How precious did that grace appear
The hour I first believed.

Through many dangers, toils, and snares,
I have already come;
'Tis grace that brought me safe thus far,
And grace will lead me home.

The Lord has promised good to me,
His Word my hope secures;
He will my Shield and Portion be,
As long as life endures.

When we've been there ten thousand years,
Bright shining as the sun,
We've no less days to sing God's praise
Than when we'd first begun.

Charge to the Congregation

Karen Gustafson

Reading *Crossing the Bar*

Karen Gustafson

Announcements and Table Prayer

Joe Belanger

Blessing

Joe Belanger

Recessional Hymn **Obedience**

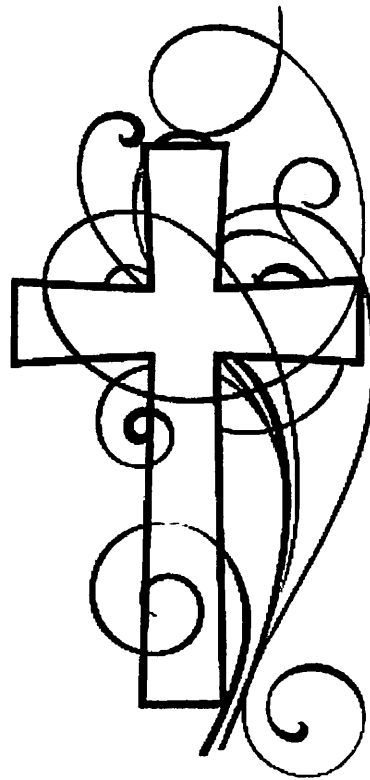
*Come all spirits roaming freely
Bind your will in common thrust
Stand beneath the gaze of neighbor
Ready to obey their trust
Take within yourself the burden
Peace on earth, good will to men
All the world is now your parish
Every spirit yours to win
Let the light that fights with darkness
Show your rights and everyman's
Place your share upon the alter
Burn it at the Lord's command
Speak with lightening when the shadows
Blind the eyes of those you love
Never let the clouds of winning
Block the glorious sun above.
Heed the cries that sound your passion
Bleed with every struggling one
Will that you might live to free them
Speak the word, the deed be done
Launch with those who share the vision
To expand man's destiny
In the life that's born of drowning
Sail with friends who wage the sea.*

*Live your life before the calling
To discern the will of God
Each man of the globe your brother
Each demand a weight and rod
Choose to follow on the ascending
Know that alone to be on your way
Then join hands beyond the border
With the saints in bright array.*

Postlude

The Last Farewell

Joe Belanger



Obituary

Byrne Lee Johnson, “a true Rainy Lake boy”, died December 2nd in his home, weeks before his 94th birthday. Born December 20, 1929, in Hibbing, MN, to Don and Layna (Cobb) Johnson, he arrived on Rainy Lake in early January of 1930, to reside in an uninsulated cabin at Camp Koochiching where they served as caretakers from 1929 to 1936. Moves from there to become caretakers at the Dahlberg estate on Jackfish Island and then to their own place on Norway (Hvoslof) Island in 1944 form the foundations of Byrne’s extensive knowledge and storytelling of the life and history of Rainy Lake.

He left the area after his graduation from Falls High in 1948 to attend the University of Minnesota on a full Mando scholarship, join the Navy, attend the Coast Guard Academy, and ultimately graduate from UMD in 1955 with a degree in business and economics.

These years were interspersed with time on Rainy Lake, to work a summer at Camp Koochiching, for the Sprague enterprise on Red Sucker Island and to run Norway Island Camp.

In 1954 he married Jane Edwards, and until 1967 they lived in Midway Township, MN, raising four children. Byrne worked as an industrial engineer for US Steel, first in the production plant in Morgan Park and then for the DM & IR Railroad. This was when he first was engaged with computer technology, building a computer in a boxcar to test railroad track, but limited to 8K of memory by US Steel. During those years he was involved in local politics, elected in 1956 as Town Clerk of Midway Township, and later he ran for the Minnesota House of Representatives. And always the return to Rainy Lake for canoeing and camping with family and friends. A company transfer in 1967 to the Bessemer and Lake Erie Railroad required a family move to Pittsburgh.

It was there that Byrne and Jane joined the staff of the Ecumenical Institute/Institute of Cultural Affairs as volunteers in local church renewal and community development.

The next years were rich and filled with many changes. During much of that time Byrne expanded his experience into the growing field of computer technology, working for On-Line Systems in Pittsburgh, Chicago, and England. His marriage to Jane ended in 1974. In 1976 his path with On-Line and the Institute of Cultural Affairs led him to the Isle of Dogs in London, where he met and married Carole Bond, with whom he shared the rest of his life. They enjoyed regular visits to Rainy Lake, often for the seasonal opening or closing of Norway Island.

In 1984 Byrne and Carole moved to Ranier primarily to become the family's caretakers of Norway Island. As an independent contractor Byrne wrote the initial computer programs for many small businesses in Borderland, such as inventory, payroll, and reservation systems.

He was actively involved in the founding of Koochco, a precursor to the current county economic development efforts, and in the initial studies regarding pollution levels in Rainy Lake that led to the sewer systems extending east of Point-of-Pines. For many years he served as Koochiching County's representative to the Arrowhead Area Agency on Aging and was part of the founding board of Koochiching Hospice. Most recently he was on the board of the Koochiching Historical Society and shared his lore and love of Rainy Lake at many History on Tap events.

After his father's death in 1991, Byrne completed what he described as his "lifetime accomplishment": the transcription and publication of Don Johnson's 10%, five volumes from his father's journals which chronicle the life of the Johnson family as well as the life and history of International Falls and Rainy Lake from 1944 to 1987.

This work plus his lived experience made an invaluable contribution to the preservation of the history of this part of Borderland. His extended family are also deeply grateful for his role in the preservation of the living family legacy of Norway Island.

Byrne joins in death: his parents Don and Layna Johnson; his sister Sally Jernberg; his brother Don (Buck), Buck's wife Dale, and their son Terry; his son-in-law Len Millard and his children's mother E. Jane Johnson.

Byrne is survived by his wife of 47 years Carole; his children Etta Johnson-Millard, Brad Johnson, Sheila Johnson and Tara Johnson and her husband Tim Padesky; his sister Karen and her husband John Gustafson; brother-in-law Jim Jernberg, Sr.; and sister-in-law Linda and her husband Larry Myers.

In addition he will remain in the hearts and minds of his grandchildren: Erin Franklin (Andy) of Hoover, AL; Matthew Jenkinson (Edith) of Ranier; Don Johnson of International Falls; Claire Johnson (Columbus Fontenot) of Crowley, LA; Nicholas Padesky and Layna Padesky of LaCrosse, WI; as well as his great-grandchildren Emma and Cade Franklin, Angelo Cuccio, Zuko Fontenot, Madalynn and Thatcher Jenkinson, one great-great grandson, and numerous nephews, nieces, and former in-laws.

Our family is eternally grateful to the hospice staff, friends, and neighbors who loyally supported Byrne and Carole these past two and a half years.

A Celebration of Completed Life will be held at Faith United Church on December 20, 2023, Byrne's 94th birthday, at 11:00 a.m. Live streaming will be available on the Zion Lutheran Church social media platforms. The family will plan for distribution of ashes after ice-out. Memorials are preferred to any local organization in need of support.