



Leah Koldenhoven

LEAH'S LIFE STORY

Leah Koldenhoven was a devoted wife, mother, and friend to many. A lover of all people, it was no surprise that she touched many lives over the years. She wanted nothing more than for people to know Jesus and have a personal relationship with Him. No one could deny the love she had for her family, especially her children; Olivia, Elliott, Graham, and Winston, as they were her greatest treasure. Deeply loved and admired, Leah will forever be remembered by and all who knew and loved her.

Leah's story begins in the year 1984. The first Apple Macintosh computer went on sale and Sally Ride became the first American woman in space aboard the Space Shuttle Challenger. During the height of pop music culture, Ronald and Debra (Zoeterman) Haan welcomed home their newborn baby girl, Leah Elizabeth, on March 8th at Blodgett Hospital in East Grand Rapids, Michigan. Born the only daughter following three older brothers, her birth brought great joy to her loving parents.

Growing up a majority of her younger years on Meadowbrook SE, Leah lived a happy childhood. Strong-willed and eager to learn, she excelled at Sylvan Christian School. She loved attending and cheering on her older brothers; Phillip, Craig, and Matthew at their various events. Athletic and talented herself, Leah was interested in gymnastics as well as singing. Her beautiful voice landed her a spot in the St. Cecilia Youth Ensemble in second grade. Active and always on the go, Leah enjoyed playing tennis and performing on the competitive cheer team at Grand Rapids Christian High. A proud moment was singing with Chamber Chorale before she graduated in 2002.

Leah was always very social and her sweet personality made it easy for her to connect with other students and make friends. She thrived in her Young Life church group during her high school years. Leah enjoyed attending church camps, learning about her faith, and socializing with other youth in her faith community at Brookside Christian Reformed Church. There was never a dull moment when she was around!

With her sights set on becoming a teacher, Leah pursued her dreams at Calvin College. While studying early childhood education, Leah became friends with Paul Koldenhoven. Paul had an older brother, Mark, who was friends with Leah's older brother Matt. Fate played a role one evening when they were all hanging out together, and Mark's eyes met Leah's. For them, it was a storybook tale of love at first sight! Their official first date was in March of 2003. After Mark graduated that May, he moved back home to Chicago to complete chiropractic school. Committed to their relationship, they were determined to make the distance work. Leah secured a summer gig at Oakbrook Terrace Summer Camp to be closer to Mark. She was also lucky to find a student teaching position in Chicago and moved in with her grandmother who lived in the area. The months flew by as she worked to balance her time between school and spending time with Mark.

Ambitious and well-liked by her mentors in CPS, Leah landed her first position as a Spanish Kindergarten teacher at Villa Park District #45. Leah quickly fell in love with her





students and enjoyed riding the city bus to work each day. Fate struck again while riding home on the bus one day. Leah was discussing her role as a teacher and another passenger, who just happened to be the wife of the superintendent fell in love with her charming personality and charismatic stories. As a result, they began talking which later led to Leah being offered a position closer to her grandmother's home. Leah felt blessed as she was a firm believer that God had a hand in their meeting one another! To her, no one was ever a stranger, only people she hadn't met yet!

The Mayflower Congregational Church was the perfect setting for her marriage to Mark on November 17, 2007. They were delighted to honeymoon on Cayman Island and settled back into their home in Clarendon Hills. Mark was successful as a chiropractor and Leah continued teaching. They were thrilled to introduce three wonderful children into their family over the next several years. In order to share more time with her family, they moved back to Grand Rapids on Valentine's Day in 2014, the same year that Graham was born. Later, they were blessed with Winston in 2017. Mark was excited to start his own practice at Kooistra Chiropractic which afforded Leah time to be home with the kids.

Leah relished in her role as a mother. She had always dreamed of being home like her mother was when she was young. Selfless and loving, her children were blessed with her amazing Soprano voice at bedtime and her wonderful hugs. She especially loved to sing country or Christian music except when in the car. Leah left car trips without music so she could spend that time talking with the kids. Not surprisingly, Leah always volunteered at the kids' school; her alma mater. She enjoyed helping with fundraisers and chaperoning field trips. Leah also enjoyed being a part of the Southern Little League as a team mom.

She was drawn to many special interests. Her grandfather Zoeterman was a left-handed pitcher for Chicago Cubs back in 1948-50. As a result, Leah was a huge fan from an early age. She had many fond memories of attending games while living in Chicago. A highlight was taking the kids out of school to attend the championship parade when the Cubs won the World Series in 2016! She and Mark enjoyed outdoor fitness and loved going on hikes together. Otherwise healthy, Leah had been having some symptoms of illness but had baffled





doctors until she was formally diagnosed with rectal cancer in July 2017. A fighter from the start, she received local treatments, radiation, as well as chemotherapy. Unfortunately, every time she had a new scan or test, she was met with devastating news. Determined and hopeful, she traveled to New York's Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center to have surgery. It was a challenging time during her five weeks there to recover but she remained optimistic. In January of 2021, the family was able to vacation in Florida. They enjoyed a couple of days before Leah developed an infection in her kidneys. Sadly, her doctor told her there wasn't much more they could do. A true warrior of her faith, Leah continued to shine the light for others on their path to finding Jesus right up until her final days. May her many special friends and loved ones celebrate her life knowing that each and every one of them were fiercely loved by her.



Leah Elizabeth (Haan) Koldenhoven, age 36, of Grand Rapids, went to be with her Lord and Savior on February 8, 2021. She was preceded in death by her grandparents; George Zoeterman, Russell Haan, George and Betty Koldenhoven and William, and Carol Short. Leah is survived by her husband of 13 years, Mark Koldenhoven; children, Olivia, Elliott, Graham and Winston; her parents, Ron and Debra Haan; in-laws, Arnie and Sandy Koldenhoven; brothers, Phillip and Betsie Haan and their children, George, Gus, Walter and Caroline; Craig and Erin Haan and their children, Charlie, Greta and Hazel; and Matthew and Teray Haan and their son, Henry. Also surviving are her sister-in-law, Anne and Ron Tazelaar and their children, Avery, Ronnie, and Alexa; brother-in-law, Paul and Kim Koldenhoven and their children William, Taylor, and Ryan and grandmothers, Gelene Zoeterman and Betty Haan; and several aunts, uncles, and cousins. Family and friends will meet for visitation (social distancing and masks required) from 2-4 PM and 6-8 PM on Friday, February 12, 2021, at Keystone Community Church, 655 Spaulding Ave SE. A private family service will take place at 11 AM on Saturday with Livestream available. Interment in Woodlawn Cemetery. In lieu of flowers, contributions in her memory may be made to Kids Food Basket. Please visit www.heritagelifestory.com to submit a favorite memory, photo or to sign the guestbook.



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