

Christian Missionary 'Mama Bear Alaska' Dies at 56

Missionary Yolanda Marie Pratt, affectionately known as "Mama Bear Alaska," died Dec. 4 surrounded by family at her home, according to her obituary. She was 56.

Although a cause of death was not expressly stated, Pratt was diagnosed with breast cancer in 2016. She pursued natural methods of dealing with the cancer, and for a while, the cancer was thought to be gone. But in 2018, the diagnosis returned.

Pratt and her husband, Ron (known as "Papa Bear Alaska"), were both missionaries in North Pole, Alaska.

Ron shared a Facebook post six days after Yolanda's death. In it, he expressed the grief he was experiencing after losing his wife.

"A mattress made for two, I don't need this much room," he wrote. "I stretch out to justify the space, only to wipe more tears from my face. Memories that won't erase, dreams together we were to chase. Did you take my pillow? she would often say, and now I have them all if she were to ask away. Overwhelmed by glory, content and filled with Love, she doesn't need these pillows, she has comfort up above. I get it, Heaven is really great, yet I sit here on the edge of our bed remembering when she was... Fighting over pillows and winning every battle with love.

"Grieving is a process Yolanda and I have helped many get through. Like so many of you, we have had several grieving experiences to walk through in this life. Now that [I] am experiencing a new depth and height of emotional pain, I'm equally becoming aware of just how deep, wide and high the comforting love of Jesus can be."

In 2006, the Pratts founded This Generation Ministries, which focuses on equipping ministry leaders and developing ministries that reach diverse demographics and nationalities. According to a Facebook post by This Generation Ministries, the Pratts first moved to Alaska in 1998 and served as youth pastors. Later, they became Alaska's first Master's Commission directors.

Yolanda served as vice president for This Generation Ministries for 10 years.

"She never stopped believing the promises of God given to her," the post reads. "Her scope of work in TGM included hospitality, administration, logistics, intercession, teaching and so much more. She remained faithful to her calling and never lost hope in God's promises."

The church announced a Celebration of Life service for Yolanda that will take place on Jan. 4, 2020, at True North Church.

Yolanda leaves behind her husband, Ron, and three children: Jovanna, Cody and Austin.

In lieu of flowers, the Pratt family requests that donations be given to This Generation Ministries or to the family directly.

See the ministry's post below, along with several heartwarming photos of Yolanda throughout her time in ministry: