

## Andrew James Gray

March 3, 1970 - July 28, 2017

Andrew James Gray, age 47 years, 4 months and 25 days, was born in La Crosse, Wis., on March 3, 1970, at 4 p.m. to Dr. James and Karen Bonnette Gray.

He was baptized on March 29, at the 6:30 a.m. Easter Sunrise Service by his godfather, Rev. Rolf Hanson, at Trinity Lutheran Church in Spring Grove.

He grew up in Spring Grove and Mabel, attending the Spring Grove elementary and high schools. During the decade when he was 6 to 16, there was no TV in his home fostering Andrew's love to read at an early age. He was especially interested in the study of World War II as well as exhibiting fascination with airplanes.

He loved his Easter basket kitten, Bonaparte, from age three until going off to college; likewise, his pet horse Gypsy, from age five for 13 years.

At age six, he rode Gypsy in the Bicentennial parade in Spring Grove ignoring a cold soaking rain; and when he was eight, he rode next to Governor Al Quie through Beaver State Park, visiting all the time during their 20 minutes together.

Andrew began his work-life delivering newspapers, and his first job, age 16, was as a DJ at KQYB evenings and weekends and building bridges for Miinowa Construction Company summers during college.

During his high school years, he loved singing under the direction of Almore Mathsen and playing in Gary Reedy's band that marched at the Fiesta Bowl. He spent a lot of time hanging out with his best friends, Eric Frydenlund,

Christian Myrah and Steve Storlie to name a few. They watched Top Gun and Caddyshack until they wore out the VHS tapes, reciting all the lines. These two movies were listed as his favorites on his "Get to Know Me" patient chart at Methodist Hospital.

In 1986 Lutz Klinkhardt, our exchange student from Weener, Germany, joined our family for a year in Spring Grove, and our hearts forever. Andrew and Lutz backpacked in Germany and Europe the summer of 1988. Lutz wrote in his application, "I will live with any family that doesn't have lions or tigers." Andrew said, "Let's choose him. He can have our bedroom that is papered with lions and tigers on the walls and ceiling.". And so, a great friendship was launched. Andrew graduated in 1988 and headed off to Luther College where he embraced the Norse life! And with the help of Mabe's pizza and late night study sessions with lifelong friends like Lara Wold-Mendez, and Dr. David Jorde, he graduated in 1992 with a degree in elementary education.

He sang with the Norseman his freshman year and sang bass for three succeeding years in Nordic Choir under the direction of Weston Noble. During the Russia tour, he was honored to serve as Dr. Noble's personal valet. He experienced a deep respect for freedom while watching tears streaming down the faces of Iron Curtain citizens as the choir performed national anthems that they had been forbidden to sing.

He served as President of the WIMI Fraternity, a service organization. One of Andrew's early goals was to be President of Luther College someday. He was passionate about Luther's philosophy and mission to shape young people spiritually, educationally and for service to others.

During his senior year, he was recruited to a position with Lutheran Brotherhood, A Family of Financial Services for Lutherans, in La Jolla, Calif. Where he lived with a good friend, Jonathan "JD" Doering, in the San Diego area.

After five years on the coast, he was homesick for the Midwest, and secured a job at the LB Home Office in Minneapolis.

Next, he took a management position at Davenport, Iowa, as recruiter and

trainer of Lutheran Brotherhood representatives.

Andrew loved to learn new things, so he decided to try a new career path and studied the anatomy of the human nervous system and ventured into introducing to health care providers, pharmaceuticals that would help people affected by maladies related to the nervous system. This took him to Cedar Rapids, Iowa, where he purchased his first home.

During all of these years as a single guy, Andrew was a great uncle, brother, and son, but he wanted more and kept searching for the perfect “Mrs. Gray.” In 2004 while living in Cedar Rapids, a good friend, Carrie Faust, told him about her friend Carrie Willett that “Andrew just had to meet.”

The couple wed on May 28, 2006, at Trinity Lutheran Church in Spring Grove. Andrew and Carrie’s early years were spent building a home together, socializing with friends, family, and neighbors, hiking with their dog Sam, traveling and running (including a couple of marathons). In June 2011, their son, Kyle Beaman was born, and the family became complete in October 2013, when Karna Raine joined the family.

Andrew’s passion for helping others make important decisions regarding their finances and life goals led him back to Thrivent Financial in 2011. The young family settled into life in Northfield where Andrew enjoyed working every day as a wealth advisor.

Andrew loved being a husband and a father and shared his love of music, friends, faith and learning with his young children. He delighted in asking them questions, and waiting for them to formulate answers.

He also eagerly brought them to his parent’s cabin in Canada where Andrew was just in heaven – he loved everything to do with the “cabin life”.

On Saturday, March 12, 2016, Andrew was diagnosed with Acute Lymphoblastic Leukemia (ALL).

His lifelong friend, Lara from Spring Grove, and Megan Kraby and others from Northfield, stepped up in a big way and started community donor drives throughout the areas attempting to find a donor who would be a perfect match

for his eventual stem cell transplant.

Many individuals in the communities of Spring Grove, Northfield, Decorah and Brooklyn responded by registering with Be The Match.

Andrew's Thrivent colleagues were also very supportive of Andrew, his family, and his clients during this challenging time. Andrew loved his work so much that he continued to do what he could for his clients during treatment in Rochester, which also served as an important spirit booster for Andrew. Some Thrivent advisors even graciously volunteered their time and expertise to assist Andrew's clients when he was not available, including Jonathan Doering who regularly traveled in from CA to work in person when needed. Throughout his 16-month journey of chemo, radiation and transplant, his parents were by his side as caregivers while Carrie divided her time with her three loves, Andrew, Kyle and Karna.

Carrie's mother, Lorraine, was also a godsend caring for the children for months at a time allowing Carrie to spend time in Rochester with Andrew and continue to work at St. Kate's in St. Paul.

All of the friends that Andrew had and continued to make during this time carried him through his treatments along with his unshakeable faith that kept him until the very end.

Andrew passed away on Friday, July 28, 2017, at Methodist Hospital in Rochester. As our friend Dan said, "God didn't take away our son and friend, but received him." Soli deo Gloria

A celebration of the life lived by Andrew will be at 11 a.m. on Tuesday, Aug. 1, at Trinity Lutheran Church, 203 E. Main St. in Spring Grove. Visitation will be from 9 to 10:45 in the Trinity Sanctuary. Burial will be in Trinity Cemetery.

Survivors include his wife, Carrie, and children, Kyle and Karna, all of Northfield; his parents, Jim and Karen Gray of Spring Grove; a brother, Paul (Heather) and their children, Ben and Hannah of Spring Grove; Carrie's parents, Gene and Lorraine Willett of Brooklyn, Iowa; brother-in-law Kelly Willett of Grinnell, Iowa, and his son, Chase, and daughter, Mallory; sister-in-law, Mandy (Dustin) Westerdale of Brooklyn, Iowa, and their three sons,

Garrett, Mason and Trace; numerous aunts, uncles and their families; and a host of dear friends.

The family prefers memorials be given to Gift of Life Transplant House in Rochester, where Andrew, Carrie and his parents spent so many hours recovering and healing. Donate online at [gift-of-life.org/donation/](http://gift-of-life.org/donation/) or call 507-288-7470. Two Northfield non-profits are equally important to Andrew: Prairie Creek Community School, 27695 Denmark Avenue, 55057 which Kyle attends, and Northfield Montessori [northfieldmontessori.org](http://northfieldmontessori.org) where Karna goes daily.

# Cemetery Details

## Trinity Lutheran Cemetery

Hwy 44  
Spring Grove, MN 55974

# Previous Events

## Visitation

AUG 1. 9:00 AM - 10:45 AM (CT)

Trinity Lutheran Church  
203 E Main St  
Spring Grove, MN 55974  
(507) 498-5291

## Service

AUG 1. 11:00 AM (CT)

Trinity Lutheran Church  
203 E Main St  
Spring Grove, MN 55974  
(507) 498-5291

# Tribute Wall

SG

“ Dear Karen,

*I'm so sorry to hear of your sons passing. You and I don't really know each other at all, but I have fond memories of visiting your mom and dad's farm, Uncle Clyde and Aunt Arlene... Lovely people ...We would usually visit on Sundays, and it was always fun to see your dad and brothers doing their chores, caring for the animals... Your mom would be preparing the most delicious dinner!! I remember her chocolate cake the most.. My family attended your wedding of course, and I don't remember how old I was, but I was in total awe of what a beautiful bride you were... I wanted to look just like you! 😊 My heart goes out to you and your family and I will lift you all up in prayer..*

*Your 2nd Cousin,  
Susan Grimm*

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**Susan Grimm** - August 06, 2017 at 04:04 PM



“ *I worked with Andrew and his clients almost daily. He was a kind, gentle soul who so loved his family dearly. He was also one of the hardest working men I knew. He was truly passionate about his work and family and it showed every day. He was just a bright ray of sunshine.....I can't believe he's gone, but I guess God needed another angel, and Andrew will only make Heaven brighter.....until we meet again, my friend.....my thoughts and prayers are with his sweet family.*

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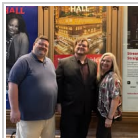
**Gail Grenke** - August 04, 2017 at 11:49 AM

MS

“ 1st two are from the Fall '88 Luther Herd Book that Andrew, Jon David Hague & I produced. I wrote in the "Hi Mom" before printing. AJ coordinated ever freshman student to come to the floor lounge to get a picture taken by JD or myself. They were printed on campus. The color pic was our floor pic (Spring '89) - Brandt 2nd East. One of the few pics found of him NOT smiling - however, it was the 1st on the roll (film!) and I don't think he was ready! Of course, he's 2nd from the right & on TOP of the bell! I'll ring it loud for AJ every time I'm on campus. ❤️



Michael Skaar - August 04, 2017 at 10:05 AM



“ What a wonderful tribute to Andrew. I sang in Nordic Choir for with him and I was always inspired by his sunny outlook on EVERYTHING, no matter what. He was a great example of living life to its fullest. My thoughts and prayers to you and your family. Soli Deo Gloria,



Angi (Rimington) Chase, Class of '92

Angi Chase - August 04, 2017 at 12:17 AM

S9

“ Andrew was one of my favorite people to take care of. He was always so cheerful and kind and I loved to chat with him about his interesting life and anything else that came up. We, here, on 93/73 are keeping Andrew and the rest of you guys in our thoughts.

Sarah RN 93/73 - August 03, 2017 at 04:13 PM

KW

“ *Carrie, Jim and Karen-*

*Our very first day at Gift of Life, August 2016, I was answering a phone call from my granddaughter and said "Hey, Sweet Pea!" I had walked into the kitchen at that moment and this guy with a big smile and bright eyes, said "Well, Hey!" That is when I met Andrew, and knew I had a friend for life. There were many times after that he was called "Sweet Pea". And our meeting is not one I will forget.*

*From summertime conversations on the porch about his parents cottage, his beautiful family and the books entries and pictures that were made for the kids. Fall came and he was the instigator for suggesting to go buy a big TV for the Packer/Viking game and put it in the dining room so we could have food and watch the game. (He wasn't even going to be there AND return the TV after the game.)*

*There were visits when Andrew or John were in the hospital and Transplant Family dinners at Gift of Life. Laughter, conversations, love and friendship! Those are the things that brought us all so close to Andrew and hold a special place in our hearts. He did these things for everyone, not just us. Genuine care and concern for everyone and the kindest man you would ever want to meet.*

*Rest In Peace, my friend. Heaven certainly gained an amazing angel. Always in our hearts and never forgotten. We love you, sweet pea!*

*Kim and John Walsh - Green Bay, WI*



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**kimberley walsh** - August 01, 2017 at 03:59 PM

SH

“ Carrie I am so sorry to hear of the loss of your dear husband and father of your children. I could not get you and your sweet family off my mind today. My thoughts and prayers will be with you all in the days and months to come. I think of you often and have so many fond memories of your time in Washington. I am a breast cancer survivor and after chemo and radiation am doing well. God gave me strength to get through that time in my life. I pray he brings you strength and peace as well. I love you dear. You are truly one of a kind. God bless you all.

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**shelly hoffman** - July 31, 2017 at 10:38 PM

WP

“ 1 file added to the tribute wall



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**Walter Pangburn** - July 31, 2017 at 09:43 PM

WP

“ I have very specific memories related to leukemia battle. Andrew and I became close friends while accepting the fight and encouraging each other to do as much as we could to beat away the cancer. We both understood that the more positive you are the more likely you were to beat the odds. So we would compare notes on exercise and how far we walked to keep in shape. All the time he was doing this he kept in contact with everyone around him to make sure their course in life was being met. He focused on getting home to his family at every possible chance. Never did he waiver until he could not do it anymore.

He will be a part of my family as both my kids (in their 30's) know about or have met Andrew. He helped me stay my course and I'm honored to remember him here. To all who know Andrew, support his lovely family as much as you can. We as his patient friends need to hear you taking care of them so we can continue to advocate this fight against leukemia and promote bone marrow donors.

*With all my love and respect, Walter Pangburn.*

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**Walter Pangburn** - July 31, 2017 at 09:37 PM



“ Beautiful in Blue was purchased for the family of Andrew James Gray.



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July 31, 2017 at 08:38 PM



“ I first met Andrew while in he and Carrie's home when he was receiving treatments. It was easy to see that AJ was very smart, funny and a joy to be around. I knew from the first time I met him that he loved Carrie, Kyle and Karna more than words can say ! He was a fantastic father and loving husband  
AJ will be missed and never forgotten.

Annette Goodrich  
(Sister to Carrie's Mother, Lorraine)

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Annette Goodrich - July 31, 2017 at 07:53 PM



“ I got to know Andrew when I spent time in he and Carrie's home as he was receiving treatments. He was smart, funny and a very caring person. And it was obvious from the first time I met him that he loved his wife and children unconditionally. He was a great father and husband and a joy to be around. He will be missed and not forgotten.

Annette Goodrich  
(Sister of Carrie's Mother Lorraine)

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Annette Goodrich - July 31, 2017 at 07:12 PM



“ Sapphire Skies Bouquet was purchased for the family of Andrew James Gray.



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July 31, 2017 at 04:10 PM



“ We are heartbroken at the loss of Andrew. He was a lovely gentle soul and will be deeply missed by us, our congregation and community. Pam and Barry Vig, Northfield

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**Pam Vig** - July 31, 2017 at 04:04 PM

SS

“ I met Andrew while he was at Luther as a student he would venture off campus to come shopping at Amundson's Men's Clothing where I worked. Andrew loved to be the best dressed guy on campus as he wanted to be prepared if he would run in to the "perfect future Mrs. Gray" He was a joy to know and would stop back to visit on his way through whenever possible rest in peace Andrew your passion will live on.

*"You can shed tears that he is gone, or you can smile because he has lived. You can close your eyes and pray that he'll come back, or you can open your eyes and see all he's left. Your heart can be empty because you can't see him, or you can be full of the love you shared. You can turn your back on tomorrow and live yesterday, or you can be happy for tomorrow because of yesterday. You can remember him only that he is gone, or you can cherish his memory and let it live on. You can cry and close your mind, be empty and turn your back. Or you can do what he'd want: smile, open your eyes, love and go on!"*

*David Harkins*

*Blessings to family and friends of Andrew*

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**Sue Nienhaus Sander** - July 31, 2017 at 03:47 PM



“ *Simply Elegant Spathiphyllum* was purchased for the family of Andrew James Gray.



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July 31, 2017 at 03:00 PM



“ *Peaceful White Lilies Basket* was purchased for the family of Andrew James Gray.



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July 31, 2017 at 01:58 PM



“ *Daniel & Kristin Hummel purchased the Sweetest Sunrise Bouquet* for the family of Andrew James Gray.



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**Daniel & Kristin Hummel** - July 31, 2017 at 01:49 PM



“ *Beautiful in Blue* was purchased for the family of Andrew James Gray.



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July 31, 2017 at 12:33 PM

YK

“ *Your PA Program Family at St. Kate's purchased the Loving Grace for the family of Andrew James Gray.*



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**Your PA Program Family at St. Kate's** - July 31, 2017 at 11:57 AM



“ *Emerald Garden Basket was purchased for the family of Andrew James Gray.*



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July 31, 2017 at 11:46 AM

DK

“ *Our deepest sympathy to Andrew's entire family. Gone far too soon. May he rest in peace now after a long courageous battle. Remember all the good times with him and that will help heal your broken hearts. God bless.*

*Harry & Diane Kilmer*

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**Diane Kilmer** - July 31, 2017 at 11:01 AM

NM

“ *Northfield Montessori purchased the Beautiful in Blue for the family of Andrew James Gray.*



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**Northfield Montessori** - July 31, 2017 at 08:36 AM

CM

“ Cary and Karen Mielke purchased the Country Basket Blooms for the family of Andrew James Gray.



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**Cary and Karen Mielke** - July 30, 2017 at 09:32 AM

BF

“ We have known Andrew for many years and he has helped us with our life savings. He was very good friend and family person. We will miss him and our thoughts and prays are with his family. His life was cut way to short. Blair and Barb Fowler, Northfield

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**BLAIR E FOWLER** - July 29, 2017 at 11:09 AM