

Pentecostal Megachurch Pastor Dies at 61

Greg Varney, the founder and pastor of Light of the World Christian Center, died this week at age 61.

"I regret to inform you that my husband and best friend, our Pastor Greg, went home to be with the Lord yesterday. He is now rejoicing in heaven," Debbie Varney says in a statement sent to congregation members.

Varney, who reportedly suffered from kidney failure, married Debbie in 1976, according to the Topeka, Kansas, church website. The couple had one son, five daughters and 12 grandchildren.

"Everybody was shocked," Danny Belisle, a fellow pastor, said. "Nobody knows what happened. He was in church and seemed fine."

Varney was arrested twice last year for uncharacteristic behavior,

"In the last few years, Pastor Greg has had health concerns resulting in kidney failure. He took a sabbatical from the church to focus on his health, and he is receiving dialysis," according to a church statement.

"During treatment, however, Pastor Greg's family began to notice unexplained cognitive and behavioral changes they believe were caused by the toxins released in his body when his kidneys were not functioning. Pastor Greg and his family have been working with multiple doctors to determine a solution to these issues, and they will continue to aggressively pursue the medical treatment he needs. We are grateful to the wonderful doctors in Topeka who have been treating Pastor Greg, and we ask for your prayers that they

might find the cause of these cognitive and behavioral changes and a suitable treatment for Pastor Greg,” according to a church statement.

But Belisle says it’s Varney’s heart for the Lord people will remember, not his arrests.

“He was happy-go-lucky. Once you know Greg, you never forget him,” and he will remember Varney’s “love and compassion for people” and his “powerful ministry.”

“He never wavered from the Word,” Belisle says.

Varney graduated RHEMA Bible Training Center in Tulsa, Oklahoma, in 1980. After pastoring a church for three years in Cut Off, Louisiana, the Lord directed the Varneys to move back to their home town of Topeka in March of 1985 to establish Light of the World Christian Center, according to the church website. {eoa}