



The Rev. Charles Michael Pumphrey

July 22, 1956 - February 10, 2025

The Rev. Charles Michael Pumphrey (68), U.S. Navy Retired, Alexandria, Virginia passed away Monday, February 10, 2025.

Michael (called by his middle name) was born in Baltimore, Maryland, July 22, 1956, to Charles Merritt Pumphrey and Dorothy Mae Iglehart. He attended school in Howard County graduating from Mount Hebron High School. He was a Boy Scout, active in Young Life and participated in many church activities. His first dog was "Taffy," a legend among Golden Retrievers who provided puppies to finance his studies.

He earned his B.A. in Religious Studies from Randolph-Macon College, in 1978. He then went on to earn the Master of Divinity, including one unit of Clinical Pastoral Education, from Virginia Theological Seminary, in 1981 supported by his home parish St. John's Episcopal Church in Howard County. He was ordained as a deacon and, in 1982, a priest in the Episcopal Church. For twelve years, he served congregations in both Maryland and Iowa before following God's call to serve and being commissioned in the U.S. Navy Chaplain Corps in 1993.

He completed the Chaplains School Basic Course in Newport, Rhode Island and reported as Command Chaplain to the USS VINCENNES (CG49), homeported in San Diego, California. In 1996, he reported to the Second Marine Division in Camp Lejeune, North Carolina serving as a Battalion Chaplain. In 1999, he reported as Command Chaplain of Destroyer Squadron (DESRON) 28, Norfolk, Virginia. He deployed aboard the flagship, USS ROSS

(DDG 71) in the Mediterranean, Ionian, and Adriatic Seas during the Kosovo Conflict. He also served on the USS Halyburton (FFG 40) during Maritime Interception Operations in the Arabian Gulf. Back in Norfolk, he was part of the pastoral care team helping sailors and their families following the attack on the USS COLE. He provided sustained pastoral support to the family of one of the seventeen sailors who were killed. In 2001, he reported to Naval Submarine Support Center, Norfolk, as staff chaplain in support of Submarine Squadrons 6 and 8.

2004-05, he completed the Pastoral Care Residency at Naval Medical Center Portsmouth and the VA Medical Center, Hampton Virginia. From 2005-2008, he served as Command Chaplain, U.S. Naval Hospital, Okinawa, Japan. From 2008-2011, he served as Deputy Chaplain of Navy Medicine, Bureau of Medicine and Surgery, Washington, D.C. In 2010, he deployed to Kandahar Air Field, Afghanistan as Command Chaplain/Director, Pastoral Care Services of the NATO Role III Multinational Medical Unit, a combat trauma hospital. From 2012-2015, he was the CREDO Director, Commander, Navy Region Europe, Africa, Southwest Asia based in Naples, Italy. At retirement Commander Pumphrey was the Joint Plans and Operations Chaplain NORTHCOM Joint Task Force – National Capital Region.

Chaplain Pumphrey remained active as a supply Priest in the area and Interim at St. Andrew's Episcopal Church in California, Maryland until his diagnosis of Metastatic Prostate Cancer. After his diagnosis, he walked with his constant companion and service dog Sophie over two miles per day supporting the American Cancer Society, rooting for the Baltimore Orioles, reading, eating great food and drinking exceptional wine. He was an excellent cook and was known for his Caesar salads which always came with a "show".

He leaves his dance partner and loving spouse of 24 years, Elizabeth Biddle with three kayaks and joyous memories of their life, journey and travels together. The only thing he took exception to was when he was called Mr. Biddle!

He loved and was so proud of his adult children, Abigail Jean Newman,

Gregory Michael Pumphrey (Emily), James Norman Pumphrey, and Logan Elizabeth Gonella; and being with his grandchildren gave him great joy, Maeve Jean Newman, Addilynn Grace Pumphrey, and Walter Thomas Pumphrey. He cherished his siblings and their extended families; sister, Sue Carolyn Corbin (Edwin) and brother John (Jack) Merritt Pumphrey (Nellie) and all his cousins who visited by Zoom during the years. He also cherished his friendship with his first wife, Donna Gambill Newman, the mother of Abigail, Gregory, and James.

Faithful service dog, Sophie is keeping watch, waiting for him to walk through the door. In the end, she was with him on his bed to comfort him.

Michael was a man of great faith. He knew from a young age that God was calling Him, seeking him to work for Him. It was this faith that gave him hope. Hope that would not let him give up on his relationships, that would find happiness in unremarkable places, fight the cancer he developed and help all of God's people. He was a man who could keep confidences and was an extremely gifted preacher. Chaplain Michael Pumphrey was a remarkable human who was cherished by his family and friends; he will be missed. He is with his Maker looking down on all of us.

A memorial service, celebration of his life and burial at Arlington National Cemetery will be when an internment date has been received. If you wish to be included in the notice, please email LFIkebana@gmail.com.

Memorial contributions may be made to the Semper K-9 or American Cancer Society or a charity of your choice. Please view and sign the family guestbook at Jefferson Funeral Chapel.