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Influential Sacramento-area pastor Glen Cole dies

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Lezlie Sterling / Bee file, 2004

When the Rev. Glen D. Cole was senior pastor at Capital Christian Center, about 5,000 people showed up on Sundays to hear his Bible-quoting sermons.

The Rev. Glen D. Cole, an influential pastor and forceful advocate for traditional values who built the Capital Christian Center into the first megachurch in the Sacramento region, died Tuesday. He was 78.

Cole was found unresponsive in his car in the parking lot at Trinity Life Center in Sacramento, where he was senior pastor, between 9 a.m. and 10 a.m. Tuesday, executive pastor Chuck Seielstad said. Seielstad said he administered cardiopulmonary resuscitation before emergency responders arrived.

"He drove to work, undid his [seat belt](#) and passed," said the Rev. [Rick Cole](#), who succeeded [L...](#) as senior pastor of Capital Christian



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a for the community.

He said his father, an avid golfer who played Monday, did not have any known health issues.

During 53 years of ministry, Glen Cole was one of the best-known pastors in [Northern California](#) and a visionary spiritual leader. His legacy includes large congregations known as megachurches that draw thousands of believers seeking the personal, emotional connection with God that he preached.

MORE INFORMATION

THE REV. GLEN D. COLE

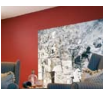
Born: Dec. 21, 1933

Died: Feb. 14, 2012

Survived by: Wife, Mary Ann, of Roseville; sons Randy and Rick, both of Sacramento; brothers Ray of Sacramento, and Marvin of Yakima, Wash.; seven grandchildren; and four great-grandchildren

Services: Pending; information to be posted online at www.cconline.cc

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As senior pastor from 1978 to 1995, he transformed Capital Christian Center into one of the biggest Assemblies of God congregations in the country. About 5,000 people flocked to the church's landmark sanctuary off Highway 50 in the Rosemont area every Sunday to hear his Bible-quoting sermons, which were broadcast on TV and radio.

"He was a giant among pastors," said the Rev. Henry Wells of Fair Oaks Presbyterian Church. "He was a builder, a man of vision."

Cole was a regional and national leader in the Assemblies of God, including many years as a member of the denomination's Executive Presbytery. He influenced generations of ministers – including his two sons and a grandson – who followed in his footsteps to preach at churches around the country.

"He was the best mentor I've ever had," said the Rev. Ray Johnston of Bayside Church in Granite Bay, the biggest megachurch in the Sacramento region. "In my estimation, he was the single most important Christian leader in the history of Sacramento."

Cole's religious message – including a strict belief in the Bible – went beyond the pulpit into social and political issues. Legislators courted him, and news reporters regularly turned to him for his conservative viewpoints on moral issues. He served on the board of Jerry Falwell's Moral Majority group.

He was an ardent critic of growing tolerance for gays and lesbians in society. He spoke out against domestic partnerships for unmarried couples, condom ads on television, local officials who supported "Sacramento Coming Out Day" and politicians who were not conservative enough for his convictions.

In 1987, he led Capital Christian Center and other churches in quitting the Interfaith Service Bureau after the bureau admitted a largely gay congregation.

"I'm very conservative, and ... I'm going to say what the Bible says," he said in a 2004 interview.

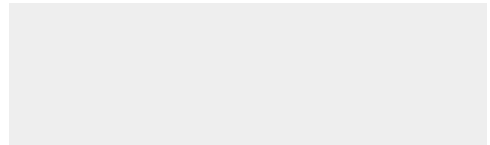
Cole stepped down after 17 years as leader of Capital Christian Center in 1995 and handed the reins to his younger son, Rick. He served as superintendent of the Northern California and Nevada District of the Assemblies of God, which became snared in an investment scheme in which he and other church members lost money.

He returned to the pulpit in 2004 for two years at Capital Christian Center, where he assisted his son, Rick. He also helped groom his elder son, Randy, as a pastor at the church.

He traveled and lectured before filling in as a guest preacher at Trinity Life Center, where he was asked to stay as senior pastor in 2008. He set about revitalizing the Hillsdale Boulevard church with building improvements and outreach that grew the congregation from 150 to more than 1,100 members.

"He is the best pastor I have ever worked for," Seielstad said. "He is a good businessman and a visionary pastor – and, on a personal level, he is so loving and giving. He treated everyone like they were his best friend."

Born in 1933 in Tacoma, Wash., Glen David Cole was the son of Ruth and Ray Cole, an injured military veteran. His father died when he was 12, and his mother raised her six children alone for several years before remarrying.



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Cole was a talented musician who earned a music scholarship to [Washington State University](#). His plans changed one Sunday in an Assemblies of God church, when, he said, he heard a voice tell him instead to become a minister.

"The pastor's wife told him, 'Glen, whatever you feel God is saying to you right now, just say yes,' " [Rick Cole](#) said.

Glen Cole enrolled at [Central Bible College](#) in Springfield, Mo., and earned a theology degree. He played in a school quartet and met a vivacious brunette working in the cafeteria, [Mary Ann](#), who became his wife of 58 years.

He was ordained in the Assemblies of God in 1959 and started working as a pastor in Ohio before returning to [Washington state](#) to lead congregations there. He served as chaplain for the state Legislature and spent 11 years as pastor at Evergreen Christian Center in Olympia.

He moved to Sacramento in 1978 to be pastor at Bethel Temple on Howe Avenue. He persuaded church members to change the name to Capital Christian Center.

In 1984, the congregation moved into a new sanctuary on 63 acres off Highway 50 and Bradshaw Road. Under his leadership, the campus grew into a spiritual powerhouse with a preschool, elementary and high schools, and a [Bible college](#).

"Everything he touched was successful," Rick Cole said. "He had a strong leadership gift and a positive personality. Every day was a good day for him."

Cole's outspokenness on social issues often made him a lightning rod. His conservative viewpoints drew the ire of many in the community, especially gays and lesbians.

"I regret the reaction, but I do understand," he said in a 1994 interview. "We take a stance that is very biblical."

Fewer people knew that Cole reached out to help people in need and paid anonymously to send many students to Bible school. He was a warm, generous man who "treated everybody equally and lovingly," Rick Cole said.

Glen Cole was a devoted patriarch who made a point to call family members early in the morning to wish them "Happy birthday." Besides spending time with his grandchildren and great-grandchildren, his favorite hobby was playing golf.

"He loved God and he loved life and he loved golf," said Johnston of Bayside Church. "I'm sure the first thing he said when he got to heaven is, 'Where's the golf course?'"

GLEN COLE 1933-2012

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chorus

fr the article:

>...I'm very conservative, and ... I'm going to say what the Bible says," he said in a 2004 interview...<

The Bible also says to "Love thy neighbor as thyself" and "Judge not, lest ye be judged". It's really too bad he didn't REALLY follow the Bible.

2 hours ago 1 Like Report Abuse

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Michael Thando Goodling

It's obviously a shame that you don't understand the Bible in its full context. :(

1 hour ago in reply to chorus Report Abuse

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AristarchusSeleucus

"full context" = what YOU think it means

LOL

What you are pretending is that there is only ONE meaning to what is contained in "the Bible". Funny.

It's obviously a shame that you think so highly of yourself that you pretend to know what "God" is thinking. BTW, that's ... blasphemy.

52 minutes ago in reply to Michael Thando Goodling Report Abuse

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FUR

"He loved God and he loved life and he loved golf," said Johnston of Bayside Church. "I'm sure the first thing he said when he got to heaven is, 'Where's the golf course?'"

I true message from a worldly man like Johnston.

Let's see-when Johnston gets to heaven, I wonder if the first thing he is going to say is where is my 15000 sq ft home. And God is going to say to Johnston "Are you plagiarizing somebody else here in heaven?"

I just don't think golf is going to be part of the picture after this life on Earth is over.

Jesus came to the world to live like a servant, and these worldly guys lived like kings.

14 minutes ago Report Abuse

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FUR

Yes, Glen Cole, the greatest pastor to ever preach the word Jesus out of his mouth. A man of his word. He walked the talk, as they say. One of the best messages he ever gave was about "One life can make a difference." He gave this message on October 22, 1998.

Below is that message. He starts off talking about how wonderful the Norwegians of Minnesota were by giving him a gift to travel to Norway. And then after his message that night, a Norwegian of Sacramento, went down to the podium and gave to him another gift. An unexpected meeting Glen Cole probably never forgot for the rest of his life.

<http://i.b5z.net/i/u/1350838/f...>

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Happyperson

Best Pastor Sacramento ever had. Thank you for the wonderful smile you always shared with everyone. My life is better cause of you. You will be missed by many. Love you Pastor Cole.

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