



## Merle W. Vander Sluis

July 22, 1944 - June 7, 2026

Merle W. Vander Sluis age 81, of Holland, died Sunday, June 7, 2026.

Merle grew up in Holland, MI where he met his wife Karen (Homkes) at Holland Christian High School. Merle completed both Bachelor and Master of Science degrees in biology at WMU. Upon university graduation, they married and began their first adventure together in the Peace Corps stationed in India, where they realized a passion for living in different cultures and helping others. This passion led to travel/living in many other countries where they were educators and missionaries. Merle always had a drive for life and living it to the fullest. Merle was also known for his love of motorcycles, having owned 40+ in his lifetime. He was always up for a ride and a new adventure.

Merle is survived by his wife of 60 years, Karen; children Daniel (Cathy) Vander Sluis, Elizabeth (Robert) Brower; Grandchildren, Sarah Vander Sluis, Nathan Vander Sluis, Madeline (Cameron) Hofmockel, Connor Brower, Thorin Brower, Adrian Brower; in-laws, Jan Homkes, Larry (Carol) Homkes, Rick (Darlene) Homkes; and several nieces and nephews.

Merle was preceded in death by his parents Adrian and Wilma Vander Sluis, and brother Eugene Vander Sluis.

Merle's celebration of life will be held at Fellowship Reformed Church, 2165

W. Lakewood Blvd. Holland, MI on Saturday, June 20, 2026, at 11:00am followed by a light lunch and social. Burial will be in Lakewood Cemetery prior to service with immediate family only. Visitation will be 4-7 p.m. Friday, June 19, at Langeland-Sterenbergh Funeral Home, 315 E. 16th St. Holland, MI. Memorial contributions may be given to Rehoboth Christian Schools Gifts in Memory/Honor - Rehoboth Christian School or Mission Partners India; PO Box 168, Zeeland, MI 49464.

# Cemetery Details

## Lakewood Cemetery

Lakewood Boulevard west of 168th Ave.  
Holland, MI 49424

# Previous Events

## Visitation

JUN **19**. 4:00 PM - 7:00 PM (ET)

Langeland-Sterenbergh Funeral Home  
315 East 16th Street  
Holland, MI 49423

## Celebration of Life

JUN **20**. 11:00 AM (ET)

Fellowship Reformed Church-Holland  
2165 W. Lakewood Blvd.  
Holland , MI 49424

# Tribute Wall



“ *Langeland-Sterenberg Yntema Funeral Homes created a Tribute Video in memory of Merle W. Vander Sluis*



**Langeland-Sterenberg Yntema Funeral Homes** - June 16 at 09:25 AM

SU

*So thoughtful, so well put together...the music and the images..I love seeing your dad with all the family members. This is most moving.What a life! I did not know your dad, but I know you now briefly. And if what I know about you is a reflection of your parents, they are/were both gracious, thoughtful, creative and adventurous people. May God be with you all as your travel this transition. God is Good!*

**Susie** - June 16 at 09:15 PM

DS

*We met Merle and Karen when they came to Ethiopia to work where we also worked as missionaries . From then on he was a constant friend ...writing us, sending us T shirts, sending us pictures of his motorcycle gatherings....what stands out is his generous spirit , his love of life, his kindness to our son especially, also a motorcycle lover . We will miss him greatly*

**Dick and Donna Swart** - June 17 at 07:37 PM



“ Peaceful White Lilies Basket was purchased for the family of Merle W. Vander Sluis.



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June 19 at 09:19 AM



“ A [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) was planted in honor of Merle W. Vander Sluis.

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June 19 at 09:19 AM



“ Lots of memories with Merle and Karen. Merle and I did a lot of dirt bike riding together around public land, Merle was a killer on the trails, never could keep up with him, our kids had some great times together too.

The funny thing I remember is when Merle secretly got a “HARLY DAVISON” tattoo on his upper arm and struggled for many months to hide it from Karen. Miss you Merle, Blessings on forever with Jesus.

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**Bill Wiersma** - June 16 at 03:05 PM

HL

“ Karen and Merle were my missionary colleagues in Aira, Ethiopia where we also got to know each other. Merle was a teacher appreciated by the students, also easily approachable by them. In our small foreign community he was the social, inventive and helpful person, curious about all new things. We also had a great time together both in Michigan and in Finland. Longing for Merle and our shared times.

*My thoughts and prayers are with Karen and the family. May Merle rest in God.*

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**Helena Leino** - June 15 at 12:41 PM



“ For many years Merle and I shared at least one ride each summer. It would always include 3 things.

1. We would visit a different friend of Merle's, usually somewhere in Allegan county. One year we got a personal tour of a ranch where his friend was raising elk with prize-winning racks which he sold to wealthy guys to have on their property. Another year we visited his friend who was retired military and had an extensive car collection, body shop, as well as being a well-known Elvis impersonator. Another friend had a collection of sling-shot dragsters and other autos on his compound. There were many more.
2. We would often stop at the Stevens Hotel in Fennville for a single beer.
3. We always stopped by the bridge in New Richmond to skip stones in the Kalamazoo river - 2 grown men. Sound like Merle? Man, I'll miss him, but I'm really happy I knew him.

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**Jim Jonker** - June 12 at 04:21 PM

OF

“ Our deepest sympathy, The Barwis Family purchased the Divine Peace Bouquet for the family of Merle W. Vander Sluis.



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**Our deepest sympathy, The Barwis Family** - June 12 at 01:40 PM

OF

“ Our deepest sympathy, The Barwis Family planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Merle W. Vander Sluis.

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**Our deepest sympathy, The Barwis Family** - June 12 at 01:40 PM

GK

“ I was fortunate enough to know both Merle and Karen from our Peace Corps days in India. My sympathy to Karen and all Merle's family. Gigi (Barnum) Kayser

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**Georgeanne Kayser** - June 12 at 09:50 AM

JL

“ Merle was the friend who led by example as he volunteered for Bibles for Mexico and helped those in need. For many of us, he was good at helping with things like towing a car and giving his advice on how it should be done correctly. When in his mid-70s a big project presented itself of helping to load and drive our U-Haul truck across country from Gallup to Grand Rapids, he was "all in", arriving days early to help with cleaning and packing, while sleeping on the floor (there was no furniture). Once on the road with the U-Haul he was wanting to do most of the driving or reminding me of things that I would have learned in his Drivers' Ed class. Every spring, I could plan on getting a post card from him with a picture of a robin (when he saw his first one) and there would always be a classic postman stamp on it--his trademark. Back in the early 1970s we chased jack rabbits at night by the light of our motorcycle headlamps by the gravel piles east of Rehoboth. Years later as neighbors on Hogan Street we'd meet at his house after school to play Casino (card game) and sip Kahlúa while solving the problems of the world. He once took a bus load of kids to Asaayi Lake and gave the kids an experience they'd never forget when he backed the bus up into the lake to let them jump out of the back emergency door into the lake, only to get the bus stuck and needing to be towed out. (Keith Kuipers was not too happy about that!) He was a colorful friend, full of ideas, a little too untraditional for some but a friend who was always at the other end of the telephone line as we talked every few months for 56 years. In May at Rest Haven we had our final conversation, together with the Lord, leaving things in His almighty hands. Merle was a faithful servant who received his "golden crown" who cast everything at the feet of Jesus as he now praises Him and waits for all of us.

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John Van't Land - June 11 at 08:19 PM

MP

*From Germany*

*We met Karen and Merle first in Addis Abeba, Ethiopia, in 1995 studying together the Oromo Language. Later we served together as teachers and nurses in West Wollega, close to the border to Sudan. We were Part of the Mekane Yesus Church of Ethiopia. We shared stories, studied the differences of our Culture, cooked together, played horse shoe and supported eachother.*

*The creativity of Merle was always a great help and his solutions while solving challenges was fun.*

*We stayed in touch throughout the decades, exchanging postcards from all over the world, including Daytona and Sturgis.*

*We even visited the homes of eachother, including for me driving his corvette...*

*Our thoughts and prayers are with Karen and the Family . May he have eternal joy in Heaven.*

*Martin & Imke Possner*

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**Martin u Imke Possner** - June 12 at 03:42 AM

HV

“ *Ya, as has been said, anything motorcycles. And please don't think it was only Harley-Davidson; he loved all makes/models. Despite personal sadness of loss, am picturing him and Bob Kerr biking on what will be one of many coffee runs. Blessed to have been a part of his life in that great Rehoboth story.*

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**Harry Veenstra** - June 11 at 11:04 AM

PK

“ *I am so saddened by Merle's death. He and my husband Bob, who died in 2021, were great biking buddies. They went to Sturgis several times together, and Merle and Karen visited us here in Montrose so we could go riding together. Riding was a real passion for both Bob and Merle, and they enjoyed many rides together. He will be missed!*

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**Phyllis J Kerr** - June 10 at 05:00 PM

JS

“ Everything we started our bikes at Rehoboth and hit tge trails, hogsback, churchrock, pyramid, Wingate, you name it...all memories never to be forgotten. He was my best friend at Rehoboth, along with Karen. Rest in peace with the Lord, be seeing you soon.

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**Jon Swartz** - June 10 at 04:33 PM

EB

*He was very fond of those memories also. Rehoboth always had a special place in his heart. Thanks for sharing.*

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**Elizabeth Brower** - June 12 at 10:48 AM