



David Booth Beers

October 19, 1935 - April 3, 2022

David Booth Beers, Chancellor to four Presiding Bishops of The Episcopal Church, has died at age 86 after a short illness.

Beers was a dynamic Washington, DC lawyer, a longtime professor of Latin and Greek, a tireless supporter and board member at numerous schools and charitable organizations, and an energetic father of five. In 1988, Beers became an enthusiastic part-time resident of Lewes, Delaware.

In the early 2000s, Beers was the leading architect of The Episcopal Church's nationwide legal strategy to protect assets donated by generations of Episcopalians from dissenters who were unhappy with the Church's ordination of an openly gay, partnered Bishop and the election of its first female Presiding Bishop. The Church's legal strategy, which Beers executed alongside Episcopal chancellors from around the U.S., resulted in the saving of hundreds of millions of dollars in assets for the denomination.

"Over his many years of service, David's knowledge of civil and church law made his advice and counsel invaluable," said the Right Reverend Frank T. Griswold, the Church's 25th Presiding Bishop. "Given his reputation for evenness in handling difficult and sometimes emotionally fraught situations, Bishops and other members of the clergy turned to him frequently and were never turned away. At the same time, chancellors serving other bishops sought his counsel, and, with his encouragement, established a network of their own. The health of the church as a whole, in its fidelity to the Gospel, lay at the heart of what can only be called David's ministry."

Beers was born and raised in New Haven, Connecticut. His father, William Leslie Beers, practiced law at Beers & Beers with his own father in New Haven, and later served as Connecticut's Attorney General. David Beers earned a Bachelor's degree in Classics and Modern Languages at Trinity College, where he was active on the tennis and fencing teams and a member of St. Anthony Hall. He went on to earn two degrees simultaneously at the University of California at Berkeley, one in Law and another in Latin. After clerking

for U.S. District Judge Fred Kunzel in Southern California, he joined the Washington, DC law practice of Ely, Duncan & Bennett, in 1961. Just two years later he was recruited to join the boutique Washington law firm of Shea & Gardner, where he flourished, serving as partner for many years. In 2004, Shea & Gardner became a part of the international firm Goodwin Procter (now Goodwin Law). Beers served as Counsel at Goodwin into 2022.

In addition to practicing law, Beers was a popular part-time professor of Classics at George Washington University for 30 years. He taught courses in Latin and Greek at all levels. In 1977, Beers was asked by the Right Reverend John T. Walker, Bishop of the Episcopal Diocese of Washington, to become his Chancellor. The two became the closest of colleagues and friends, and worked together until Walker's sudden death in 1989. Two years later, Beers was called to serve as Chancellor to the Right Reverend Edmond L. Browning, then Presiding Bishop of The Episcopal Church. Following Browning's retirement, Beers served as Chancellor to three successive Presiding Bishops: Bishop Griswold, the Right Reverend Katharine Jefferts Schori, and the Most Reverend Michael Bruce Curry, who currently serves as Presiding Bishop. Beers retired as Chancellor in 2019.

"David had a deep love for the Episcopal Church, and was one of its most faithful and selfless servants. He was a no stranger to the vagaries and contradictions he frequently had to confront in his role as Chancellor," reflected Bishop Griswold.

"One of David's gifts that I most appreciated," Bishop Griswold went on, "was his pastoral sensitivity, and, at the same time an equally clear sense of what a particular situation required. There were times when he would gently pull me back from acting with what he perceived as undue severity, and there were occasions when, with equal care, he would confront my reluctance and urge me to act decisively. He also had a wonderful sense of humor, and could laugh with compassion at the ambiguities and contradictions of our humanity."

Beers was a passionate member of the Board of Trustees of Virginia Theological Seminary and of St. Andrew's School; co-founder and member of the Board of Governors at the Bishop John T. Walker School for Boys; a longtime member of St. Peter's Church in Lewes, Delaware; and former vestry member and Senior Warden at St. Patrick's Episcopal Church, Washington, D.C., where he was a parishioner for over 50 years.

Beers was married to Margaret Graham Beers, whom he met in 1951, when he was just 15.

Together they raised five children: David III, Paul, Anthony, James, and Alexandra. In

addition to his wife and children, Beers is survived by his sister, Mary Jane Cooper, and brother-in-law, retired Major General William E. Cooper; a son-in-law, David Shenk; two daughters-in-law, Carol Beers and Marian Beers; his grandchildren, Parker, Daphne, Charlotte, David IV, Natalie, Jackson, Samuel, Lucy, and Henry; and a great-grandson, Charlie.

A funeral service will be held on Saturday, April 9, 3:00pm, at St. Patrick's Episcopal Church,
4700 Whitehaven Parkway, Washington, DC.

Donations in memory of David Booth Beers may be made to
Bishop John T. Walker School for Boys: bishopwalkerschool.org.

Please sign Beers Life Memorial guestbook located on this site.

**FLORIST NOTE: PLEASE HAVE ALL FLORAL ARRANGEMENTS DELIVERED
DIRECTLY TO ST. PATRICK'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH BY 2 PM ON SATURDAY, APRIL
9, 2022.**

Events

APR **Funeral Service** 03:00PM

9
St. Patrick's Episcopal Church
4700 Whitehaven Parkway, Washington, DC, US, 20007

Comments



“ I've known "Big David" all my life. He was a force to be reckoned with. He loved his family and always livened any event he attended. He was fun, eccentric (as are so many Beers!) and brilliant. His influence was far reaching, and I ran into this on business trip in Florida years ago when I heard a gentleman calling out to me "Cousin Joanne!" Earl and I were sorry to miss his funeral to express our condolences in person. We will miss him, and our sincere sympathies go to his entire family.

Joanne Beers - April 13 at 12:47 PM



“ Thanks for that Jo! Peace and love,
Tony Beers

Tony Beers - June 05 at 10:48 PM



“ It's hard to overstate the beneficial impact David has had on our lives. Beyond stepping up to help us when we really needed a hand, he's also been something of a role model for me, both professionally and personally. I'm extremely fortunate to have had his love, guidance, and help.

Our hearts go out to the Beers family.

Charley Carpenter - April 12 at 11:33 AM



“ Florist Choice Bouquet was purchased for the family of David Booth Beers.



April 08 at 10:53 PM



“ Peaceful White Lilies Basket was purchased for the family of David Booth Beers.



April 08 at 04:27 PM



“ I had the pleasure of working as David's assistant for many years and I learned a lot from him and have many fond memories of his stories and endearing qualities. I will never forget my "walk by" interview where he walked up to my desk, asked me if I minded working for an old-fashioned attorney, and if I minded driving him around. I told him my sense of direction was not the best, so he would have to direct me as I was driving. Then in a flash, he was gone as David was always on the move. Well, I got the job. In the coming years, as I drove him around DC he gave me history lessons on the layout of DC streets and infrastructure to help me understand where I was at all times. Occasionally, I had to drive his car to BWI airport and leave it in the parking garage for him. One of those times, I called him and said "I have good news and bad news." He said, "Give me the good news first." I told him his car was at the airport. He replied, "And the bad news?" I then had to tell him I hit a cement pole in the parking garage. He asked if I was OK and then said, "Is it drivable?" When I told him I was fine and he could drive the car, he said "No worries then." And we never spoke of it again. David was always forgiving and understanding. I will miss him. I extend my sympathies to his friends and family.

Debbie Van Kirk - April 07 at 10:34 PM



“ David was always so kind to me and my family over the years. A special moment was a chance meeting we had at the Washington cathedral. I was showing the cathedral to my older brother, Val Thomas, an architect who lives in Seattle, when we encountered David. He immediately proposed to arrange for him a proper tour of the building with the Clerk of the Works. What followed was exactly that...a tour from the bowels to the rafters that my brother remembers and raves about to this day. On another occasion our Swedish friends were in town for a musical concert at St Patrick's...David suggested we treat them to a beach weekend at his wonderful beach house in Lewes, Delaware ...three days of unforgettable magic ensued on Delaware Bay. Finally, David was a fan of my husband's piano music...knowing he was going to miss his next recital bc of his upcoming knee surgery, he came early to his play through at the Westchester so he would not miss the music. My heart is heavy for the loss of this very unique man of God's creation. What a gift he was to us all! Rest in Peace David! We love you! JoLynne Thomas Hough and Louis Orphanos

JoLynne Thomas Hough - April 07 at 01:35 PM



“ Emerald Garden Basket was purchased for the family of David Booth Beers.



April 07 at 07:38 AM



“ David had a great dry sense of humor... My wife Debbie Van Kirk worked for David for the last 17 yrs as his assistant at Goodwin. I worked a Latham and Watkins down the street and she asked to stop by one afternoon so she could introduce me. I walked in his office, we shook hands and he said " So you're the one that has to put up with her"(referring to Debbie) I said "Absolutely 24/7", he paused and gave me a smiling stare and said laughingly "Not quite 24/7" lol. That was David!

Fred Van Kirk - April 06 at 03:17 PM



“ A wonderful, delightful man whose love for the Church and his service to its leaders will be felt for many years to come. I greatly cherished the time I spent with him.

Steve - April 08 at 12:17 AM



“ Working with David at the law firms of Shea and Gardner and Goodwin Proctor for many years was truly a privilege. A man of unmatched integrity with a wonderful sense of humor, David always “came through” for those in need both in his professional and private lives. He will be sorely missed by all who knew him.

Sandra Varney

Sandra Varney - April 08 at 05:48 PM