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Dear family, friends, colleagues, and former students,

Thank you for gathering today to honor the life of my husband, Christopher James Bennett—Chris to most of you—born on August 22, 1959, in Boston, and who left us on December 14, 2025, at the age of 66.

We were partners in every sense for 32 years—equal parts steadiness and surprise, conversation and companionable silence. We respected each other’s dreams, and we learned the work of love not as a grand sentiment, but as a daily practice. I still hear the gentle cadence of his voice in our kitchen, the way he’d pause before answering a question, as if to hold it up to the light and make sure he saw it clearly. If you knew Chris, you knew that measured pause. It was the sound of someone listening as if it mattered, because to him, it always did.

He was the first in his family to attend college, and he carried that fact not as a banner but as a responsibility. As a high school history teacher, and later as a principal, he believed that education is a trust handed from one generation to the next. He championed scholarship programs that opened doors wider than his had been. He established restorative discipline practices that made school not just a place where rules were enforced, but where dignity could be repaired. Countless students first met Chris when they were angry or scared; countless students left his office feeling seen, not sorted. He asked questions that helped them find their own accountability and their own strength: What happened? Who was hurt? What can be made right?

At home, the same questions—gentler, but no less serious—shaped our table talk. He wanted to know what we were reading, what we were thinking, what had surprised us since breakfast. He set an extra place for curiosity. Our children, Eleanor and Graham, learned quickly that Dad would hear the headline and then reach for the footnotes. Graham, you once teased that no one could

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get away with saying “It was fine” at dinner without at least three follow-ups. And Eleanor, when you left for college, you took a stack of his lunch-bag notes with you—ink smudges and all—because his small daily words had become a kind of compass.

Chris’s compass points were simple: be principled, be patient, keep your courage quiet enough that it doesn’t demand applause. He tended other living things with the same ethic. The roses in our backyard were never just plants. He had names for them—Austen, Baldwin, and a stubborn climber he called Hope—and he kept a spiral notebook tracking which ones liked the morning sun and which ones needed a little more wind. On Saturday mornings, he would play chess with a friend, and then bring home fresh bread. Kayaking became our way of remembering that a shoreline is best understood from the water. He loved classic literature not for its prestige but for the way it let him hear the human voice across centuries and feel less alone in any given day.

He was spiritual without being dogmatic. He found meaning in service, in literature, and in moments of silence long enough to catch the truth trying to pass by. He believed that reverence shows itself in how we treat one another: the grace to listen, the discipline to apologize, the courage to begin again.

I would like to speak his life alongside those he loved most. His mother, Margaret, gave him his first long book and, along with it, the belief that attention is a form of love. His brother, Thomas, was his first debate partner and his last phone call when something hard needed humor before it could be handled. To our children, Eleanor and Graham, he offered not perfection but presence. When sleep was scarce and schedules were chaos, he wrote notes and tucked them into lunch bags: a history quote, a chess problem, a crooked heart. When the twins, Maya and Noah, arrived, he discovered a new octave of tenderness. Watching him kneel on the floor to build a block tower—checking their faces as if the structure rose because they were smiling—reminded me of the teacher he had always been: patient, delighted, unafraid of the unsteady moment that precedes understanding.

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If I must choose one memory—and there are so many—let it be our 25th anniversary, on a Maine shoreline before dawn. The sky was all slate and promise. He read a poem he had written just for me, in that careful, steady way that made every word feel placed, not dropped. I remember the chill of the rock under us, the shy first light on the water, and the way the poem—its few plain lines—refused extravagant language and settled instead on gratitude. He spoke of ordinary mornings, of the work of returning to each other, of the privilege of having someone to tell the day to. When the sun finally broke the horizon, he took my hand and said, simply, More of this. Not more of the spectacular, but more of the faithful.

In schools, he had another phrase he used often: Assume capacity. He said it about students, about teachers, about himself, especially on hard days. Assume capacity. Assume that we can meet the moment if we are met with trust. That trust ran through our marriage, our parenting, and the way he showed up as a son, a brother, a friend.

What will we miss? The quiet courage that steadied a room without announcing itself. The thoughtful questions at the dinner table that turned conversation into learning. The handwritten notes—penciled corners softened by his hands—tucked into lunch bags and coat pockets. His measured wisdom, which never pretended to be certainty. He could say, I don’t know, and make it sound like an invitation rather than a failure.

We gather at a memorial service to tell the truth about loss, but also to speak the larger truth that a life continues in the changes it made possible. Look around this room and imagine the ripple of students who stayed in school because someone trusted them more than they trusted themselves; of teachers who kept heart because their principal asked what they needed and then quietly made room for it; of family members who found that one more question, asked with care, can transform a difficult conversation into a path forward. These are not abstractions. They are the durable things Chris left in our keeping.

His life began in Boston, and, being the first in his family to attend college, he

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carried that door left ajar for others. He served as a history teacher who loved the clarity of timelines and as a principal who knew that real timelines are messy and human. He fought for scholarship programs because he remembered what it felt like when tuition looked like a wall. He insisted on restorative discipline because he knew that punishment without restoration can teach a child to hide rather than to heal. He believed in structure, yes—but the kind that supports growth rather than constrains it.

To those of you who learned from him, worked alongside him, or were shaped by his counsel: thank you. To Margaret and Thomas: thank you for the boy you raised who became the man I loved. To Eleanor and Graham: you carry your father forward every time you lead with a question, every time you choose substance over spectacle, every time you write something by hand because you know it lands differently that way. To Maya and Noah: your Grandpa’s love is in the patience of anyone who kneels to your level and waits for your words.

What comfort can we take? Perhaps this: Chris ordered his life around what endures—service, learning, and kindness that does not need an audience. Grief does not erase that order. It simply reveals it more starkly. If you want to honor him, assume capacity in the person across from you. Take five more seconds to listen. Write the note. Read the chapter. Ask the hard question gently. Tend a rose and notice which way it leans.

Chris was principled and dignified, curious and courageous, a listener who made people feel seen. These are not lines on a program; they are habits we can continue. He would not have asked for monuments. He would have asked for books in hands. In lieu of flowers, he hoped that contributions would be made to student book funds and local literacy programs. For those who wish to help, details can be coordinated at cto@kuchventures.com. He believed that a book placed in the right hands at the right time is not a gift; it is a beginning.

I do not pretend that words can mend the ache of December. But I know this: the light we watched rise over that Maine shoreline has risen every day since, indifferent to our sorrow, faithful to its task. Chris understood that kind of

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faithfulness. He taught me to trust it. Today, as we say goodbye, we also say yes—to the work he loved, to the people he believed in, to the difficult hope that chooses action over despair.

More of this, he said on that rock by the sea.

More care. More questions. More second chances. More books and better futures. More silent mornings where meaning gathers itself without theatrics. More of the steady love that holds a family, a school, a life.

Farewell, my love. Thank you for the years, for the trust, for the poem that keeps finding new ways to end.

We will carry you in what we choose next.

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