# Connie Lee Helmke

AUGUST 22, 2024

Connie Lee (nee Penner) Helmke went to be with her Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ, on the 22nd of August 2024.

Connie was born in Saskatoon, SK on June 30th, 1969, to Peter and Margaret (nee Peters) Penner. She was the second of three girls, Cynthia being the oldest and Aimee to come later on. They grew up in Martensville surrounded by a big family of aunts, uncles, cousins and friends she would grow up with. A lot of fun and adventure was had biking around town, playing games with cousins and camping at Pike Lake.

Connie was involved in the Martensville Mission Church from a young age attending all the programs, including Sunday School, Girl's Club and Youth Group to name a few. This was where her foundation built on God started and grew. After graduating from Martensville High School in 1987, Connie went on to Millar College of the Bible, in Pambrun, SK for one year.  She spent a lot of time socializing and making lifelong friends in a fun, Christian environment.

She had a passion for missions which lead her to Guatemala for the summer with Teen Missions (1988).  She spent the summer showing the children God's love in the orphanage.  After this she met the love of her life, Dieter Helmke.  They shared a love of family, friends, and the Lord, and were eventually married on a rainy day in April the 27th of 1991.  They moved to Warman, Saskatchewan to build their life together. They lived there until 1999.  Connie's happiness grew exponentially when their first son Timothy was born on July 21st, 1993, and then even more with Nathaniel on February 04, 1995. The two kept her happily busy, being a mother

was her labour of love.

Her home was always bursting with energetic little ones giving her the opportunity to teach other children about Jesus. Anyone who knew Connie, knew that she loved children and loved talking about Jesus.  She firmly believed in Proverbs 22:6 “Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it.” Keeping this in mind, she chose to homeschool the boys.  These were some of her happiest years, teaching the boys, exploring with them and being goofy. It was not uncommon to see Connie, Tim and Nathaniel and often Grandma Penner creating spectacular experiments, on a field trip with the other homeschoolers or at the skating rink for the afternoon. Connie wanted to share her passion for life and the world with Tim and Nathaniel.

In the fall of 2001 Connie’s dream came true when her and her family moved to an acreage in the tiny hamlet of Hochstadt and was able to live and further teach the boys “farm life”. What didn’t she do on the farm? She took this opportunity to experience everything they could, from tending to animals, foraging for wood, and in general, enjoying the outdoor life, rain, shine or blizzard. Here the boys learned to drive standard, use rifles and live on a homestead. Everywhere they moved Connie used the opportunity the teach.

Spreading God’s love and the message of Jesus was very important to Connie. She made friends with a pastor couple who taught her how to get out of her comfort zone and preach Jesus everywhere she went.

In 2008 the family packed up and moved to Lemberg.  This was a tough adjustment for Connie, especially the first few years.  But she tried to make the best of it. The boys were now both in school, so with a bit of extra time on her hands, Connie started another daycare, again teaching everybody about Jesus.

Dieter started work at Dutch Industries in August of 2013, and a few years later Connie would join him in a daily drive to Pilot Butte for almost 3 years. With permission from the bosses, Connie used this opportunity to preach Gods word, as there were many there who had never heard the gospel. The drive to Regina gave Connie the opportunity to also see the boys as they also were now living in Regina.

In the spring of 2018 Dieter moved on from Dutch Industries taking Connie with him. Connie now having some free time used the opportunity to work at Dallas valley ranch camp a few summers helping in the kitchen. It was here she met many wonderful women who made a huge impact on her life.

Connie's passion for missions did not wane. In March of 2019 Connie went to Mexico with Nathaniel where they spent 2 weeks working with her cousin in the mission field.

Back home in Lemberg, Connie met up with a neighbor and the two of them became walking buddies. Along with her dogs, the two would go for a walk almost everyday around Lemberg. It was around this time that Connie once again started a daycare. She loved having a daycare. Connie would many times take the daycare kids to coffee time at the friendship center or an open house event at one of the businesses just to say Hi. Connie and Dieter also were involved with the church where they met some dear friends, a second set of "Pearl and Gary's".

In December of 2020 Connie's life would forever change as breast cancer was found, stage 3 level C Breast Cancer, an aggressive form. On Friday April 16, 2021, just days before Connie and Dieter's 30th anniversary, with a smile on her face, Connie started her cancer journey with her first round of chemo. The first four rounds were the most difficult, nicknamed the "red devil".

The fight with cancer continued. Numerous rounds of chemo, tachycardia attacks, Covid and horrible side effects continued. Connie truly tried everything to fight

this disease with strength from God, including hormone-based chemo pills.

In the winter of 2022, Connie went for Mastectomy Surgery, praising God through it all. In the fall of 2022, Connie and Dieter moved to Regina as medical appointments frequent, and driving the long distance was painful for Connie.

After taking the 2 pills daily for several months, other side effects were starting to pop up.  Memory loss was the major side effect now.  After several months of reducing the dosage to regain memory, to no avail, Connie chose to trust Gods plan for the rest of her life and stopped taking the medication.  After a few months, her memory was improving again.

In January of 2024 Connie took a contract at the Ruth Pawson School as an E.A. trying to maintain some sense of normality, again instantly making friends and teaching Jesus. Shortly after, it was confirmed that the cancer had come back, in a different form, and still just as aggressive as the first.  She spent the next seven months struggling with pain and the loss of her abilities. One of Connie's friends came to visit one day and said to Connie – "You are brave and taking this quite well", Connie responded with a little chuckle and said, "I'm dying, that's all I can do." – still praising God for all he has done in her life.

And on August 22, 2024, around 9:15 in the evening, God called her home, where she can now spend eternity with Her Lord and Saviour.

Connie loved her family, loved serving God and sharing what God had done in her life. Connie, through out her life, almost everyday recorded her thoughts in a journal. She filled many journals. She recorded a Bible verse or passage she read that day, along with what the passage meant to her.  Eight months before she found out she had cancer, Connie started recording her thankful lists. First five things to be thankful for, then the list grew quickly to ten items a day.  These things she would then turn to prayer.

Connie was a woman of faith; she knew God was always at work in her life. In her own words:

“When we needed our tree stumps to be removed from our first house and we had no money, I gave the paving crew some hot chocolate (not great hot chocolate) a few days prior and they took out our stumps. It was a surprise as I didn’t expect them to even ask. I thought it was our problem, but God took care of it for us.”

“Revenue Canada gave us to much money back one year” - amazing what happens when you miss a check box – “The next year they wanted it back with interest. We were at a loss as to what to do. We didn’t have the money. Dieter’s Mom and Dad gave us money out of the blue they were giving everyone of the kids $1500. We appreciated it and it was a gift from God.”

“I always wanted to move onto an acreage. The Lord made that happen.”

“Nathaniel had a problem with his teeth. We were told it was going to cost 5 or 6 thousand dollars and a broken jaw. We prayed about it and the Lord heard our prayers and fixed Nathaniel’s teeth. He had one tooth that hadn’t come down, but after prayer and time it came down.”

Even during her cancer journey, Connie always praised God for the small victories in her life. Connie’s last prayer was that God would take care of her to the end. Prayer answered!

GOD is good. Amen

Connie is survived by her husband of 33 years, Dieter Helmke, sons Timothy (Jolene), and Nathaniel; Parents Peter & Margaret Penner; siblings Cynthia Penner, Aimee Penner-Mayoh; Mother-in-law Erika Helmke; Brothers – and Sisters-in-law Kelly (Roberta) Helmke, Linda (Stuart) Liebrecht; nieces and nephews, Chelsea Haughey, Brittany Haughey, Liam Penner-Mayoh, Jonas Penner-Mayoh,

Darby Liebrecht, Zoey Liebrecht, Heidi Helmke, Gabriella Helmke, and Maksym Helmke. Gone before her was Father-in-law Peter Helmke, and numerous Grandparents, Aunts, Uncles, and Cousins.

A Celebration of Connie's life will take place on Tuesday, September 3 at 11:00 am at Faith Baptist Church (437 Broadway Ave E, Regina, SK. S4N 0Z8). For those who are unable to attend, there will be a livestreamed on YouTube (search Faith Baptist Church).

## Messages of Condolence

My condolences to you, Dieter, Tim, Nathaniel, Cindy, and Aimee. I have so many memories of Connie - growing up and as moms. My kids were 2 of the kids that she babysat in one of her many daycares. A cousin and a friend.

**— Carol Friesen**

Connie my friend you will be missed. I will miss our walks with the dogs. I will miss sitting with you in church. I will miss your friendship. I know you dancing with Pearl now and being pain free. See you again in heaven.

**— Debbie Brice**

Much too soon, so sorry for your loss.

**— Chris Fehr**

Dieter I am so sorry for your loss. My deepest sympathies to you and your family.

**— Jacquie (Fehr) Wirth**

Sending condolences to you Dieter, your boys and extended family.

**— Connie (Willems) Jones**

I am so sorry to hear of Connie’s passing. She was taken so young. I hope Connie’s family is feeling the comfort and care of those who love them and Connie. Praying for peace and strength as you uphold each other on this difficult journey of grief.

**— Keith Penner**

We express our deepest sympathy to Dieter, Tim, Jolene and Nathaniel as well as to Peter and Margaret Penner. May you feel Jesus very near and be comforted with the words of the bible Rev. 21:4 He will wipe every tear from their eyes and there will be no more death, or sorrow or crying or pain. All these things are gone forever. John and Thelma Teichroeb

**— John and Thelma Teichroeb**

Our condolences to Dieter and boys. What a beautiful life Connie lived. She loved her Lord, willing to share her faith with others. What a great testimony.

**— Margaret and Delphine Fehr**

The outpouring of love and support continues to be tremendous- a testimony to Connie's impact on so many lives. Thank you.

It is difficult to imagine Connie not in our physical lives. Her quirky messages and ability to bring levity to a situation. She tried so hard to stay on this earth- she wanted to be there physically as her family continues to explore life and grow.

We will be reminded of Connie when we see a person befriending a lonely stranger or someone trying to learn a new recipe or try a new adventure. We will remember Connie getting out in nature with her dogs or reading stories to children. For the love she has for her boys Timothy and Nathaniel. And for Dieter and Jolene. How she cared to know the minutiae of the lives of Chelsea & Dustin, Brittany & Romeo, Liam & Jonas and other neices & nephews.

And for being Margaret and Pete's daughter. One of our fondest memories is of Dad and Mom taking us to EXPO 86. Connie had Mono and so she and Mom spent some of the time resting.

Growing up with Aimee and I, Connie played travelling on a ship, school, Barbies and so many other things. When Aimee was born, Connie raced home to see our new baby. Just a few of so many moments.

We love you Connie. Danke Schien xo

**— Cynthia Penner**

My heartfelt sympathies to the family!
Thank you so much for making the service available online. It was a beautiful service honouring your wife and mother and glorifying her/your Lord and Saviour!! Well done!
May your memories of your Wife/Mom/sister/daughter bring you comfort and courage to carry on following Jesus.

**— Dale and Deb Gerbrandt**

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