



Mathew Rodney Ward

July 23, 1987 - December 23, 2023

Mathew Rodney Ward died on Saturday, December 23 at Grand Strand Medical Center after a battle with renal-cell kidney cancer.

A musical prodigy, Rodney grew up in Conway, South Carolina. When he was only 10, he won first prize in the Grand Strand Yamaha Piano Competition. Throughout junior high and high school, he accompanied numerous choirs and vocalists for local and regional performances.

He served as Organist for the Saturday Mass at St. James Catholic Church from age fourteen until he left for his studies at Appalachian State University, where he completed a dual degree in both sacred music and organ performance, earning a Bachelor's and Master's degree, studying with Dr. Joby Bell. During his years at Appalachian State, Rodney served as Organist for First Baptist Church of Lenoir, North Carolina.

In the summer of 2006, Rodney visited the Washington, DC area where he performed on organs at St. Paul's Episcopal - K Street, the Catholic Basilica of St. Peter and St. Paul, and at the National Cathedral. In March 2007, he was a featured soloist on organ at the American Church in Paris, France while touring there with a chamber choir from Myrtle Beach, SC. In April of 2009, Rodney was chosen to present a recital on the famous Tannenberg organ in Old Salem, NC, and again in July of 2017. He maintained an active recital career performing for such organizations as the Organ Historical Society and American Guild of Organists. He participated in an apprenticeship with C.W. Gibson, Inc. Pipe Organ Specialties in Monroeville, New Jersey while also

serving as assistant organist at Saint Nicholas of Tolentine Roman Catholic Church in Atlantic City.

In 2018, Rodney began working as Director of Music Ministries at the historic St. John the Beloved RCC in Summerville, South Carolina, where he found great joy and satisfaction in performing services on the organ and directed the choir and other musicians.

Only three months after surgery to remove a brain tumor in early 2023, Rodney performed his final recital at Conway's First United Methodist Church, where he had often practiced on their pipe organ.

A lover of good food and conversation, Rodney had countless friends in many different locations, but he was especially close with his beloved family in his native Conway.

Rodney is survived by his mother, Robyn Arnold and her husband Cliff Arnold of Conway; his father Mathew Ward of Dillon; his brother Lee Ward and his children Isabella and Savannah Ward of Conway. He is also survived by his grandmother Frances Earle King of Conway; uncle Paul King and his wife Lori and son Dylan, also of Conway; his aunt Nicole King and her husband Baynard Woods of Baltimore, Maryland; and his aunt Ellen Watkins and her husband Robbie, in Conway, and their son Hayden and his wife Sarah, of Conway, South Carolina.

Rodney was preceded in death by his grandparents Jack and Mary Frances (Frankie) Ward and Paul Michael (Mike) King and his great grandparents Earl and Mary Frances Lewis.

A celebration of Rodney's life and music will be held at First United Methodist Church, 1001 Fifth Avenue, Conway, SC on December 29, 2023 with music performed by many of his colleagues, friends, and fans, as arranged by Ann Miles, one of Rodney's mentors, and colleague Sarah Abushakra. There will be a visitation, with music, at noon, with the service at 1:00 p.m..

In lieu of flowers, memorials in Rodney's name may be offered to the Music Fund at St. Anne's Episcopal Church, 2104 North Main Street, Conway, SC 29526 Attn: Rebecca Lovelace or the American Cancer Society at

donate.cancer.org or 800-227-2345.

Please sign an online guest book at www.goldfinchfuneralhome.com

Goldfinch Funeral Home, Conway Chapel is in charge of the arrangements.

Previous Events

Visitation

DEC **29**. 12:00 PM - 1:00 PM (ET)

First United Methodist Church of Conway
1001 5th Avenue
Conway, SC 29526
<http://www.fumcconway.org/>

Funeral Service

DEC **29**. 1:00 PM - 2:00 PM (ET)

First United Methodist Church of Conway
1001 5th Avenue
Conway, SC 29526
<http://www.fumcconway.org/>

Tribute Wall

PS

“ *Pat Sabatino lit a candle in memory of Mathew Rodney Ward*



Pat Sabatino - February 08, 2024 at 12:54 PM

BM

“ *AS a member of St Johns, I enjoyed Rodney's organ Music. He played with so much enthusiasm. He will be sadly missed.*

Bernard Mineweaser - January 01, 2024 at 12:24 AM

PF

“ *I am heartbroken to hear of Rodney's death. He was so talented and I was in awe of his musical abilities. I loved listening to him play at mass at St. John the Beloved. And I was so excited when he came back. I am praying for Rodney's family. May God's mercy and peace be with you in the coming days. God Bless you!*

Pegeen Fouty - December 31, 2023 at 04:00 PM

RF

“ *St. John The Beloved was blessed to have Rodney as their Music Director. He brought so much joy and love to the parish. Rodney played the organ beautifully and with all his heart. My most sincere sympathy to the family and friends of Rodney. He will be greatly missed. R.I.P. dear Rodney*

Rhea Fitzgerald - December 29, 2023 at 10:25 AM

MF

“ My heartfelt condolences to Matthew Rodney Ward's family. I was sorry to hear of his passing. Rodney was a great organist! I loved hearing him play at Mass at St. John The Beloved Catholic Church! Rodney is well loved and already missed by so many. Sleep in the comfort of God's arms, Rodney. Rest in peace.
With sympathy,
Mary Clare Fitzgerald

Mary Clare Fitzgerald - December 29, 2023 at 08:25 AM

PV

“ So saddened by Rodney's passing. Praying for all his dear friends and family members. Rodney was always a joy to be around and a very spirited and talented musician.

Phoebe Vogel - December 29, 2023 at 07:53 AM

TH

“ I sang in the St. John's The Beloved choir for 5 years, 3 with Rodney. I had to quit because of health issues. He was a very talented organist. At one funeral I attended Rodney played "The Summons". I thought Him to a good choir director/organist, but this was a great piece played by a Great Organist. What a talent He had. I'm sure the congregation at St. John's will miss him.

Thomas Hamons - December 28, 2023 at 11:42 PM

JM

“ I will always remember you Rodney in my heart. I have enjoyed our time together at St. John the Beloved. How awesome and talented you were. And I know that you will be playing for the Lord. And watching down on us. You will be missed my friend. Jenette

Jenette Metler - December 28, 2023 at 08:37 PM

AJ

“ Rodney's joy and kindness truly touched our family. He was so incredibly encouraging to Luke as a vocalist and noone accompanied Luke the way Rodney did. He brought out the best in so many of us and will always hold a special place in our hearts. We wish we could be at his funeral but we are out of town. Sincere sympathy to Rodney's family and friends.

The Jones Family - Steve, Anne, Luke & Caleb

Anne Jones - December 28, 2023 at 08:36 PM

DB

“ Rodney lived next door to me n my husband in Conway. I can remember when he was born. Cutie pie. Always a smile for everyone. So many memories of him n Lee. When he started playing piano, I knew he was destined for greatness and he didn't disappoint. His family was so proud of him!! So sorry to hear about his death. My thoughts and prayers are with the family. Love to all of his family. He will be missed by so many. De Lis Polatty Browne

De Lis Polatty Browne - December 28, 2023 at 08:33 PM

BW

My heart is heavy-laden, as is my family's, to learn of Rodney's death. He is gone to soon, but leaves us all with the secure knowledge that he is as he always has been safe within the loving arms of his Heavenly Father.

Barbara Whitley - December 29, 2023 at 11:13 AM

AP

“ Alan P. planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Mathew Rodney Ward.

Alan P. - December 28, 2023 at 12:24 PM

AP

“ Alan P. purchased the Arrive in Style for the family of Mathew Rodney Ward.



Alan P. - December 28, 2023 at 12:24 PM

LS

“ I am heartbroken to hear of Rodney's death. He was so talented and I was in awe of his musical abilities. Robyn and Matt please know I am praying for you and your families. May God's mercy and peace be with you in the coming days.

Lyn Snyder - December 28, 2023 at 11:49 AM

LS

“ Lyn Snyder lit a candle in memory of Mathew Rodney Ward



Lyn Snyder - December 28, 2023 at 11:40 AM



“ Simply Elegant Spathiphyllum was purchased for the family of Mathew Rodney Ward.



December 28, 2023 at 11:23 AM

LO

“ We offer our condolences and prayers to the family. Rodney was a gem and a very special person to be around. We all loved him dearly. John and Lisa O'Rourke

Lisa O'Rourke - December 28, 2023 at 11:18 AM

SR

“ To the Family

I was sorry to read of the passing of Rodney. He was truly a talented musician who blessed so many with his beautiful music on the organ and piano. May God grant you peace and comfort at this time and the days ahead.

Sylvia Richardson

Sylvia Richardson - December 28, 2023 at 09:51 AM



CG

“ Our deepest condolences to Rodney's family and friends at this time. We enjoyed Rodney so much during his visits to South Jersey and his one extended visit while he worked with us. We wanted him to stay but he was homesick! Rest in peace. Chuck and Joyce Gibson

Chuck Gibson - December 28, 2023 at 09:48 AM

GC

“ Guild of Organists - Charleston Chapter planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Mathew Rodney Ward.

Guild of Organists - Charleston Chapter - December 27, 2023 at 09:05 PM



“ *Sweet Solace Spray was purchased for the family of Mathew Rodney Ward.*



December 27, 2023 at 09:05 PM



“ *Kay & Dennis Graham lit a candle in memory of Mathew Rodney Ward*



Kay & Dennis Graham - December 27, 2023 at 07:22 PM



“ *Sentiments of Serenity Spray was purchased for the family of Mathew Rodney Ward.*



December 27, 2023 at 07:06 PM



“ *Keith Daigle lit a candle in memory of Mathew Rodney Ward*



Keith Daigle - December 27, 2023 at 06:58 PM

FM

“ Rodney will truly be missed! Thankful he thought of me as his Lenoir mom! He played for my daughter's ordination! First Baptist Lenoir have a lot of treasured memories and the choir especially! Prayers of comfort for all! Frances Malcolm

Frances Malcolm - December 27, 2023 at 05:45 PM

JF

“ 21 years ago when Rodney was only 15 years old, he played the organ for my daughter's wedding. (Jodi and Brett Barker). The wedding was at First Methodist in Conway. I had never met him or heard him play. When I walked in the night of rehearsal and heard him playing Ave Maria, it brought tears to my eyes. I could not believe the talent of that young man. Prayers for comfort to all of the family. Jo Fogle

Josephine Fogle - December 27, 2023 at 03:13 PM

AL

“ Ann And Steve Lee lit a candle in memory of Mathew Rodney Ward



Ann and Steve Lee - December 27, 2023 at 02:47 PM