

Richard William Ely, 71, of East St. Johnsbury, Vt., died peacefully Tuesday, Jan. 17, 2006, at his home after a lengthy illness, with family by his side. He was born Jan. 3, 1935, in St. Johnsbury, Vt., son of Luther and Marion (Oliver) Ely. Richard was a lifelong resident of East St. Johnsbury and graduated from St. Johnsbury Trade School in 1953. After high school, he was employed as a draftsman by Fairbanks Scales, where he worked for 46 years until his retirement in 2000. After his father's death in 1963, he did much for the support of his mother and many younger brothers and sisters, for whom he felt great love and pride. In 1967, he married, and together with his wife Janice joyfully raised seven children. Richard attended Bible School in 1967 and began ministering in the fall of 1968. He ministered at his start-up church, Grace Chapel on Pleasant Street in St. Johnsbury, until 1977, when he started his lifetime work of ministering at Concord Community Church, where he continued to preach after his official retirement in 1992. During his years preaching, he maintained his full-time drafting job while preparing sermons, offering three services a week, visiting nursing homes and shut-ins and helping the needy. He loved singing traditional hymns and watching him lead a song service was a unique experience. He loved gardening, as well as cultivating berry bushes, grapes and fruit orchards, and keeping honey bees. He enjoyed walking his land, sitting in the warmth of the sunshine and listening to the sounds of nature that surrounded his family homestead. His upbeat, kind-hearted approachability touched all with whom he came in contact. He was often heard whistling through the aisles of White Market or yodeling as he walked, but always producing, listening to and moving to some form of music. He loved to cook for everyone and anyone, and for years developed his hobbies of baking,

preserving jelly and making fruit ciders. In later years, he challenged and overcame his fear of flying and began traveling throughout the U.S., visiting family in Florida, South Carolina, Missouri and Colorado. His greatest passion was his children and he spent his time keeping contact with them and his many brothers and sisters, and demonstrated his complete devotion to family togetherness through his organization of family reunions, holiday get-togethers and giant Sunday dinners. During the last months of his life and throughout his illness, he was deeply touched by the frequent visits and gracious acts of kindness demonstrated by the church, the community, his friends and family. It made his last days here very special. He is survived by his wife, Janice (Austin); sons, William of Landrum, S.C., Garth of East St. Johnsbury, Stefan of Spartanburg, S.C., and Nathanael of Jericho; and daughters, Heather of Princeton, N.J., Joanna of Burlington, and Carolyn of Wakefield, Mass.; as well as grandchildren, Rhya LaFleur of Leesburg, Va., Jeremiah James, Savannah Lynn and Dalton Luther of Landrum, S.C., Quinton Oliver and Sheridan Grace of Spartanburg, Va., and Dalton Richard of Jericho. Surviving siblings include brothers, Dan Gaudet of Saugus, Mass., "Little Charlie" of Rockville, Md, Gary of East St. Johnsbury, James of St. Albans, David of South Burlington, Gaylon of East St. Johnsbury, "Big Charlie" of Torrence, Calif., Robert of Audenton, Md, and Gordon Wood of Worchester, Vt.; sisters, Elizabeth Williams of Boyton Beach, Fla., Rosemary Palmer of Fairlee, and Sharon Noel, of Lyndonville. He leaves behind over 40 nieces and nephews; as well as parents-in-law, Grace and Delmer Austin of St. Johnsbury. He was predeceased by his father in 1963, and his mother in 1988; as well as sisters, Carol at infancy, and Muriel of Northfield, Vt., in 1986; and brothers, Bill at infancy, and Raymond of Missouri in 2004. Visiting hours will be from 6-8 p.m. at Sayles Funeral Home, 525 Summer St., St. Johnsbury, Vt. 05824. The funeral service will be

held at the Concord Community Church on Main Street in Concord, Vt., 05824. Donations may be made to the Concord Community Church, 481 Main St., Concord, VT 05824.