



Joseph Robert Golden

June 27, 1934 - January 4, 2026

J. Robert Golden, or Bob as he was known to his friends, was born on June 27, 1934, in Manhattan, New York City. He was called into the loving arms of his Savior on January 4, 2026, at the age of 91.

Bob was the youngest of six children of Joseph Golden and Martha Krippendorf. He was raised in New Jersey, and never quite lost all of his "Joisy" accent. After living for two years in Azusa in Southern California, he enrolled as a high school freshman at Concordia, Oakland in 1950. Bob, or "Goldie" as he was known to his Concordia classmates, spent the next 6 school years there, first running errands for upperclassmen, finally being one of the privileged students to have his '49 Ford on campus. Bob sang in the Choristers, but even the great Professor Gehrke could not teach him to play the piano, so he was excused from lessons for lack of talent.

On the 1956 class trip to the snow, he and Betty Wren Claybrook started dating. After finishing their education at Concordia Teachers College in River Forest, Illinois, they were married in 1958 at Trinity Lutheran in Paso Robles, California. Bob taught for four years at St. Paulus Lutheran, San Francisco, where he and Betty Wren lived on the church property. Barry and Suzie were born during those years in San Francisco.

In 1962, the family moved to Terra Bella, California, and took up residence in the 1909 teacherage on the church property. Fortunately, electricity and

plumbing had been added over the years. Two more girls, Sherri and Tami, completed the family. In 1970, Zion built a brand new teacherage (still on the church property) with modern plumbing and air conditioning, which was a real blessing in the heat of the San Joaquin Valley. Bob spent 34 years at Zion Lutheran School from 1962 until 1996, serving as principal, upper grades teacher, choir director, sometimes school bus driver, coach for every sport, and handyman. He enjoyed singing lead in the Ultra Sonics Barbershop Quartet. When Bob enrolled the first grandchild of one of his former students at Zion, he joked that it might be time to retire.

Since Bob and Betty Wren had spent their entire married life living in church-owned houses, they had no retirement home, so they physically built their own retirement house in the mountains above Terra Bella. Bob did most of the heavy digging, pounding, carpentry, plumbing, electrical, sheet rock, and painting.

For someone who grew up in New Jersey, Azusa, Oakland, and Chicago, Bob had quite an interest in life in the country. He encouraged his children's 4-H projects, built pens to contain their sheep, and put in a huge garden every year, spending hours in the spring poring over seed catalogs to plan his bounty and pushing his rototiller across acres of land. In the summer, he would often declare at mealtime, "Almost everything here came from our garden!" Bob was quite famous for his pomegranate wine and often had rows of 5-gallon jugs fermenting in the dining room.

Bob loved nature and history. He hauled a little tent trailer on family vacations all over the Western United States and into Canada, visiting national parks, historical monuments, and museums along the way. He took his children backpacking, hiking, and fishing. He would sit the kids down in front of the TV when something important was happening, saying, "This will be in the history books someday." Bob and Betty Wren upgraded in their retirement to a 5th-

Wheel Trailer, traveling with family and dear friends throughout the Continental United States, Canada, and even into Alaska, where they helped construct a church in a remote area. Bob also discovered a love of cruises, and was able to enjoy three trips to Alaska and one through the Panama Canal, both east and west, because although Bob was fascinated with airplanes and could identify every World War II plane in existence, he would not travel by air, quoting Scripture as his evidence that Jesus said, "LOW, I am with you always!"

Bob continued to volunteer at Grace Lutheran Church and School in many capacities: singing in the choir, playing handbells, painting musical sets, cooking for men's Bible breakfast, serving as head elder, and substitute teaching/tutoring in Tami's classroom, where he became known as the "school grandpa" and famous for story time. He assisted the Lahu Minister with his seminary studies to become an LC-MS Pastor, meeting each week together to dive deep into Scripture and doctrine. He was faithful in worship and Bible study, and when fellow church members would say, "See you next week," he would always respond, "Lord willing!"

In 1998, Bob and Betty moved to Visalia to be closer to their grandchildren. It brought him great joy to babysit his youngest grandchildren, spoiling them with trips to the doughnut shop, watching the same movies over and over again, and reading every Thomas the Tank Engine book ever printed, after which Grandpa enjoyed his naptime, maybe even more than the little ones. Bob never missed a concert or sporting event that his grandchildren were participating in, and he clocked numerous hours back and forth around town as their personal chauffeur.

Bob was a loving husband, father, grandfather, and great-grandfather. He was preceded in death by his beloved wife of 50 years, Betty Wren, who went to

heaven in 2009. He is survived by his son Barry (Junette) Golden of Bellingham, Washington; and three daughters: Dr. Susan (David) Andreas-Bervel of Tehachapi, California; Sherri (Tim) Andreas, of Kingsburg; and Tami Golden of Visalia. He was also blessed with ten grandchildren: Jeremiah, Christopher, Michael, Melissa, Adrionna, T.J., Mikaela, Karina, Nathan, and Andrew, and twelve great-grandchildren.

In lieu of flowers, Bob requested donations be made in his memory to Grace Christian School in Visalia or Zion Lutheran School in Terra Bella.

Graveside services will be held 9:30 AM Saturday, January 24th, 2026 at Visalia District Cemetery, 1300 W Goshen Ave, Visalia.

Services have been entrusted to Salser & Dillard Funeral Chapel. Memorial Tributes and condolences may be offered by logging onto www.salseranddillard.com.

Previous Events

Graveside

JAN 24. 9:30 AM (PT)

Visalia District Cemetery
1300 W Goshen Ave
Visalia, CA 93291

Tribute Wall

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“ So sorry to hear of Mr Golden's passing. He taught both the WHITTEN boys, Randy & Brian. We admired Mr Golden and enjoyed school activities and coaching baseball and winning the small school tournament one year! He was so happy! 🙏s for the Golden Family. Robert & Sherry WHITTEN

Sherry Whitten - January 18 at 03:00 PM