

Ronald Aaron Grider

September 18, 1980 – September 18, 2010

On Saturday, September 18, 2010, Aaron Grider, Pastor Vera's and Mark's nephew and Brittany Reed Grider's husband, completed his baptismal journey. A Special Operations soldier and Sergeant 1st Class, Aaron died on his 30th birthday after being hit by machine gun fire during a combat operation in Kunduz Province, Afghanistan. He is survived by his daughter, Catie Anne, and his parents, Ron Grider of Brighton, Illinois, and Rita Grider of St. Louis, Missouri.

We will remember Aaron for his fierce love of the Lord, the intense love and joy that he and Brittany shared, and how he was like a son to Pastor Vera and Mark. His exuberant smile was infectious, his faith inspiring. With a twinkle in his eye and an inviting grin, he was quick to make friends. No wonder so many of our youth grew attached to him so quickly. ELC members from every generation could see that Aaron was a special man with a deep devotion to God and a love for others.

A spiritual family man, outdoorsman, and music lover, Aaron grew up in Brighton, Illinois, where friends say he always put others first. "He'd run by and give you a hug for no reason and then take off running," said his science teacher and track coach Frank Grasier.

Aaron's story is one of unbelievable courage, bravery, and dedication. He enlisted in the Army soon after high school and was assigned to Charlie Company, 2nd Battalion, 504th Parachute Infantry Regiment at Fort Bragg. He graduated from the 82nd Airborne Division's Ranger School in May 2000. He served as a scout team leader in the 2nd Bn., 504th Parachute Infantry Regiment for seven months before being reassigned to Fort Benning, Georgia. In 2002, Aaron was assigned as a rifle team leader to Co. A, 1st Bn., 75th Ranger Regiment, then as squad leader in 2004. He became a special operations team member, United States Army Special Operations Command (Airborne) in 2005.

Aaron was on his ninth military deployment overseas. He went seven times to Iraq and twice to Afghanistan. His honors include three Bronze Star Medals and a Purple Heart. He will be deeply missed but we rest in our faith that he is with our Lord.

We will celebrate Aaron's life here at Evergreen Lutheran Church on **Sunday, October 3, at 2:30 p.m.**, followed by burial with full military honors at Evergreen Memorial Park. Memorial gifts can be made in Aaron's name to Rainbow Trail Lutheran Camp, 107 S. 9th St., Suite B, Canon City, CO 81212 and to Casas por Cristo, PO Box 971070, El Paso, TX 79997.