

James Todd Alger was born on May 30, 1933, to O. Kenneth Alger and Jean Nicholson. He grew up with his younger brother Robert in Morris, Minnesota, raised by O.K., Jean, and O.K.'s second wife, Virginia Spitzer. Jim died peacefully in Fargo, North Dakota on May 24, 2025.

Jim studied history and drama at Augustana College (Sioux Falls), ministry at Luther Seminary (St. Paul), including an internship year in Hong Kong, and religious drama at Union Theological Seminary (NYC), then launched his life's work as a Lutheran minister. He served congregations in North Dakota, Minnesota, Iowa, and Canada, and was campus pastor at the NDSU Lutheran Center for 13 years. Jim thrived on the theology, homiletics, and pastoral care of his ministry, which was shaped by several defining passions: his love of the woods and waters of the northlands, which were a source of joy and inspiration throughout his life; his immersion in the theater, which deeply informed his ministry and provided endless fun (he always memorized his sermons); and most importantly, his love for JoAnn Rasmussen, his great love and life partner of 70 years. Jim and JoAnn shared his ministry, raised a family, directed, costumed, and acted in many theatrical productions, hosted play readings, founded and ran two theater companies (Chancelleers and St. John's Players), and actively engaged in political and community action, including committed leadership with the Hawthorne Neighborhood Association and the Fargo-Moorhead Community Theater and hard work in the trenches for local political candidates and direct aid to refugees. The two love birds built a wonderful home together, including at the Fargo house and at Leech Lake camp, through their mutual care and collaboration. In that way Pa truly was at home in the parsonage, on the stage, and in the woodlands. Throughout his active life Jim was a great writer; he blessed his friends and family with countless personal letters, he composed a body of poetry, and for over fifteen years he faithfully chronicled his observations of the woodlands.

Jim and JoAnn's children, Doug, Julie (Mark), Stuart (Patricia), and Rich (Tina) have basically followed in Jim and JoAnn's footsteps, with modifications. Besides his loving wife JoAnn and his children, Jim is survived by his grandchildren Jack, Otto and Max. Those three boys will never forget their grandpa, who read them comics, applauded their Christmas skits with enthusiasm, and regaled them with song and story around the campfire.



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JAMES TODD ALGER

May 30, 1933 - May 24, 2025

# THE GOLDEN BOUGH

I PLANT A GARDEN  
AND IN THE EVENING  
WHEN THE SUN CASTS LONG SHADOWS  
ON THE REMNANTS OF MY LIFE  
A GOLDEN BOUGH  
STRETCHES PAST MY SHOULDER  
AND BIDS ME REST  
BENEATH ITS COOLING SHADE,  
AND I LIE DOWN  
AND SLEEP.

--JAMES ALGER



**HANSON  
RUNSVOLD**  
Cremation • Burial

## Funeral Service

Friday, May 30, 2025 - 2:00 PM

St. John Lutheran Church - Fargo, North Dakota

Rev. Chad Brucklacher - Officiant

Rev. Phil Johnson - Preacher

### Musicians

Dawn Papenfuss - Accompanist

Merrill Piepkorn - Soloist

Kate Henne - Fiddler

### Readers

Maxwell Marckel - Richard Alger - Mary Jackson

Douglas Alger - Julie Marckel

### Order of Service

Special Music	"Ashokan Farewell"
Congregational Hymn	"For the Beauty of the Earth" #879
Obituary Reading	
Congregational Hymn	"First Song of Isaiah" (Insert)
First Reading	Ecclesiastes 3:1-9
Second Reading	Romans 12:9-21
Third Reading	"The Golden Bough"
Special Music	"How Can I Keep from Singing"
Gospel	
Sermon	
Congregational Hymn	"What a Friend We Have in Jesus" #742
Lord's Prayer	
Congregational Hymn	"Praise to the Lord" #858 (vs. 1 & 2)
Psalm 23	

### Honorary Pallbearers

Jack Alger - Otto Marckel - Maxwell Marckel

Mark Christianson - Tony Tilton - Patrick Tilton

*All are invited to a reception following the service.*