



Dr. Robert Courtney Pearce

August 8, 1965 - May 22, 2026

Dr. Robert Courtney Pearce, 60, of Georgetown, KY, formerly of Oldham County, passed away on Friday, May 22, 2026, at his home surrounded by his loving family. Born on August 8, 1965, in Louisville, KY, “Bob” was the only child of Amelia Courtney Pearce and the late Franklin West Pearce. On July 25, 1987, Bob married his best friend and soulmate Cynthia Ann Williamson Pearce, and together they built a wonderful life, raising their son William, cherishing and supporting their family and friends, contributing to their professions in extraordinary ways, opening their home and hearts to seven cats, and valuing each day for 37 years before her untimely passing on July 23, 2025. A 1983 graduate of Oldham County High School, Bob’s love of farming and introduction to FFA (Future Farmers of America) in high school, inspired his professional career. He earned his Bachelor of Science Degree in Agronomy with a Minor in Biology from the University of Kentucky in 1987, his Master of Science Degree in Soil Science from UK in 1989, and his Doctor of Philosophy Degree in Soil Science from the University of Georgia in 1994. Bob attended the Georgetown First United Methodist Church with his mother. Hired as an Assistant Extension Professor of Agronomy in the Department of Plant and Soil Science at the University of Kentucky in 1994, Bob began his career as a Tobacco Extension Specialist, providing over 32 years of academic and extension service. Promoted to tenured Associate Extension Professor in 1999 and again to Full Extension Professor in 2016, Bob earned the prestigious title of Philip Morris Endowed Professor from 2018 – 2024.

Over the course of his career, he took great pride in mentoring 17 Master's and PhD students as the advisor/co-advisor, guiding their research in tobacco and hemp.

Highly respected as a researcher and extension specialist, Bob became a trusted, sought-after resource of unbiased research-based information on all aspects of tobacco and hemp production. He was an international authority on conservation tillage and no-till tobacco production, and he conducted over 200 "on-farm" research trials in growers' fields across Kentucky on conservation tillage, variety testing, topping and grading, tobacco fertility, and disease control. Known for his unwavering availability for growers, he never left a call unanswered. Bob conducted over 300 winter tobacco grower meetings, over 125 field days, over 40 agent trainings, and made over 60 invited presentations outside Kentucky during his career. In 2019, he stepped into a new responsibility, becoming the Director of the Hemp Research and Extension Program, creating innovative ways of connecting local growers and processors, and pioneering a multi-state collaboration across multiple universities throughout the United States.

A prolific writer, Bob led the development of the first Burley & Dark Tobacco Production Guide in 2007, expanding in 2010 to become a multi-state effort. He also wrote book chapters, new or revised numbered extension publications, tobacco fact sheets, and countless popular press articles. Bob had a gift for interpreting complex research information and creatively sharing it in ways that were clear, concise, and the most impactful for others.

Recognized for his commitment to the agriculture community, Bob received the Outstanding Specialist Award from the Kentucky Association of County Extension Agents in 2013 and the Leadership Award from the Burley Tobacco Growers Cooperative in 2014. A natural leader, he chaired the Tobacco Workers Conference twice (2010 and 2020) and headed the Tobacco Science Research Conference in 2025.

Bob Pearce also loved creating memorable meals as the "grill master". Fascinated with all the inventive ways to prepare and grill food, he constantly

challenged himself to try new ingredients and methods to share with those lucky enough to get that invitation.

Bob left an indelible mark on his family, his friends, his colleagues, and all who shared his passion for agriculture, family, learning, and life. Bob was a loving father who always made an effort to spend time with his son, William, playing outside or just having a good time being with one another.

Surviving and blessed to be his family are his son William Franklin Pearce; his mother Amelia Courtney Pearce; his mother-in-law Linda Ann Rutherford Williamson; two brothers-in-law: Randal Williamson (Aimee) and Joel Williamson (April), all of Georgetown; his paternal uncle and aunt James and Brenda Pearce of Crestwood, KY; his niece Ashley Williamson (Max); his nephew Matthew Williamson (Emily); his great niece Freya Edison; his great nephew Lachlan Williamson; dear family friends Brent, Sarah, and Jacob Styer; and a host of extended family, friends, colleagues, and farmers, who are grateful for his powerful example of how to be an extraordinary steward of all the people and land entrusted to his care.

In addition to his wife and father, Bob was preceded in death his maternal aunt and uncle Martha and Stan Chasteen.

A Celebration of Life for Bob Pearce will be held at 2 pm on Saturday, June 13, 2026, at Georgetown First United Methodist Church, 1280 Lexington Road, Georgetown, KY 40324.

Friends and family are invited to gather from 11-2 pm preceding the service. Woodhead Funeral Home, Falmouth, is honored to serve the family.

In lieu of flowers, donations are suggested to the Scott County Humane Society: 751 Slone Drive #13, Georgetown, KY 40324.

Previous Events

Gathering of Family and Friends

JUN 13. 11:00 AM - 2:00 PM (ET)

First United Methodist Church
1280 Lexington Rd
Georgetown, KY 40324-9357
(502) 863-0173

Celebration of Life

JUN 13. 2:00 PM (ET)

Georgetown First United Methodist Church
1280 Lexington Road
Lexington, KY 40324

Tribute Wall



“ *Woodhead Funeral Homes, Memorials, & Cremation Service created a Tribute Video in memory of Dr. Robert Courtney Pearce*



Woodhead Funeral Home - June 15 at 10:33 AM



“ *Beautiful in Blue was purchased for the family of Dr. Robert Courtney Pearce.*



June 10 at 04:08 PM



“ *Love always, Donna and Liam Buckman purchased the Simply Elegant Spathiphyllum for the family of Dr. Robert Courtney Pearce.*



Love always, Donna and Liam Buckman - June 09 at 08:27 PM

LB

“ Love always, Donna and Liam Buckman planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Dr. Robert Courtney Pearce.

Love always, Donna and Liam Buckman - June 09 at 08:27 PM

WH

“ My first memory of Bob Pearce is from the 1982 Parliamentary Procedure Contest at the State FFA Convention. He was the Secretary of the Oldham County team my future wife from Warren Central was competing against. I didn't know him at the time, but little did I know how our paths would become so intertwined as the years passed. After teaching high school agriculture and being an FFA Advisor for 11 years, the first four of which were in Pendleton County, I have worked for Novartis/Syngenta the past 28 years. I had the privilege of getting to know Bob in the light of what we both were trying to do..... help Kentucky tobacco farmers. We became friends and I will truly miss him!!! My sincere condolences to his family who remain.

Willie Hawkins - June 08 at 10:52 PM

HF

“ Hanna Poffenbarger and family purchased the Simply Elegant Spathiphyllum for the family of Dr. Robert Courtney Pearce.



Hanna Poffenbarger and family - June 06 at 10:39 PM

NM

“ Dear William,
For the past 4 years I had the honor of working in your Dad's hemp and tobacco team at University of Kentucky. As we were planting this week the tobacco trials he had planned for this season, we have been constantly reminded of the enthusiasm and pride he placed on each of his trials and several of us felt like he was watching us from above laughing at our struggles but proud that we were doing the best we could in his memory!
We miss him dearly everyday, but he gave all of us life and professional lessons that will never be forgotten and have with us the rest of our lives!
Whenever you want, please come by to the UK farm and pay us a visit.

Natalia Martinez

Natalia Martinez - June 05 at 05:30 PM

AW

“ Ann, Matthew and Emily Williamson purchased the Sweet Liberty for the family of Dr. Robert Courtney Pearce.



Ann, Matthew and Emily Williamson - June 03 at 02:09 PM



“ Florist Choice Bouquet was purchased for the family of Dr. Robert Courtney Pearce.



June 01 at 01:44 PM



“ A [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) was planted in honor of Dr. Robert Courtney Pearce.

June 01 at 01:44 PM



“ Medium Dish Garden was purchased for the family of Dr. Robert Courtney Pearce.



June 01 at 12:18 PM



“ A [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) was planted in honor of Dr. Robert Courtney Pearce.

June 01 at 12:18 PM



“ I am so sorry to hear of Bob's passing. He was a valued colleague for many years - decades. Always positive, always wanting to work together to help others, a joy to know and collaborate with. Always fair and reasonable. He helped make our lives and our world better. We all hope that his family and friends find comfort and inspiration in how Bob lived, and hope, peace, and strength for their futures in Him who is our hope.

Chuck Johnson - June 01 at 11:11 AM

KT

“ Kimberly Foley & Foley Seed Team purchased the Sentiments of Serenity Spray for the family of Dr. Robert Courtney Pearce.



Kimberly Foley & Foley Seed Team - June 01 at 09:50 AM

KT

“ Kimberly Foley & Foley Seed Team planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Dr. Robert Courtney Pearce.

Kimberly Foley & Foley Seed Team - June 01 at 09:50 AM

LG

“ Like Troy, I met Bob (and Cindy! in 1985, for me) when they were both undergraduate students. As a new faculty member, I was tasked with leading the Agronomy Club. Meeting Bob there--as president of that club--was a true joy. He was full of fresh and fun ideas for activities for the group! Before he graduated with his UK BS in Agronomy, he was already set up for his first summer's research as one of my very first graduate students. Such a joy to work with Bob in a graduate student/advisor context. Bob worked hard--of course--but he was always fun to be around and deeply thoughtful about the research on the table (not just his own, by the way). When Bob came back to UK as an assistant professor, he was a colleague--one who took on steep challenges in his assignment with determination and cooperation. Such a solid human being, such a strong colleague, such a caring team member! It was my privilege to work with Bob as undergraduate, graduate and fellow faculty member. Tough, sad, hard to see him go so soon. My heart aches for their son William and the entire family.

Larry Grabau - June 01 at 09:41 AM

AF

“ I first met Bob in 1995, when I was on a study tour of the US, and for the last 25 years, I have been honored to have worked with him and to have regarded him as a friend. He will be sadly missed. My heartfelt condolences to William, Ashley and the rest of his family.
Anne Fisher

Anne Fisher - May 31 at 10:05 PM

TB

“ I am beyond words. I have known Robert and Cindy since the late 1980s. Robert and I spent many a night studying for a myriad of agronomy classes and battling to best one another in soil judging.

While some years had more contact than others, we always reconnected and remained a part of each other's lives over all these decades.

Robert and Cindy will be so deeply missed. They were wonderful people, and I am a truly better person for having known them.

Troy Brady - May 31 at 07:00 PM

SS

“ I had the privilege of working with Dr. Pearce, and it was truly an honor. He was a gentleman in every sense of the word. His immense knowledge and willingness to share his expertise left a lasting impact on countless colleagues and students.

Dr. Pearce's contributions and mentorship will not be forgotten. He will always remain in our memories with the greatest respect, admiration, and honor. His legacy will continue to inspire those who had the good fortune to know and work with him.

sanjay kumar singh - May 30 at 10:06 PM

GG

“ I had the honor to know Bob while I worked in the College of Ag. He was so bright and had the ability to explain his work in a way all could understand. He had such a good caring heart.

Grace Gorrell - May 30 at 09:56 AM

UC

“ Universal Leaf Tobacco Company purchased the Simply Elegant Spathiphyllum for the family of Dr. Robert Courtney Pearce.



Universal Leaf Tobacco Company - May 30 at 01:15 AM