

**James Kim**  
**2 January 1946 – 10 December 2023**

*Written by Brian McKinlay and read by Chris Cheah*

James Kim was born in 1946 in the town of Gim Hae in the southeast of South Korea, the child of Kim Ki Woon and Chu Bong Sun. He was the fourth of seven siblings. Other than James himself and one sister who has died, they are all still living in Korea.

In the 1940s and 50s in Korea, times were tough. James told stories of carrying a sack of food on his back as the family fled from the communist armies, through the mountains. After the war, the family built a business making and selling *makouli*—fermented rice wine. The business and the family prospered, but it was hard work.

From Gim Hae Agricultural High School, James went to Gyeongsang National University to study agricultural chemistry and microbiology. He graduated in 1970 with honours and the University Medal.

James completed reserve officers' training while at university and then entered the Korean Army for compulsory military service as an intelligence officer. He was promoted and had about 120 troops under his command, patrolling the demilitarised zone searching out the activities of nearby North Koreans.

In 1973, after military service, James joined the Korean Ginseng Company in Seoul and remained there until he migrated to Australia in 1990. Again, James was a leader. After two years, he was the head of the company laboratory and in 1985 he became the production manager, leading a big team.

James has two daughters and a grandson.

Sometime in the 1980s, James began to understand that he was gay — not an easy thing in Korea over 40 years ago. He met an Australian, also called Brian, who was teaching English in Seoul. James visited Brian a couple of times in Canberra and in 1990 moved here to live with him. They parted in 1996 but remained friends.

In 1997 James met another Brian: this one, Brian McKinlay; they were together until parted by James's death nine days ago.

At first, life for James in Canberra was hard; he had to start again at the bottom—as a kitchen hand. After a couple of years, he joined the Public Service, where he worked mostly as a finance officer and assets manager until retirement in 2007.

When Brian also retired, they set out to enjoy travel, beginning with Europe in 2012. In 2014, they went on a road trip in the west of the United States and Canada, driving on what, for Brian, was the wrong side of the road. After Brian nearly pancaked a cyclist, James decided that he would do the driving—9,700 kilometres in sixty days. Many more journeys followed.

Apart from one sister, James was the only Christian in his family. As a boy, he went to Sunday school with a young friend and was fascinated by the Bible stories. As a teenager, he defied his father to sneak out of the house to attend church. (That wasn't the only thing he snuck out to do—James loved movies and took the bus to go to see them. He was a movie buff all his life).

James Kim was not perfect. As for many of us, there were some wrongful things for which he needed the forgiveness of others and of God. Yet, after James joined Brian in a Canberra church community, he softened. His faith was refreshed and renewed. Having been a leader previously, James transformed himself into a beautiful servant. He helped with hospitality especially—cooking and serving.

James taught himself to be an excellent cook and he enjoyed creating good things. He searched out the best produce so that he and Brian could enjoy a superb diet. James took care to serve their guests nutritious and delicious food.

Here at St Philip's, James served Pandora's op shop, emptying the bin, moving heavy bags, and sorting donated clothes. After a few years, rector Rob Lamerton chose James to be his warden. James had a simple but insightful wisdom, grounded in the Scriptures.

James and Brian became oblates — lay associates — of the Benedictine Abbey at Jamberoo. The love and gentle welcome of the sisters was a remarkable blessing to James, and he loved them greatly. The daily Benedictine rhythm of Christian prayer and reflection sustained James, blessed him, and strengthened him for many years.

James liked to keep fit. Famously, he used to run up and down Black Mountain every morning. Until quite recently, he went to the ANU gym every weekday at 6am.

The version of Castleman's disease that killed James horribly is an extraordinarily rare autoimmune disease. James was the only person in Canberra with it. It is not well understood; its cause is unknown and, in the end, it's fatal. Yet some patients can be helped to battle it. The determination, hard work, and sheer brilliance of Dr Samuel Bennett at The Canberra Hospital gave James five years of life after diagnosis in 2018. James endured much suffering, but in the final days of his life he was comfortable, at peace, and longed to be with his Lord.

James's body will be cremated. Brian will take his ashes to Korea where his family will put them on the grave of James's parents, on a hillside close to Gim Hae, where James's ancestors have lived for countless generations.

James loved plants and gardens. He had a green thumb, but also knew the science. He crammed his courtyard with roses, flowering shrubs, and fruit trees. He loved long-stemmed "Mr Lincoln" roses; they are on his coffin this morning. James grew masses of blue hydrangeas and Barbara Griffiths has graciously arranged some in the church for us. Thank you, Barbara.

In a moment, Jeannette will lead us through Psalm 30. Make the words your own. But if you can, also imagine them as James's words to his Lord.

James asked for rejoicing and celebration at his funeral, with thanksgiving for the goodness of God. He imagined a Dixieland band—a little sad, yes, but also upbeat and noisy. We can't quite manage a Dixieland band, but Colin Forbes will play for us two rags by Scott Joplin. Thank you, Colin. As we go out at the end of the service, try a little skip and a dance, as James dances with God.

On the coffin there is a little bronze bell. It's a replica of the Liberty Bell kept in Philadelphia. It's a symbol of freedom. James kept the bell by his bed, to ring when he needed Brian's help. Now James is free, and it will be Brian who rings the bell.

"Ring the little bell, my darling, for I will be with you forever."