



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 Friday, 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 pm and interment to follow at Hillcrest Cemetery.

In lieu of flowers, memorials in Rodney's name may be offered to the American Cancer

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

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

To send flowers or a memorial gift to the family of Mathew Rodney Ward please visit our Sympathy Store.

Cemetery Details

Hillcrest Cemetery

1000 Hwy 544
Conway, SC 29526
(843) 347-4909
office@hillcrestcemetery.com
<https://www.hillcrestcemetery.com/>

Previous Events

Visitation

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

First United Methodist Church of Conway
1001 5th Ave
Conway, SC 29526
(843) 488-4251
<http://www.fumcconway.org/>

Funeral Service

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

First United Methodist Church of Conway
1001 5th Ave
Conway, SC 29526
(843) 488-4251
<http://www.fumcconway.org/>

Interment

DEC **29**. 2:00 PM - 3:00 PM (ET)

Hillcrest Cemetery

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