



Thomas "Tom" Albert Schwandt

October 28, 1948 - December 22, 2025

“For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.” (Romans 8:38-39, New Revised Standard Version)

Thomas “Tom” Albert Schwandt, 77, passed away peacefully in his home on December 22, 2025, surrounded by the love and comfort of his family. He was known to some as “Thomas,” “Dad,” “Grandpa Tom,” “Professor Schwandt,” but to most he was known as simply, “Tom.” A beloved husband, dad, grandpa, teacher, mentor, and friend, Tom touched the lives of many with his generosity, calming wisdom, unwavering commitment to his loved ones, and dedication to helping others. Tom left a deep void in the hearts of all who loved him. He will be remembered for his compassion, and tireless pursuit of making the world a better place.

Born on October 28, 1948, in Chicago, IL to Lorraine Elsie Frieese Schwandt and Wilfred Frederick Charles Schwandt, Tom was a curious soul who spent his life asking questions. After earning degrees at Valparaiso University and Indiana University Bloomington respectively, Tom dedicated more than three decades as a professor, first at Indiana University Bloomington and then at the University of Illinois in Champaign, IL, where he taught and mentored countless students and inspired generations to think deeply and consider the

important questions of the day. Tom was a national and international leader in the field of evaluation where he helped establish the value of the profession within democratic societies. He focused on qualitative inquiry across disciplines and how moral and ethical values shape our understanding of these practices. His enthusiastic presence, firm but fair leadership, and genuine interest in every student's future made him a beloved professor. He had an uncanny ability to make others feel seen, heard, and valued. Tom remained active right up until his death, mentoring early career professors, co-authoring books and articles, and sharing his wisdom at educational conferences. Many former students say Tom influenced their thinking as scholars and teachers.

Tom demonstrated exemplary involvement at Pathways (formerly Monroe County United Ministries), a Bloomington-based nonprofit organization focused on providing accessible, high-quality early learning and promoting economic mobility for families. As a member of the Pathways Board of Directors, Tom contributed to all facets of the organization's operations, consistently applying precision and a strong commitment to advancing its mission. His service included weekly work in the food pantry and close collaboration with staff to establish a sustainable "Your Path" program, which reflected his dedication to dignity, support, and meaningful, lasting progress. The "Your Path" initiative is designed to assist families in developing practical skills, creating durable solutions, and progressing toward greater long-term security and stability. In acknowledgement of Tom's exemplary service, dedication, and steadfast commitment, the Pathways food pantry and the "Your Path" allocated fund will bear his name. This designation serves as a lasting recognition of Tom's significant contributions to the organization and its community.

In addition to his professional and civic responsibilities, Tom and his wife, Sherry, participated actively in their faith community at First Presbyterian

Church. Tom served as a ruling elder and played a significant role in supporting the homeless population. He consistently demonstrated his commitment by staffing the winter shelter for unhoused individuals and preparing meals for those in need of food assistance. Tom's impact extended well beyond the classroom and community organizations; he was known for his curiosity and lifelong dedication to learning. Whether discussing philosophy over coffee or exploring innovative ideas with his family and friends, Tom inspired others to find meaning and purpose in everyday moments. His openness to different perspectives and gentle encouragement fostered kindness and growth in all who knew him. Tom enjoyed working with Sherry to create a peaceful garden sanctuary at their home filled with native plants and wildlife. He and Sherry also worked together to support Templeton Elementary School's vegetable garden. Tom loved cooking healthy meals and sharing them with family and friends over lively conversations.

Tom is survived by his beloved family: wife, Sherry; daughter, Sarah (Ash); brother, Dave; stepchildren, Brandy (Shawn), and Jeremy; and grandchildren; Abby (Karlle), Paige, Ty, William, Benjamin, Piper, and Finn. He was preceded in death by his parents, his stepfather, Walter Baermann, and by his son-in-law Bart Abel. He also leaves behind a strong faith community, and numerous friends and colleagues. Each of them carries a piece of his spirit whether it is his love of learning, quiet strength, or warm sense of humor.

A celebration to honor Tom's life and legacy will be held on Saturday, January 24, 2026, at 1:00pm at First Presbyterian Church at 6th and Lincoln St. in Bloomington. A reception will follow in the church fellowship hall where everyone is invited to join the family in celebrating Tom's life, and honoring Tom's love for food and conversation. In lieu of flowers, the family humbly requests that any donations in celebration of Tom's life be directed to Pathways' "Your Path" program - <https://btownpathways.org/frc/yourpath/> , or

to First Presbyterian Church - <https://www.fpcbloomington.org/new-page-1>

Tom Schwandt left us too soon; yet he leaves behind more than memories — he leaves a legacy.

Previous Events

Celebration of Life

JAN 24. 1:00 PM (ET)

First Presbyterian Church
221 E 6th St
Bloomington, IN 47408-3596
(812) 332-1514