Christian Bernard Anderson

December 12, 1952 ~ December 19, 2023

If you talked much to Chris, you likely heard him ask how many therapists it takes to change a light bulb. Answer: One, but the light bulb's gotta want to change. You probably also knew that Chris was devoted to Lili and had the faith and courage to, with her, bring eight children—the "Alphabet Kids"--into a family on one salary. They wryly joked that their tithing blessings must be their children because they were the only things they had no room to contain. With the 8th child on the way in a 3-bedroom home, and finances very tight, Chris took a sledgehammer to the stoop where an addition would begin and, at Lili's shock and concern, calmly stated, "We need this space for the kids and the Lord will help us get it done." Miracle upon miracle came and the addition was completed.

Born in Twin Falls, Idaho, Chris was immediately adopted by Mark and Roberta Anderson of Provo, Utah. Chris grew up in a house practically (and now in reality) a part of BYU's campus. He and his dad attended every BYU basketball and football game. His kids were woken up to "Rise and Shout" and learned to cheer for the Cougars. As he grew up, Chris worked as a bellboy and then as desk clerk at the family business, Hotel Roberts, later saying his exposure to all kinds of people at the hotel laid a great foundation for his social work career.

At Provo High School, he met Lili De Hoyos. A history teacher first tried to set them up as partners on a field trip, but Lili was unaware and didn't make it to the event. As senior and junior, they were at the same lab table in chemistry and together on the debate team. In chemistry, Chris would talk with Lili about debate and in debate, he would talk about chemistry. They dated until he served a mission for the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in Kobe, Japan from 1971-1973. The second night he was home, he took Lili on a date and posed his romantic question, "Well, what do you think?" She said, "I really care for you but I don't think so." Chris's persistence (and a sign from God) won her over, and they were sealed in a forever partnership in the Salt Lake City Temple on August 1, 1974. When, years later, Lili asked Chris why he persisted in the face of her reluctance, he said he was never more sure of anything in his life than that he was going to marry Lili.

They had eight children in twelve years: two kids in Provo, Utah (completing Chris's degree in Sociology at BYU); two in Norman, Oklahoma (completing his Master's of Social Work at Oklahoma University); two kids in Bolingbrook, Illinois (where he started his career for Church Family Services); then two more in Las Vegas, Nevada (his next assignment for work).

Chris began his 42-year career as an Agency Practitioner for the Church in Chicago. He did almost everything you could do in the agency: counseling, birth parent work, adoption, agency director for Nevada, and again for the flagship agency in Salt Lake City, helping with the setup and execution of the HELP Line for priesthood leaders, counseling for missionaries at the Provo MTC, in the Missionary Department as a resource to in-field representatives and mission presidents, coordinating world-wide area mental health advisors, program and material

development, Field Group Manager at Headquarters, and humanitarian work.

While director in Las Vegas, Chris started thinking of last-days prophecies that the world would be in commotion. Following a strong prompting, he reached out to the local Red Cross chapter to learn what mental health services they provide in natural and man-made disasters. Chris learned the Red Cross trains mental health professionals for crisis response and arranged to have his agency personnel certified. Shortly afterwards, the Red Cross asked Chris if he would accept a two-week assignment with them, responding to a flooding disaster in Louisville, Kentucky. He and Lili were prepared to sacrifice two weeks of vacation time for Chris to gain this experience; at the last minute, he was given approval for taking paid leave. That was the first of many crisis response efforts Chris helped with for the Red Cross.

A few years later, after Chris had become director in Salt Lake, a gunman entered the Family History Library, just west of Temple Square, and shot seven people. Immediately, Chris selected some of his full-time counselors, gave some instructions, and implemented crisis relief. Five days later, the Columbine High School shooting happened and Chris was sent to respond in the first-ever official mental health crisis response from the Church. In the ensuing years, Chris responded, with more and more trained agency workers, serving victims of hurricanes, tornadoes, and other disasters. His extraordinary experiences are too many to recount, but include: being one of only two Christian counselors allowed to provide mental health response after the 2004 Indonesian Tsunami, going with the Church's first response medical team to the 2010 Haiti earthquake, responding to the World Trade Center attack on 9/11, and providing humanitarian services in the Philippines on the U.S.S. Mercy. Before retiring, Chris trained all the North American Family Services agencies in Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM), fulfilling his original inspiration.

Above all, Chris was a steadfast family man. He would come home from work and fully engage in family needs and activities. He never shied away from new learning curves that came his way in providing for Lili and the kids. He learned to repair, retool, rework, reuse, along with build and innovate. He personified one of his original and often repeated maxims to the kids, "Flexibility is the key to mental health." When Lili felt directed to go back to school for her graduate degrees, Chris was instantly supportive in every way, including assuming most household tasks. Chris's spiritual, emotional, intellectual, physical and practical support were crucial to all of Lili's personal and professional pursuits.

Chris passed away unexpectedly from a pulmonary embolism one week after his 71st birthday. He is survived by Lili, their eight children—Adam (Sara Payne); Bethany (Nathan Callister); Caitlin (Robert Justiniano); Dominic (Jennifer Sorensen); Eden; Faith (Spencer Cotterell); Graydon (Angela Bennion); and Harper—36 grandchildren, their first great-grandson, his sister, Marcia (the late Karl Barton), and his half-siblings, Debby Lewis (the late Rodger Blake), Art Lewis (Marsha), and Ann Givens. He is preceded in death by a granddaughter, Magnolia. His family will miss him terribly. They rejoice that, through the grace of our Savior, Jesus Christ, they will be reunited with Chris forever.

A viewing will be held Thursday, January 11 from 6 - 8 pm and Saturday, January 13 from 9:30 - 10:45 at the Draper Corner Canyon Stake Center, 13366 South 1300 East, Draper, UT 84020. Funeral services will take place in the same building at 11 am on Saturday. Interment will take place at Eastlawn Memorial Cemetery in Provo, Utah.

In lieu of flowers please consider donating to The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints humanitarian services or missionary fund.

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