



## James Vincent Brinker

June 18, 1994 - October 15, 2023

James Vincent Brinker, age 29, of Lansing, Michigan, died unexpectedly in his sleep October 15, 2023. He was born June 18, 1994 in Lansing to John and Jennette (Guy) Brinker, the youngest of five children and an identical twin. He grew up in Charlotte, MI, and graduated from Charlotte High School in 2012, and later Spring Arbor University in 2016, earning his Bachelor's degree in Actuarial Science. He worked at Auto Owners Insurance in Lansing as a Predictive Modeler since 2016. He will be missed by all who called him husband, dad, brother, son, uncle, and friend, and will be remembered for his service, thoughtfulness, and love for others.

In 2014 he married Alana Ann Retzer, his high school sweetheart, and they enjoyed a wonderful life together traveling, making a home in their Lansing neighborhood, practicing their Christian faith, and eventually growing their family. Their son, Sage William, was born in March of 2022, and immediately became James' pride and joy. James was a devoted, enthusiastic, and nurturing parent, taking on many of the responsibilities of raising Sage. He and Alana were excited to welcome their second child, a girl, this December.

James was devoted to his family, immediate and extended, as well as his church family, and was proud to be a member of Lansing Central Free Methodist Church. Volunteering on the board of the church as well as wherever he was needed, James loved to serve and cherished the faith

community his church provided.

James' lifelong favorite hobby was long-distance running, and he especially valued his participation on track and cross-country teams from middle school through college. Fall was his favorite season and best time to go for a run; he so enjoyed the smell and feel of the crisp Autumn air. James also enjoyed cooking and baking for his family and friends; he was known for his ginger molasses Christmas cookies and was working on making the perfect gluten free chocolate chip cookie (and many say he already did!). James also greatly enjoyed films, podcasts, and listening to music.

James is survived by his wife, Alana; son, Sage (19 months old); a daughter due to arrive in December; mother, Jennette (Donald) Stahelin; father, John Brinker; siblings, April (Adam) Gibbs, Kayla Denton, John (Marina) Brinker, and Jared (Janelle) Brinker; mother-in-law, Patricia Retzer; grandmothers, Francine Swisher and Marjorie Morris; brother-in-law, Patrick (Jessica) Retzer; and his beloved nieces and nephews Xander (18), Phoenix (17), Haven (16), Lilith (7), Sailor (3), Ember (1), Lucas (8), Isabella (6), Oliver (5); and several extended family members. He was predeceased by his grandfathers, Ronald Brinker and Bill Morris; and father-in-law, Gerard Retzer.

Friends are encouraged to support James' family by attending services or sharing memories on his Tribute Page at [www.prayfuneral.com](http://www.prayfuneral.com). Visitation is Friday, October 20, 5-8:00 PM at Pray Funeral Home in Charlotte. Funeral services are Saturday, October 21, 10:00 AM at Central Free Methodist Church in Lansing with Pastor Joanna DeWolf officiating. The funeral will be webcast from the church's YouTube page at the following link here <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xOHjAThthao>. If desired, the family suggests memorial contributions to James's favorite charities: Partners in Health International or Family and Child Charities of Lansing. The family is in the care of Pray Funeral Home, Charlotte.



# Previous Events

## Visitation

OCT **20**. 5:00 PM - 8:00 PM (ET)

Pray Funeral Home  
401 W. Seminary St.  
Charlotte, MI 48813

## Funeral

OCT **21**. 10:00 AM (ET)

Central Free Methodist Church  
828 N. Washington Ave.  
Lansing, MI 48906

# Tribute Wall



“ Pray Funeral Home, Inc created a Tribute Video in memory of James Vincent Brinker



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**Pray Funeral Home, Inc.** - October 19, 2023 at 08:23 PM

AW

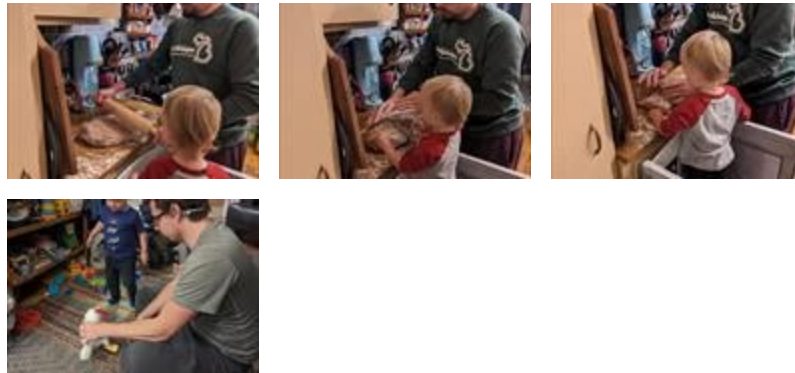
“ I never had the privilege of meeting James (since my husband and I live in another part of the country), but his mother-in-law, Patty is a dear friend of mine from childhood. I have also known his wife, Alana, since she was a baby. I am so shocked and saddened by this news. Alana and Patty, you are in my prayers, and I'm sending you lots of love.

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**Alice Webb** - October 27, 2023 at 12:29 PM



“ The three photos in the kitchen are from the night before James died. He was making me a belated birthday dessert - chocolate beignets. When it was time to roll out the dough, he brought Sage over to participate. I thought it was so sweet. He was also very patient with Sage in telling him not to eat the dough, and scooting him back when he continued to eat it. He let Sage kind of play with the dough even though he wasn't really helping. I loved that James involved Sage in everything he could even when it was inconvenient. He loved spending time with Sage so much. The other picture is of James taking a small stuffed rooster, and using a voice to pretend that the rooster is helping Sage pick his toys. James grabbed toys with the roosters wings and put them in the bin. Sage was enthralled. I just wish I had gotten a video. It's not the first time James did that with that rooster.



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**Alana Retzer Brinker** - October 22, 2023 at 11:29 PM

CD

“ James and his sweet wife 'are' some of the best people that I have ever met, truly living examples of Christ like character. The world has lost a treasure. His memory and kindness will remain in the earth forever.

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**Cindy Davis** - October 22, 2023 at 04:52 PM

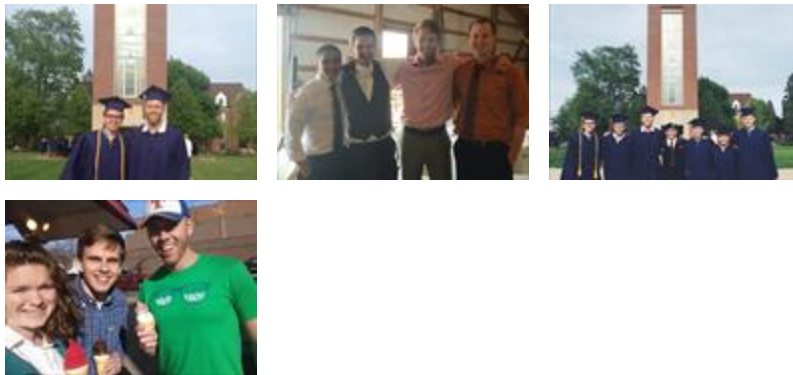
LP

“ God bless you and your family, Alana.  
Sending prayers,  
Leah Parker-Roth  
(Alana’s college roommate)

Leah Parker-Roth - October 21, 2023 at 10:28 AM



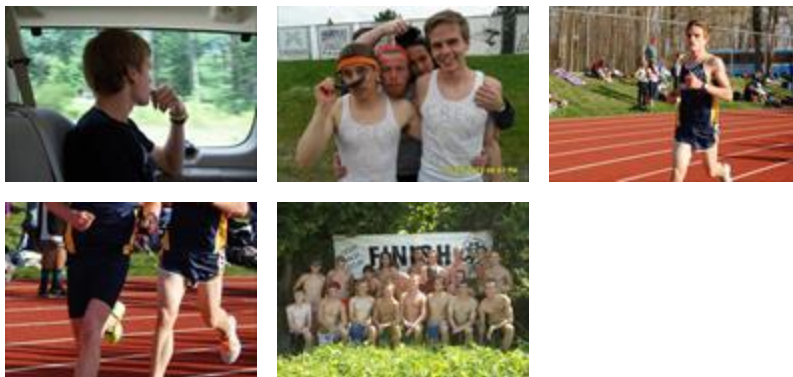
“ 4 files added to the album Spring Arbor University Memories



Justin Hughes - October 21, 2023 at 09:45 AM

NA

“ 11 files added to the album Spring Arbor University Memories



Nathan Anderson - October 21, 2023 at 09:05 AM

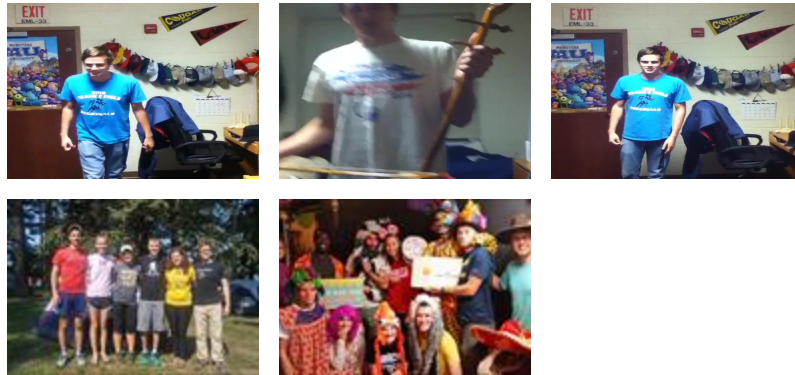
MW

“ I have such fond memories of spending time with James and Alana! We all lived in Lansing, joined the same young adult group, and eventually attended the same Mass. They are sweet and understanding people with a gift for ecumenicism. They are up for adventure and loyal friends. I cannot imagine what you are going through, Alana. I've always considered you a strong woman, and it seems God agrees, desiring to now accompany you in such a profound way that few others will ever know. Good bless your family.

Marnee (Wohlfert) Weisbrod - October 21, 2023 at 09:00 AM

SR

“ 22 files added to the album Spring Arbor University Memories



Simon Reidsma - October 20, 2023 at 10:00 PM

JK

“ James, along with his wife Alana, were frequent attendees to our monthly young adult gatherings in Lansing, which my wife and I helped organize and run. Not only did James and Alana attend and get to know my wife and I, but they also frequently lent a helping hand for tear-down, which was often a lengthy and cumbersome process, and something that was appreciated by us main volunteers that did set-up and tear-down every month.

One thing that stuck out to me about James that speaks a lot to his character was that I would frequently find him on dish duty - he would often go back there, unannounced, and just be doing the large amount of dishes in the parish hall sink without ever having been asked. While I personally did not get to know James super well, these actions spoke very loudly about the man he was and his generous commitment to serving others that I am sure he embodied in his life.

Alana, I am at a loss for words to convey my sorrow for you and your family in this moment, and my wife and I are praying for God's consolation for you during this time. I hope this memory I have of James can provide some sort of comfort during this difficult time. Please know we are here for you and available to help you in the months and years ahead. On behalf of Rebecca and I and the Kanclerz family, we ask for God's blessings and peace upon you.

- Jacob, Rebecca & Kanclerz family

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**Jacob Kanclerz** - October 20, 2023 at 01:33 PM



“ *Treasured Lilies Spray was purchased for the family of James Vincent Brinker.*



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October 20, 2023 at 11:06 AM



“ A [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) was planted in honor of James Vincent Brinker.

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October 20, 2023 at 11:06 AM



“ *I met James and Alana in 2015 at an SAU Senior and Alumni Banquet, as we sat at the same table at the event. Not long after James started at Auto-Owners, where I also work, we got to talking and he reminded me that we had met at the aforementioned banquet. I felt a little silly for not remembering that; he looked so grown-up that I didn't recognize him. It's so neat how God works - being able to meet James and Alana at that banquet and then working at Auto-Owners with James!  
I'm so sorry for your loss.  
-Margaret Kline*

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**Margaret Kline** - October 20, 2023 at 09:46 AM



“ *Small Garden Dish was purchased for the family of James Vincent Brinker.*



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October 20, 2023 at 08:52 AM



“ 65 files added to the album *Life Tributes*



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**Pray Funeral Home, Inc.** - October 19, 2023 at 08:18 PM

RS

“ I really believe that James was one of the last few good man around. My memories includes the way he adoringly looked at his wife and child whenever I saw them together. Even before the birth of Sage. James had a nack for always mading everyone feel so welcomed and special. I recall being included for friends n family thanksgiving meal (which meant more to me than you realize), and I snuck away to do the dishes. He came into kitchen seeing me cleaning up and said, "Oh no no, you don't need to clean up, just come and enjoy yourself. I'll take care of all this later". Of course I smiled, ignored his command and just kept cleaning. I told him how much it meant to me to be there and he smiled that James smile. Then I shooed him off to rejoin his guests. My intent was to give back, blessing them as they had me.

Both of them went to such great length to make everyone feel so warm and welcome and they put on a wonderful meal as well. M My goal was for them to have little to nothing to attend to after everyone had gone home.

His thoughtful attitude just showed me what a servant hearted man he really was.

Each time I was around this couple the two of them just complimented each other in every way, shape, and form. Truly an example of what Christian love and commitment really is. Extending beyond one another to everyone around them. He went above and beyond to show that grace and love to include his mother in law Patty in their lives too. This God-fearing respectful example blessed many people without him even knowing it! He will be truly missed. I'm here for you Alana, anyway I can be. Please don't hesitate to call on me. You are loved and valued as he was loved and valued and will not be forgotten. Please never feel you have to do all this alone. Although you are a strong resilient woman, we are here for you too 💕💕

In His Love,  
Renee'

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Renee' Schafer - October 19, 2023 at 01:53 PM



“ *Crystal Cross Bouquet was purchased for the family of James Vincent Brinker.*



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October 19, 2023 at 12:05 PM



“ *We are so thankful to have shared our Az state with both of you when you visited in 2020. We loved you already Alana and learned to love James as well. He too was such a caring , loving human. Hugs of love and prayers of faith to the family!  
Dave and Pam Hunt*

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**Pam Saddler Hunt** - October 18, 2023 at 11:32 PM



“ *Blue Caribbean Bouquet was purchased for the family of James Vincent Brinker.*



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October 18, 2023 at 11:15 PM

MG

“ Our heart breaks for you Alana. We met James and Alana in 2019 when we joined the Lansing Area Catholic Sports night group. One thing that stood out to us about James was how much he supported Alana's endeavors. Weather that was going after a Master's degree, raising Sage, or growing spiritually. We love you and are praying for you.

Love,

*Maria and Brian Goulet*



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**Maria Goulet** - October 18, 2023 at 08:30 PM

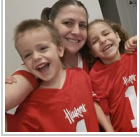


“ 4 files added to the album *Brian Wu's Memories*



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**Brian Wu** - October 18, 2023 at 04:28 PM



“ We are so sad to hear of the loss of James and are praying for your family, "Lord, our Father, listen to our cry. Our hearts may fail, but you, Lord, are their strength and portion. Mend our broken hearts and bind their wounds. Cover us under your canopy of love and peace and give us relief from our distress, anxiety, and worry. Help us to relax by reminding us of the good times we shared with James and reassuring us that he is in your presence. Let calmness reign in our hearts. Open our spiritual eyes that we can see your work in everything. Be present in our pain and struggle and remind us of your promises. Holy Spirit, help us to be faithful in prayer and joyful in hope." Some photos from the joyful example he set for all who attended our wedding in 2011.



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**Amanda Messerschmitt** - October 18, 2023 at 12:09 PM



“ Chad & Carol Walker lit a candle in memory of James Vincent Brinker



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**Chad & Carol Walker** - October 18, 2023 at 10:09 AM



“ *Simply Elegant Spathiphyllum was purchased for the family of James Vincent Brinker.*



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October 18, 2023 at 09:31 AM



“ *Alana, Patty, and the whole Brinker/Retzer family I am so very sorry for your loss.*

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**Diane Hudson** - October 18, 2023 at 08:47 AM



“ *Alana, I am so sorry about James death. He was one of our best students in our Actuarial Science program and he was a great encouragement to me in that program. Praying for you and your family. Garnet Hauger, Emeritus Professor of Mathematics, Spring Arbor University.*

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**Garnet Hauger** - October 18, 2023 at 08:36 AM

JB

“ I want to express my deepest heartfelt condolences to his wife Alana and the two best friends a guy ever had “His Brothers” I remember when our dog Casey got hit by a car and it was a scary moment for all of us. After sitting down with the boys and explaining that God has a plan for all of us and when he calls us home, we will go. James put his hand on her face as a sign of Love that only he and his brother shared, and said if it's your time Casey you'll go home to God.

James knew and had an acceptance of passing on then, that I pray his heart felt in his time. Always in Gods time not ours.

To my son I regret not being there for you these past few years, the compassion, strength and drive that you have, I know will live on through your children.

I am deeply humbled by your passing.

Please forgive son

I love you

Dad

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**John Brinker** - October 17, 2023 at 11:00 PM

BR

“ He once brought over a batch of his Ginger Molasses cookies as a gift, shortly after my son was born. It was great watching him awkwardly hold the baby. He hadn't had Sage yet so wasn't as practiced. James was always one to smile and laugh, enjoying all that life has to offer. The kindness that James showed will last in our memories forever.

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**Brian** - October 17, 2023 at 04:03 PM



*Hi Brian, thanks so much for sharing your memory. I remember visiting you then, and meeting your dog :) James had said before we had Sage that he was really nervous about holding a newborn. He got used to it! Thanks for letting us visit you that day. James had also told me recently that he really appreciated your occasional texts about how your son was doing and comparing notes on parenting. I had encouraged him to text you more too! Alas. Thanks again for your friendship.*

**Alana Retzer Brinker** - November 21, 2023 at 01:41 PM

JM

*“ I went to school with James and he has always been one of the kindest most compassionate souls I have ever known. He will be deeply missed.*

**James Mills** - October 17, 2023 at 02:37 PM



*“ Medium Dish Garden was purchased for the family of James Vincent Brinker.*



October 17, 2023 at 12:04 PM

BB

*“ James was a great and loyal friend. He showed the light of Christ everywhere he was and love connecting with others. God used him in mighty ways. You will be dearly missed Brinker! Love you!*

**Bryan Burk** - October 17, 2023 at 11:58 AM

SD

*“ James was such a support to you. He loved your family. And was a balance point for you all.*

**Susan Dougherty** - October 17, 2023 at 11:27 AM

AR

“ *James was a gift from God that was my channel. Thanks to Alana and the road traveled. Life’s journey has changed, so I wish all strength to carry on !!!*

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**Antoni Rodewald** - October 17, 2023 at 09:32 AM



“ *Country Basket Blooms was purchased for the family of James Vincent Brinker.*



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October 17, 2023 at 06:17 AM

CD

“ *One of the sweetest people (he and his beautiful sweet wife). As scripture says that they are one. I feel like the world needed you but the song says that 'We will understand it better by and by' we may never come to a place of understanding while on earth but we will yet trust in God. Love you*

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**Cindy Davis** - October 17, 2023 at 12:45 AM

ER

“ James was always a calming, yet hilarious presence. His dry humor accompanied with wisdom and insight makes him the kind of friend you are grateful to have. What has always stuck out to me most about James and Alana is their love for community and bringing people together. This is how James showed Christ. James will be so missed here on earth, and we are rejoicing knowing he is Heaven with his Savior.



emily reidsma - October 16, 2023 at 11:12 PM



“ *Simply Elegant Spathiphyllum* was purchased for the family of James Vincent Brinker.



October 16, 2023 at 10:14 PM

HE

“ James was a kind, loving and loyal husband. He will for sure be missed.



Heather - October 16, 2023 at 09:35 PM