



Christopher James Bell

May 3, 1960 - March 26, 2025

Christopher James Bell, 64, went home to heaven peacefully surrounded by his loving family on March 26, 2025. The second of seven children, Chris was born on May 3, 1960 to Virgil Leroy Bell and Carol Ann Bell in Walterboro, South Carolina. He grew up in Lodge, South Carolina where he worked on the family dairy farm until he was 14 years old. Soon after, the family moved to Costa Rica where they invested in the community through a ceramic shop and roller-skating rink. In 1977, the family moved from Costa Rica to Fruitland Park, Florida to open Sunshine Ceramics, later known as Florida Pottery (located in Leesburg). Chris graduated from Leesburg High School and went to Lake Sumter Community College. At Lake Sumter, he met the love of his life, Joyce Boutwell. They were married in Fruitland Park on August 29, 1980.

Chris worked in the family pottery business until the late eighties, when he opened Disability Consultants with his mom, Carol Bell. The business flourished and in 2010, his son Jeff joined him as the third generation of Bells helping people get the Social Security benefits they deserve.

In 1994, Chris was elected as Commissioner for the city of Fruitland Park for the first time. In 2005, he was elected Mayor of Fruitland Park. He was the last mayor to be elected by the community he loved and served faithfully for over thirty years. He was instrumental in the creation and development of many of the parks throughout Lake County.

Chris loved life and his family. He spent countless years coaching his kids and his grandkids in community sports. Chris also enjoyed boating and traveling with his wife and kids; but his greatest passion was following Jesus Christ. Chris taught Sunday School, led the children's ministry, went on mission trips, and served as a Deacon of the First Baptist Church of Fruitland Park (now Heritage Community Church). One of his fondest memories and favorite projects was starting a Christmas Drive-thru depicting live action scenes from the life of Jesus.

Chris is survived by his wife of 45 years, Joyce Boutwell Bell; son, Christopher Bell II (Rachel); daughter Jacqueline Blake (Joshua); son, Jeffrey Bell (Bibi); daughter, Cari Lucas (Andrew), 10 grandchildren who was "Pepaw's" pride and joy; brother, Roland Bell; brother, Daniel Bell (Melissa); sister, Beth Osborne (Randall); sister, Daphine Harvey (Paul); sister, Jennifer Keller (Steven); and many nieces, nephews, and cousins. Chris and Joyce were also known by many as unofficial "foster" parents to many children and students in the community, as their house remained the preferred hang-out "eight days a week".

A visitation will be held on Saturday, April 5, 2025, from 6:00 PM to 8:00 PM at Beyers Funeral Home, 1123 W. Main St, Leesburg, FL 34748. A funeral service will be held on Sunday, April 6, 2025, 3:00 PM with visiting hours from 2:00 PM till 3:00 PM at Heritage Community Church, 509 W Berckman St, Fruitland Park, FL 34731: Pastor Randall Hosea, Pastor Daniel Fogle, and Pastor Sidney Brock officiating. Interment to follow at Shiloh Cemetery in Fruitland Park, FL.

In lieu of flowers, contributions may be made to the Bell of Lake, in care of the Bell of Lake legacy fund, which was created to give grants to non-profit organizations, P.O. Box 625, Fruitland Park, FL 34731.

Arrangements entrusted to Beyers Funeral Home of Leesburg, Florida.

Cemetery Details

Shiloh Cemetery

Fruitland Park , FL 34731

Previous Events

Visitation

APR 5. 6:00 PM - 8:00 PM (ET)

Beyers Funeral Home & Crematory
1123 W Main St
Leesburg, FL 34748
(352) 787-4343

Viewing

APR 6. 2:00 PM - 3:00 PM (ET)

Heritage Community Church
509 W Berckman St
Fruitland Park, FL 34731

Funeral Service

APR 6. 3:00 PM (ET)

Heritage Community Church
509 W Berckman St
Fruitland Park, FL 34731

Tribute Wall



“ *Beyers Funeral Home created a Tribute Video in memory of Christopher James Bell*



Beyers Funeral Home - March 28, 2025 at 10:58 AM

LM

Joyce, my deepest sympathy to you and your family at your loss of Chris. He was truly a man of God, husband and father and a light to everyone who knew him. On behalf of my Wife Kay and American Legion Post 219 you are in my prayers. In Christ Love, Larry Miller, Commander Post 219.

Larry Miller - March 28, 2025 at 01:40 PM

RS

Beautiful video. Lovely family.

Ray SanFratello - March 28, 2025 at 01:51 PM

RF

Beautiful video. Lovely family.

Ray San Fratello - March 28, 2025 at 05:12 PM

CK

Sorry for your loss my prayers and condolences to family

Cheryl Kuchma - March 28, 2025 at 11:28 PM

KS

“ *My deepest sympathies and sorrow. I served as a city commissioner for Eustis and met Chris at our local League of Cities. He was insightful and it was a pleasure talking with him. He will be missed.*
Karen LeHeup-Smith

Karen LeHeup Smith - March 30, 2025 at 06:47 PM

CL

“ *Mr. Bell was so kind and helpful as I navigated the disability process. I'm so sorry for your loss.*

Cindy Losak - March 30, 2025 at 07:39 AM

PM

“ *I have known Commissioner Bell ever since moving to Fruitland Park in 1991 to accept the pastorate of Grace Bible Baptist Church. He has always been a dear friend and supporter of me, both as a local pastor and Volunteer Chaplain for Fruitland Park Fire-Rescue and the Fruitland Park Police Department. He is also a beloved brother in Christ and a faithful servant of God and of the community he loved and served. Joyce and family, are hearts grieve his loss and our thoughts and prayers are with you. Through your tears and in your sorrow, please know that God holds you close (Psalm 46:1).*

Pastor George Mulford - March 29, 2025 at 04:25 PM

CM

“ *So sorry for your loss Joyce I knew both of you in school your family is in my thoughts and prayers. Cheryl (strickland)Morrot*

Cheryl Morrot - March 28, 2025 at 08:53 AM

SL

“ *Chirs will not be forgotten. He is such an amazing man. He helped my family to get my social security check and stuff. Rest easy prayers for family and friends.* ”

Stephanie L Losey - March 28, 2025 at 08:14 AM

JW

Mr. Chris Bell was a blessing when I needed my Benefits, he made it possible and easy to process. J. Wright

Joyce Wright - March 28, 2025 at 07:14 PM



“ *I have known Chris since he moved to Fruitland Park. Our family and his attended Fruitland Park Baptist together. His family and ours are inextricably linked through his sister's marriage to my brother. He was such a kind and gentle person. I knew instantly that he had a love of Jesus.* ”

I didn't spend much time around him in these later years as my path moved me away from the area, but I heard about him and his family through my brother. I know he will be missed greatly, but he left a legacy of love in his wife, children and grandchildren. I know I will one day see him again in heaven.

Joyce - The one thing I knew is that he loved you dearly. May God hold you through your time of grieving.

Nancy Jansen - March 27, 2025 at 07:13 PM

LV

“ *I know the Bells through softball and baseball. Loved coaching with and against Chris. He was one of the best. Prays for all the family he will be greatly missed!* ”

lisa vasque - March 27, 2025 at 05:40 PM

RS

My condolences to all the Bell family on the passing of Chris. I met him way back in 2005 as part of the Leadership Lake program. Loved his volunteer spirit and the way he rocked the role of Mayor in Fruitland Park. Peace and blessings upon Chris and may the Lord hold him in the palm of his hand.

Ray SanFratello - March 28, 2025 at 01:20 PM

WC

Chris was a good man who loved Fruitland Park!

Welton Cadwell - March 29, 2025 at 09:47 PM