

James D. Brassard

December 9, 1956 — November 4, 2020

Rev. James Dewart Brassard, 63, passed away at his home on November 4. James was born to Rev. LaVern and Mary Brassard on December 9, 1956 in Connell, Washington, and spent his boyhood in Vancouver, WA. He graduated from Whitworth College in 1979 and Princeton Theological Seminary in 1984. In 1994, he married the love of his life, Andrea Belanus, in Wayne, NJ.

James held pastorates in Slippery Rock, PA, Wayne, NJ, and was senior pastor of Christian Community Presbyterian Church (CCPC) in Bowie, MD, from July 2004 to May 2020. James' ministry was marked by his many acts of service to his church, community, and region. His unbridled and contagious enthusiasm helped support mission trips to install clean water systems in Honduras, annual building weeks for Habitat for Humanity and others, Warm Nights shelter weeks, and other community service-oriented projects. He was a hands-on pastor, taking seriously the call to feed the hungry, welcome strangers, provide clothing, visit prisoners, and heal and comfort the sick.

James loved living in Bowie, and found fellowship and friendship throughout the town. He was a generous and devoted friend to people of all ages. He greatly enjoyed CCPC's men's reading group, "The Paper Tigers," and playing in a Bowie Golf Club league where he famously hit his second hole in one (he hit his first hole in one in his twenties). "Pastor James," as he was known there, was a beloved fixture at the Bowie Panera Bread, where he regularly chatted with the young staff members about their studies or sports activities, met with friends, and worked on his sermon for the week.

James served on three Bowie Interfaith community organizations – the Bowie Interfaith Pantry board, the Bowie Interfaith Recreation Council, and the Interfaith Council of Suburban Maryland. He found the social justice-oriented work of ecumenical groups to be spiritually fulfilling and restorative; one of his favorite events of the year was the Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. service.

As a lifelong avid sports fan, one of James' happiest moments was when the San Francisco Giants won the 2010 World Series. He and his sons cheered on the Pittsburgh Penguins, a happy habit from their time living in Slippery Rock, and the trio would exchange texts and calls whenever the team played.

James was a beloved and devoted husband, father, grandfather, son, uncle and brother. James' passion and love for his family was ceaseless, and he made certain that they (and everyone else) knew it. He truly loved nothing more than having his family around him, and spent much of his time off visiting with his children either at their homes or on a destination vacation.

James loved the United States of America and could be counted on to have read the most recently published history books. He visited all 50 states, seeking out Presidential libraries in the process. He also traveled internationally, to Latin America, Kenya, the Middle East, and throughout Europe. James and Andrea celebrated their 25th wedding anniversary with a tour of Paris and the Netherlands.

In April 2020, James was diagnosed with a stage IV malignant brain tumor (glioblastoma) which robbed him of his abilities to read, carry on complicated conversations, drive, and play golf. He received radiation and chemotherapies and valiantly wore tumor treating fields on his shaved head during the brutally hot months. During this time (relatively early months of COVID-19 pandemic), he treasured the many visits from his family and socially-distanced outings with friends.

James is survived by his wife, Andrea; mother, Mary; sons, Oliver (Jessica), of Oak Park, IL, and Jonah (Allyson), of Union City, NJ; daughters, Lydia (Jonathan) of Albany, NY, and Shaina (Jeff) of Minneapolis, MN; sister Marla; brothers Paul and Daniel; thirteen nieces and nephews; and two grandchildren, Beckett and Adelaide.

In lieu of flowers, the family wishes any memorial donations be made to the Bowie Interfaith Pantry and Emergency Aid Fund, or Whitworth College, or Princeton Theological Seminary.

A Service of Witness to the Resurrection of the Rev. James Brassard was held on Saturday, October 30, 2020 at National Presbyterian Church in Washington DC. A reception followed. On Sunday October 31, Christian Presbyterian Church in Bowie dedicated bricks in James' memory, in the church's Memorial Garden.