

**Peter Michael Cernoia**, born in Cambridge, MA on September 16, 1954 to Mario "Mike" Cernoia and Helen Robbins, went to be with the presence of his Lord and Saviour on September 15, 2009. Pete died at home after a sudden battle with cancer. Every aspect of Pete's life is a genuine and resounding testimony to the redemptive power of Jesus. By the age of 29, Pete was addicted to drugs, suicidal and in a marriage broken by adultery. At that moment, Pete was offered the news that there is a God in heaven that loves mankind and offers all the free gift of new life through his son Jesus Christ. Pete accepted the offer and handed his life over! God made good on His promises of deliverance, restoration and a future with hope. After his salvation, Pete found family at Cambridgeport Baptist Church where he served faithfully as a lay leader. There he met and married his best friend, Elizabeth [Stilleke]. Elizabeth and Pete enjoyed the last 17 years in an extraordinary marriage, each day filled with joy and laughter. He was blessed with 2 remarkable sons, Micah, age 13 and Dylan, age 10. Pete was thrilled to spend the last 5 years in full-time ministry as the station manager of WFGL Fitchburg and WJWT Gardener. In addition, he was a compassionate shepherd and an anointed worship leader at Horizon Christian Fellowship for the past nine years. There will be a memorial service to celebrate Pete's life and give praise to all God has done on Saturday, September 19 at 2pm at Horizon Christian Fellowship, 356 Broad Street, Fitchburg, MA. No flowers.

In place of flowers, you may consider contributing to the  
**Cernoia Education Fund**  
c/o Sovereign Bank, 346 Timpany Blvd, Gardner MA 01440.

**Remembering Peter Cernoia: A True Friend**, Lead Them Home radio producer Pete Cernoia died one day short of his 55th birthday after a sudden and courageous battle with cancer. My family wishes to extend our love, thoughts and prayers to Elizabeth, Micah and Dylan. I invite you to join us at Pete's memorial service detailed above or you can offer Pete's family a note of comfort at <http://horizonfitchburg.org/blog/peter-cernoia>.

Pete and Elizabeth have been a team serving as editor and producer of my radio show since the start. In fact, they are the reason Lead Them Home exists! They came to me with the idea of putting FOTOS on the air. Out of their creativity and expertise, Lead Them Home was birthed. I cannot count the hours of service they have given to make Lead Them Home what it is today. This is a huge loss! But that is only a small part of the story...

Pete and Elizabeth are dear friends. They have given so many people an authentic glimpse into what it means to know, abide in and share Jesus with others. Pete could just as easily be best friends with a homeless drug addict as he could a Christian radio executive. He was a devoted father - I often saw Pete including his young sons in his radio work, laughing with them and giving them hugs, high-fives and loving affirmations. He deeply loved his dear wife, Elizabeth. He often spoke of how much he appreciated and loved her. He was a true father and husband.

Pete and I spent countless hours sharing our common vision to take the Gospel into our culture and transform churches into "safe havens" where people experience our Heavenly Father's mercy. At times, we were as serious as we possibly could be. Other times, Pete would have us both rolling in laughter until we cried. We would talk about the challenges of ministry here in New England: raw, complex, difficult and exhausting. We often comforted and encouraged one another. This guy will always be my dear brother and trusted friend.

In the words of a song: Pete, *you lift me up*.

Pete lifted me up time and time again. He hugged me every time he saw me and every time I said goodbye. He had a constant smile. His joy overflowed through his laugh, his encouragement, his sense of humor and his eye-to-eye affirmations that he constantly gave me. His whole posture and every word said to me, *Bill, I love you. Jesus loves you. If you ever run into people who are angry with you or reject you or question your work or ignore your ministry, I want you to know: you keep going, man. You're doing God's will. Keep going. I love you Bill.*

Pete's compassion and passion both reassured and empowered me. I always knew that Pete was there for me. This ministry is a battle - emotionally, mentally and spiritually. I sometimes just want to go get a regular job. It's too controversial. It's too misunderstood. I'm either a hate-monger or a compromiser. In the words of one pastor, *Bill, I bet you get beat up from both sides*. Sowing peace as a peacemaker is the work of revealing Christ's presence in the midst of getting beat up from both sides. But it can wear a person down. When I have been most worn down and wanted to give up, I could call Pete or else think about his smiling face or his big bear hug or his words of encouragement. In the days ahead when ministry gets tough, I will still hear Pete saying, *you keep going, Bill. I*

*love you. Jesus loves you. In those days, I will whisper back: Pete, you lift me up. Thank you. I love you too. But now I can also add: Hey Pete, tell Jesus thank you for loving all of us so much...*

What will happen to Lead Them Home? It doesn't matter. What matters is our love, prayers and care for Elizabeth and the boys. This is a mother with two young sons (13 and 10) who must move forward. She will need our help. Pete and Elizabeth sacrificed financial gain in order to follow Jesus and his call on their lives. Pete was faithful to always follow God and trust Him for provision. It's now time for us to be faithful and act on his trust. We are the hands and feet of Jesus - let's shower Elizabeth and the boys with our loving care.

**If you would like to help, see the instructions above for giving to the Cernoia Education Fund.** Let them know you are a Lead Them Home listener or FOTOS supporter. That will be encouraging after all that Pete and Elizabeth have given to my show.

Oh, by the way, did I mention? *The show will go on!* No, there is no grand plan and there are no guarantees in this world. I just believe that where there is God's will, there will be a way. I hope to share more details with you in the near future. Join me in prayer and come support us as we move forward.

*Pete, you've **led us home** faithfully. You'll always lift me up. Thank you, my friend.*

*Elizabeth and boys, we love you and pray God's comfort for you today and in the days ahead.*

In closing, so many of you also *lift me up*. Thank you so much.

Love in Christ,

**Bill**

Bill J. Henson, Jr.

FOTOS Ministries, Inc.

Helping the Church Love Gay People - in the Church

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Ministry Website - <http://fishontheotherside.org>

Today's Lead Them Home Broadcast - <http://renewfm.org> (9am and 9pm ET)

Archived Lead Them Home Broadcasts - <http://leadthemhome.com> (24-hours a day)

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