



Thomas Kurtyka

November 17, 1950 - February 18, 2011

Thomas Joseph Kurtyka, 60, of Lac du Flambeau, passed away Friday, February 18, 2011 at Seasons of Life Hospice House. Thomas was born November 7, 1950 in Wheelwright, Kentucky, the son of John and Luby (Ognowski) Kurtyka. Tom graduated from Appleton West High School in 1968, whereupon he took a Greyhound bus to Mexico City and lived for a time with an Indian tribe at Zipolite, a beach on the southern coast of Mexico. After coming back home in 1970, he became a born-again Christian, and moved to Freeport, IL to work with an Evangelical church. Throughout the 1970's, he traveled extensively throughout the United States, Kenya, Nigeria, Israel, and England as a missionary. In 1976, he married his beloved wife Catherine in Rock City, IL. He then graduated valedictorian from Scholl College of Podiatric Medicine in 1988, and moved to Minocqua to practice podiatry. Upon his retirement in 2007, he became a Big Brother/Big Sister volunteer and worked as a mentor for the boys and girls groups at the Abinoojiiyag Center in Lac du Flambeau.

He is preceded in death by his parents. He is survived by his wife, Catherine; two children, Nathan (Brandi) Kurtyka of Chicago IL, and Faith (LaRue) Diehl of Tucson, AZ; one granddaughter, Sofia Grace Kurtyka.

He is further survived by two brothers, Jerry (Nancy) Kurtyka, and Rolfe (Lori) Kurtyka, four nieces, and two nephews.

A memorial service will be held at 4pm on Sunday, February 27 at Lakeland Assembly of God. Memorial donations can be made to Seasons of Life

Hospice House. Bolger Funeral and Cremation Services is serving the family.

Tribute Wall



“ Tom was a beloved brother and very special friend - we enjoyed many hours of fellowship through the years and were kindred hearts in our life-long passion - our wonderful Saviour!

Tom's equal passion for the lost was a constant inspiration, and latterly, his occasional emails always brought a smile to my face and lit up my day.

He will be much missed
Enjoy eternity, my friend!

Valerie Warsop - March 22, 2013 at 11:53 AM

“Where can I possibly begin to describe all that Tom Kurtyka means to our family? In the scope of a lifetime, 10 years is not much. But I guess it’s not so much about length of time, but quality of time...and with Tom, every moment tends to be rich with some significance, because he just loves people!

My husband Arnie and I met Tom within a couple of months of opening our small Christian Bookstore. At first, we didn’t know what to think of this quiet, deep, soulful guy. To be honest, he was a bit unnerving to us at first. But it took almost no time at all for Tom to take up an almost permanent place at the back table in the store (which was apparently put there just for him!), and certainly a deep place within our hearts.

Tom would often swing by our place not even to see Arnie and I, but to just spend some time with our son Nathan. Outside of immediate family, Tom is most definitely Nathan’s biggest fan. Sometimes he would bring Nathan a toy, some bubbles to play with, maybe a costume to wear, or he might just talk with him about what 1st grade is like. When Tom would pull into our drive, Nathan would say, “My friend Tom is here!” Nathan loved Tom too!

One time, I remember Tom breezing into our store all excited because he had just met this young guy uptown and they had enjoyed a wonderful “God” conversation together. Tom told Arnie and I, “I invited him to come here for lunch tomorrow. I’ll pick up Subway. Oh and, I don’t know his name!” We just cracked up!

While Tom may have mostly come across as a serious kind of guy, Tom also had a playful side that perhaps some did not get to see. For instance, the Fourth of July consisted of things like Tom burning holes in his pants by jumping through fireworks or trying to see if smoke bombs worked underwater. (They do...sort of.)

Tom’s sense of humor or honesty came out regularly in the subject field of his e-mails:

"I found Jesus, he was behind the couch the whole time."

"If we're here to serve others, what are the others here for?"

"Dyslexics are teople poo."

"I finally got around to reading the dictionary...turns out the Zebra did it!"

"The Kingdom of God is participatory...tag – you're it!"

"God are you really invisible, or is this just a trick."

Silliness aside, Tom truly is one of the most profoundly deep people we've ever met. He's a poet, a songwriter, counselor, theologian, comedian, mentor, friend...and I could go on and on. He showed us, by word and deed the clearest, most passionate living picture of Jesus we've ever seen.

The world is a dimmer place without Tom's presence...

We miss him terribly...and can't wait to see him again!

Kelli Boedecker - March 22, 2013 at 11:53 AM

SM

“ I met Tom and his wife through a Bible study at the Smith's house. Brilliant man and so knowledgeable that it was intimidating at first. He was very nice and very helpful. Will see you again one day Tom.

Suzanne

Suzanne Mursett - March 22, 2013 at 11:53 AM

KM

“ I don't even remember quite how we met the Kurtykas, I think they found us! It was about 13 years ago when our family lived in Siberia but were home for a few months visiting churches. Tom and Cathy generously supported us and I thanked God for them each time I used my double stroller and my food processor :). More importantly though has been their friendship and mentoring of us over the years. During a very tough time for us they were the people we could sit with and share our hearts with. They assured us that we were not crazy! With their love, advice and encouragement we were able to move on through that hard time. When we look back on the journey God has taken our family on through this life we remember those few poignant people God placed in our path to speak life to us...Tom was one of them. We thank God for them both.

Our kids will always remember the man who made the bubbles for them....how kind that he always considered them and what would be fun for them...we love you guys,
Kara

Kara Moran - March 22, 2013 at 11:53 AM

RF

“ I have never seen a Believer’s death leave a bigger hole in the Body than this one. Tom is simply the most amazing Christian I’ve ever met.

I met Tom in 1978 when he worked in Alliance Dental Ceramics in Freeport, Illinois. I was brand new on a towel rental route, and one Wednesday while delivering towels, Tom was listening to a tape of some preacher explaining Bible prophecy. The bond was sealed. My boss always knew when I stopped there, because every time I did, I was really, really late!

It always really, really bugged me that Tom and I had different views of creationism, eschatology, hermeneutics, and several other silly –isms and –ologies. I knew I was right, and doggone it; I wanted my Paul to be right as well! One day after the two of us were getting nowhere with one another, Cathy taught me one of the greatest lessons I’m still learning. “Has anything changed at the Cross, boys?” she asked. That could have been what Tom was really trying to teach me all along, and I was just too lunkheaded to see it.

I really believed God would heal Tom, so I’m still confused by all this. Yeah, I’m greedy. I want more; I know we all do. But Tom got so much more of life than he should have. He could have died many times in Mexico, and who knows where all else. The demon of cancer should have claimed him more than a decade ago. His life was a roadmap of miracles. I’m sure Hollywood would reject his life story as unbelievable. (I’m praying he left an autobiography!) But to me, the most fantastic Tom Kurtyka story of all is the one where long ago, he loved and mentored a young, hotheaded towel route delivery man. The Kingdom of God is participatory- - and now, we’re it. But thank you, Jesus, for tagging our Tommy.

With all due respect to the doubter chosen by our Lord, the real St. Thomas was not from Judea. He was from Lac du Flambeau.

Ron Fry - March 22, 2013 at 11:53 AM

PG

“ Tom's name had come to mind over the last few days. I knew him back in the seventies when we attended New Covenant in Freeport. At the time Tom was working at a dental lab and my wife and I attended a small group that he led. Small groups were a new ministry of the church and Tom was anxious to care for those attending his group. He would often call me between meetings just to see how i was doing. Tom's directness and sincerity would often catch me off guard. He might begin a conversation by asking me, "What's God been saying to you lately?" Since I wasn't accustomed to getting revelations on a daily basis, I never knew quite how to respond. Eventually I realized that Tom wasn't interrogating me. He genuinely cared about me and was interested in how the Lord was moving in my life. I don't know whether he knew it or not, but he made an impression on me and made me want to be closer to Jesus. I was sorry to hear of his passing and that we had lost contact over the years. Tom and Cathy were good friends to us. Thankfully we share the same sure hope in Jesus, and can look forward to seeing him again in heaven.

Patrick and Diane Green - March 22, 2013 at 11:53 AM



“ I miss you pop!

February 20, 2011 at 12:00 AM