



## Pastor Wayne Ahrens

April 10, 1957 - July 18, 2025

Pastor Wayne Ahrens, 68, of Rockford, was welcomed into the loving arms of his Savior, Jesus Christ, on July 18, 2025. Born April 10, 1957, he was the son of Norman and Bonita (Walts) Ahrens.

Wayne graduated from high school and later pursued his calling into ministry by studying theology at Bethany Union Church in Chicago, where he was ordained. On November 1, 1982, he was united in marriage to the love of his life, Margaret "Peggy" Paulausky, at Long Grove Church in Long Grove, Illinois.

Wayne's life was a powerful testimony of redemption, grace and faithful prayers of Terry Kriese, Prayer Warrior. After struggling with alcohol in his early years, he cried out to the Lord in 1999 and experienced a life-changing encounter with Jesus. That moment marked the beginning of his spiritual transformation and his walk into lifelong recovery. He attended his first Alcoholics Anonymous meeting and soon felt a calling to use his story to bring hope to others.

Fueled by the love of Christ and a heart that beat for the broken, Wayne dedicated his life to ministry. He had a God-given gift for reaching people who felt lost, unwanted, or beyond redemption. With gentleness, wisdom, and unwavering compassion, he ministered to those battling addiction and despair, reminding them of their worth in God's eyes.

Pastor Wayne founded Five Gates Church and Holy Ghost University, creating welcoming spaces where everyone—regardless of their past—could encounter the love of Jesus. Through his leadership, his church family served the community with meals, help with housing, job placement, and spiritual support. He also served as President of Fishers of Men Ministries, a Police and Fire Chaplain for the City of Rockford, and as Community Spirit Director of Illinois Credo Recovery.

Wayne was also a Licensed Realtor and Real Estate Broker, formerly with Key Realty, where he continued to offer spiritual guidance to clients and colleagues alike.

In his downtime, Wayne loved spending time with Peggy, especially in the mountains among horses and at rodeos. Though he preferred the peaks to the shorelines, he joyfully accompanied Peggy on her favorite trips to places near the water, including Maine and Niagara Falls, simply to be by her side.

He is survived by his beloved wife of 42 years, Peggy; his daughter, Ginger (Ryan) Strader; grandsons, Dakota and Dylan Strader; numerous cousins; his dear friend Pastor Tim Gleason; and a wide circle of cherished friends and his devoted church family. He was preceded in death by his parents, his Aunt Margie Riley, and extended family members.

A Celebration of Pastor Wayne's Life will be held at 1 p.m. on August 2, 2025, at Five Gates Church, 821 4th Ave., Rockford. In lieu of flowers, memorials may be made to Five Gates Church to continue Pastor Wayne's legacy of ministry and outreach.

To share a memory or condolence, please visit [www.gracefh.com](http://www.gracefh.com) Grace Funeral & Cremation Services is assisting the family share a memory or condolence at [www.gracefh.com](http://www.gracefh.com).

# Previous Events

## Celebration of Life

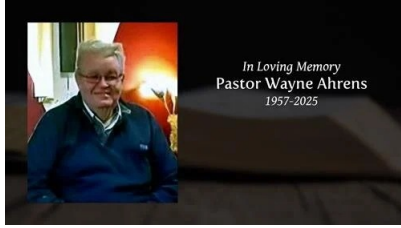
AUG 2. 1:00 PM - 2:00 PM (CT)

Five Gates Church  
821 4th Ave.  
Rockford, IL

# Tribute Wall



“ Grace Funeral & Cremation Services created a Tribute Video in memory of Pastor Wayne Ahrens



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**Grace Funeral & Cremation Services** - August 04, 2025 at 12:03 PM

BS

“ I've known Pastor Wayne for a very long time. He was a very precious man of God and he worked so hard to keep relationships open and Five Fates Church open for anyone who would listen to the Gospel of Jesus Christ. I will miss him but know he's got great people who will carry on the mission of this church. See you when I get to Heaven, Pastor Wayne!

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**Barb Seaworth** - August 02, 2025 at 02:01 PM



“ Pastor Wayne Ahrens! Wow! What a life! Wayne was like a supernatural force for good in the world. Over the years, he had a powerful impact on the Rockford Community that will live on in all the lives that he touched. I tell you my friends, Wayne Ahrens had a powerful impact on my life. I have only experienced brother Wayne and his teachings for about a year. Week by week, I watched as his health deteriorated, and despite all the physical challenges and mobility issues, Wayne showed up at Five Gates Church every week. His dogged determination to obey the will of the Holy Spirit was a living testimony to Wayne’s calling to preach the gospel and the love of Jesus to this fallen world.

To say that Pastor Wayne was strong-willed is a disservice to his memory. The man, in my opinion, had a will of iron! He faced down challenges that would have crushed many men, and he did it in a way that will always continue to inspire me. He was tough as nails when he needed to be, but on the other hand, in a kind and gentle way, he could also warm a sinner’s cold heart of stone and inspire that cold heart to desire Jesus. Who today can count all the souls who testify that Wayne Ahrens was used by the Holy Spirit to introduce them to the fact that God Really Loves them, God has always Loved them, and that God will always Love them. Hallelujah, brother Wayne, Hallelujah! Brother Wayne, our loving God poured Grace into your broken life in a mighty way, and like a fountain that never ran dry, you, in turn, poured out amazing grace into life after life after life, to any and everyone who had ears to listen.

Wayne often shared how the Holy Spirit worked to put Five Gates Church into his hands as the Pastor. One day, he came to see the abandoned, derelict building and said, “No way, this place is a dump, it should be torn down!” It was really rough; he said, “You could stand in the sanctuary and see the stars above.” But the Holy Spirit spoke to Wayne, “This is your place”. And Wayne said, “I’m out of here.” We all know who won, don’t we? And, as they say, the rest is history (His Story).

Who can count all the miracles that God wrought over the years to bless Pastor Wayne's ministry? At times, when all seemed lost, that was just a cue for the Holy Spirit to step up and manifest His power and greatness. Oftentimes, the Holy Spirit revealed that He had been working all things together, behind the scenes, long before any man even knew there would be a need. The Holy Ghost was behind everything, to bless the people and to bless the ministry of a once broken man, a man who heard the call of God and said, “Yes, Lord.” A once-proud and defiant man who humbly chose to submit to Jesus and allow the Lord to use him in any way He wanted, a man named Wayne Ahrens!

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Chuck Hansen - July 31, 2025 at 04:14 PM

EA

“ I remember how Pastor Wayne welcomed me in after a terrible time on my life. He said "I'm not concerned with your mistakes but, I recognize the anointing on your life." He allowed me to preach and teach and assist at 5 Gates, gave me a key and we worked together in ministry for a few years. His life and ministry gave me an opportunity to work in ministry that continues to this day! I will miss him greatly.

Evant Harris (Brother Anthony) - July 31, 2025 at 08:35 AM

AW

“ great servant of the Lord he will be missed by many thankful for his friendship and encouragement over the years prayers to his family and freinds

Amber Wilson - July 23, 2025 at 04:10 PM

SC

“ Oh my! The good Lord took an amazing man home! My heart is just broken for Peggy and her family! So sorry to hear he has passed! There truly are no words that I could post that would come close to the light that Wayne brought to so many, he saved so many lives including mine. Forever in my heart

sheila Cochran - July 22, 2025 at 12:58 AM

JS

“ Wayne was a Great man who overcame a lot of tough things. I met Wayne several years ago when I married his cousin. I was at his ordainment ceremony what a proud and great day. He gave the eulogy at my wife's celebration of life. God Bless you Wayne . I'm sorry for your loss Peggy. You were his strength

Jim Stanula - July 21, 2025 at 12:42 AM

TR

“ I would like to thank pastor wayne for swearing me in to be a street evangelist and teaching me jesus holy words in the bible from genesis to revelations thank you pastor wayne for all you done for me last time I seen you and your wife is when you let me sing downstairs this song?Trust in god and your smile lit up the room you will always be in my heart and I will never forget you.I wish you rest in perfect peace.I know you are there with Jesus love always sister Theresa Rolando

Theresa ann boldt Rolando - July 20, 2025 at 07:36 PM

BJ

“ *What a humble and great man Wayne Ahrens was !! His Legacy will live on, because Wayne touched a lot of people's hearts with the Grace of God !! Rest in Peace my Brother in Christ !! Love Bill and Lois Johnson*

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**Bill Johnson** - July 20, 2025 at 06:51 PM