



CELEBRATING THE LIFE AND LOVE OF
Paula Michele McQuay Reitsma

September 14, 1959 - January 8, 2026



Paula Reitsma was a faith-filled woman whose quick wit and love for adventure made her a joy to be around. She had a natural gift for planning and organization, approaching both daily life and big adventures with thoughtful intention. Her caring heart extended to everyone around her, and she poured herself into her community with generosity and love, always ready to give her time and support. Rooted deeply in her faith, Paula walked closely with God throughout her life, growing spiritually in a way that was gentle, sincere, and beautifully evident to all who knew her.

Paula's journey began on September 14, 1959, born to Mary Ann Steinquist and adopted at nine days old by Russell and Betty Jean McQuay on September 23rd, 1959. She spent her childhood in River Forest, Illinois, where—remarkably—many of the homes on her street were filled with other adopted children, creating a unique sense of community and belonging. Adopted parents all told us the same thing, “You were special because you were chosen, we got to pick you out.” Paula grew up alongside her younger brother, Kameron, who was also adopted. Later in life she discovered additional biological siblings—a half-brother, Jeff, and a half sister, Kim.

Paula attended Roosevelt Elementary School and later OPRF (Oak Park–River Forest) High School. Though she often rebelled—skipping classes more than she attended—she found her way back, earning her high school diploma through the American School of Home Correspondence.

Determined to keep moving forward, Paula continued her education with a year at Triton Junior College, and pushed through on her own terms. Faith was woven deeply into Paula's childhood, shaping her early years. Naturally creative, she began learning piano at the age of five and carried a lifelong love for music. Paula held several jobs as she grew up, working in roles that ranged from waitressing to serving as a bank teller and even managing a switchboard. Each job added a new layer to her work ethic, adaptability, and determination. Paula moved to Germany in 1983 with her first husband, an experience that sparked a lifelong love of travel. During those years abroad, she embraced new cultures, learned the language, and discovered countless places that broadened her world and deepened her passion for exploring all that life had to offer. While in Germany, Paula worked for Staff Judge Advocate's office in Kauserslautern, Germany. In 1987, she moved back to Chicago and began working as an office manager for a private investigator firm.



Through her divorce, Paula leaned heavily on her deep faith, trusting God to carry her through even the toughest days. She kept putting one foot in front of the other, holding firmly to the promises she believed God had spoken over her life and persevering through the wilderness. Accepting Jesus Christ as her Savior on April 1, 1989, was one of the most profound moments of her life. In 1990, a new chapter began when she met the love of her life, Dan Reitsma, while attending Oakbrook Christian Center. Paula had long been praying for a companion, and after attending a Singles Church camping trip, the rest was history. He was tall—just as she had prayed—and after they spent the day together leading a group of kids fishing and entertaining them, their friendship blossomed. They quickly became a remarkable team: supporting and encouraging one another in their faith, with Paula managing the details of daily life while he nurtured social connections. Together, they balanced each other perfectly, building a partnership rooted in love, faith, and shared purpose. They were married on September 7, 1991, in a church overflowing with family

and friends—a joyous day filled with love, laughter, and memories to last a lifetime. The couple moved in 1993 to an 18-acre farm—later expanding to a beautiful 36-acre property in Vevay, Indiana—where they built a life rooted in love and shared dreams. Dan and Paula worked tirelessly to bring their longtime dream to life, founding The Chord Coffeehouse—a labor of love built with dedication, sweat equity, and a deep passion for community. The coffeehouse simply brought people together, forging friendships, and provided a “living room” where people could come, be warmly welcomed,

and be themselves. Paula and Dan began Three Strand Chord Ministries, a nonprofit organization that held bible studies, craft sessions, and a way to spread the good news.

Paula and Dan enjoyed visiting Destin, Florida, every year, where they could relax and spend time with friends or family. It was truly their happy place! Paula and Dan made travel a priority. She ended up visiting over 42 states and in 2005, traveled to Russia for a month on a mission trip with Little Lambs Ministries. On March 18, 2005, she faced one of her greatest challenges and succeeded: she gave up smoking. Paula loved to cook, and everyone looked





forward to her infamous Boston Brown Bread around Christmas time. She found tremendous joy spending time with her nieces and nephews, floating in the pool on a hot summer day, listening to country music, indulging in some of her favorite dark chocolates, or a delicious seafood dinner. Paula loved to craft and made beautiful, hand-crafted cards for people. She enjoyed sending them to people who least expected them to brighten their day! Paula cherished the precious time she spent with her lifelong friend Chris, whom she met at church, creating countless memories together that she treasured deeply. Dan and Paula looked forward to the traditions of singing to and enjoying a Jesus birthday cake every Christmas. Paula loved nothing more than starting a new year by filling in her calendar with the birthdays and special occasions of friends and family. The people around her brought her immense joy, and she delighted in pouring into their lives with warmth, acceptance, and unwavering love.



Paula retired from the IRS Innocent Spouse Operation in 2025. She battled illness over the last 15–20 years, yet she faced every challenge with a quiet strength and unwavering resilience, meeting each day with the same grace and determination that defined her life. The couple found a church home at The Link Church in Hebron, Kentucky, where Paula continued walking in her faith.

Paula passed away peacefully on January 8, 2026, to be greeted by those who had gone before her. Quietly, and often flying under the radar, she profoundly touched the lives around her, creating a ripple effect of unexpected and unassuming kindness that spread far beyond what she ever realized. Although she is already so greatly missed, she leaves behind a priceless legacy that her loved ones will be proud to carry on in her footsteps.



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