

Minnesota Pastor Dies After Tragic Cruise Accident During Son's Wedding Celebration

What began as a joyful family celebration overseas ended in unimaginable tragedy for one Minnesota pastor. Yet even as he faced death, those closest to him say his faith remained unshaken.

Pastor Steve Junker, 58, died Friday, Sept. 4, weeks after suffering a catastrophic spinal cord injury aboard the Sun Princess cruise ship while celebrating his son's wedding, according to Bring Me The News.

The Aug. 16 incident took a devastating turn when Junker fell into a swimming pool and nearly drowned. Bring Me The News reported that he was discovered face down and unresponsive before being transported by the Italian coast guard to an intensive care unit in Naples. A family fundraiser said Junker suffered a cervical spinal cord injury, was unable to breathe independently and was diagnosed as quadriplegic.

His family fought to bring him back to the United States, and on Aug. 23, Junker was flown home and admitted to Mayo Clinic-Saint Marys Hospital in Rochester, Minnesota.



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There were glimmers of hope. Junker regained consciousness and communicated through head nods and facial expressions. He remained on a ventilator and underwent emergency surgery for spinal compression.

Ultimately, however, additional testing revealed that his

injuries could not be treated.

Junker died surrounded by his wife, children, friends, and parents.

However, his story did not end simply with tragedy.

Junker served as pastor of Chippewa Lutheran Church in Brandon, Minnesota, and his obituary painted the picture of a man whose ministry was woven deeply into his life. It remembered his energetic sermons, his willingness to help others, and his devotion to his family.

Most striking, however, was the description of how Junker approached his final days.

His obituary said he faced both life and death with a “quiet and unshakable faith” and was not afraid of what was ahead. Even in his final moments, the obituary says Junker’s thoughts turned to his church and those he loved.

Bunker’s obituary says a visitation will begin at 10:00 a.m. central time, followed by the funeral service at 11:00 a.m. at Chippewa Lutheran Church. During this time of grief, pray for Bunker’s family, friends and congregation.

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