



The Rev. Doctor John W. Dean

October 19, 1933 - April 12, 2020

The Rev. Dr. John W. Dean, 86, peacefully departed this life on Easter Sunday, April 12, 2020, at Delaware Hospice Center, Milford, with family present.

Born in Pittsburgh Pa, on October 19, 1933 to the late Howard and Nettie Dean, he grew up in Connellsville, Pa. where he had a paper route. While attending Connellsville High School he began dabbling in photography, becoming the yearbook photographer during his junior and senior year, graduating in 1951.

John graduated from Washington & Jefferson College in 1955 with a major in History and Minors in Philosophy and Psychology.

After attending Dallas Theological Seminary for one year, he taught English at Connellsville Jr. High for the 1956-57 school year. During this time, he met the former Lillian Lindquist, and after a whirlwind 8-month engagement, they were married on August 23, 1957. A relationship that lasted 57 years until her passing in 2014.

Newly married, he and Lil moved to New York where he attended New York Biblical Seminary, Graduating in 1960. He went on to receive a Masters in Theology from Princeton Theological Seminary in 1966 and a Doctorate in Ministry with a concentration in Spiritual Formation in 1993.

Once ordained, he began his pastoral career as the Associate pastor of the Presbyterian Church in Glenolden Pa. It was here he began his first youth ministry, developing many friendships that would be sustained throughout his lifetime.

In 1965, wanting a church of his own and Lil wanting a beach town, he accepted the call to Westminster Presbyterian Church in Rehoboth Beach. Not your ordinary minister, he could often be seen riding a motorcycle around town – often, to the dismay of his wife, with his 2-year-old son riding with him! He chose to join the Rehoboth Beach Volunteer Fire Company, where he was also on the ambulance squad, instead of the traditional service

organizations favored by most ministers of the day.

He became active in several youth organizations in Rehoboth resulting in having the 1968 Rehoboth Seahawk yearbook dedicated to him. That same year, when the school would not sponsor a senior trip – he along with a few others did.

With the proliferation of drug use in the early 1970's, he worked to set up a drug rehabilitation program for the state in Sussex County, and was the first director, working part time for several years until such time as a full-time director was needed. During this era, he also taught an occasional class at Wesley College in Dover.

He started a radio ministry to reach those without a church. Those who followed his radio program thought of him as “their” minister, often calling for weddings, funerals or a just a friendly ear to listen.

During his years in Rehoboth he could often be found having coffee with friends at such locations as Snyder's, The Avenue Restaurant, McDonalds, the B & E, Rehoboth Pharmacy, Mr. Donut, and The Captains Table – to name a few. In retirement he continued this legacy at The Hollywood Grill in Wilmington.

In the New Castle Presbytery, he served as the chairperson of the ministerial relations committee and the committee on Ministry. He also served on the board of the Spear Trust. As a member of the Synod of the Piedmont of the Presbyterian Church, he served as Stated Clerk, Vice Moderator and then Moderator. Throughout his ministry he championed ordaining ministers regardless of gender or sexual orientation.

He was a member of the Cape Henlopen School Board from 1981-1987, serving two terms as president.

Throughout the 1990's, Rev. Dean served the Rehoboth Beach Police Department as it's Chaplain.

Realizing his church of 35 years needed a change, he retired in 2000 and moved to Wilmington to continue his ministry as an interim minister. For the next 11 years he would serve as interim minister at First & Central Presbyterian Church, Wilmington; Easton Presbyterian Church; Newark Presbyterian Church; and Community Presbyterian Church, Wilmington.

Remaining true to his Western Pennsylvania roots he was a diehard Steelers fan. He also

enjoyed attending NASCAR races – arranging two weeks of vacation each year around the two races held in Dover. A voracious reader, he often kept 6 or 7 books going concurrently. Additionally, he enjoyed new cars and fine writing utensils, trains and model railroading as well as sitting quietly watching people go by.

Above all, the highlight of his life was spending time with his wife, children and grandchildren.

In addition to his wife and parents, Rev. Dean was pre-deceased by his brothers-in-law Richard T. Stephens and Arthur Lindquist and his sister-in-law Jeannie Lindquist.

He is survived by his son, John W. Dean II (Elisabeth) of Milton, De; his daughter Elizabeth Thompson (Michael) of Frederick, Md; and his grandchildren, John W. Dean III, Micaela G. Thompson, Cosette N. Thompson, and Christopher G. Dean.

Additionally, as an only child, he is survived by his brothers-in-law and sisters-in-law whom he regarded as his own siblings: James Lindquist, Lucile Stephens, of Oil City, Pa; Judy and Ronnie Sandrock, of Laurinburg NC; and Bob and Vickie Confer, of Seneca, Pa as well as 14 nieces and nephews.

The family would like to express their sincere appreciation to Kentmere Rehabilitation and Healthcare in Wilmington for the excellent care they provided Rev. Dean for the past three years.

In lieu of flowers the family request that contributions be made to either Westminster Presbyterian Church in Rehoboth Beach or to Kentmere Rehabilitation and Healthcare in Wilmington.

Due to the Corona Virus Pandemic burial will be held privately with the family at Coolspring Presbyterian Church Cemetery. A public celebration of his life will be announced at a date in the future.

Please sign the online tribute page at this site.

Comments



“ Rev. Dean married my husband and me some 35 years ago. He was a great friend to our entire family and will be extremely missed. Blessings to all of the family he left behind. Deborah and Ben Newell, Virginia Beach

deborah newell - April 22, 2020 at 09:35 PM



“ I have wonderful memories of attending Westminster Presbyterian Church during my teen years with my parents Tom & Lois Butterly. Rev. Dean performed our wedding on Jan 17, 1981 and we are still married. Our love and sympathy to Rev. Dean's family.

Beth & Mike Garvilla



Beth Garvilla - April 20, 2020 at 04:11 PM



“ My parents loved sitting on the beach on Norfolk St. with your parents. My father was NOT a religious man by any means, and for some crazy reason he and your dad really hit it off. They got quite a kick out of teasing each other and enjoyed lots of good laughs with their good-natured ribbing. My Catholic husband agreed to marry me in the Presbyterian church because of my parents' friendship with your father. One of my favorite photos from our rehearsal dinner (33 years ago) is of your father laughing with that twinkle in his eyes. You must have so many wonderful memories to hold onto. Our thoughts are with you. Sending hugs...Patti (Price) Hocker & Mark Hocker

Patricia Hocker - April 18, 2020 at 09:31 PM



“ So sorry can't be there to give a hug to you and Elizabeth. Your father and mother were one of my first friends in Rehoboth Elementary School in 1981. You have many precious memories of what good parents look like. Know that not in person but in thoughts and prayers I am there. Truly, Sara Wilkinson

Sara Wilkinson - April 18, 2020 at 11:31 AM



“ Rev. Dean married my husband and I in our summer home 46 years ago on April 11. He was a very kind person and put us at ease. Thinking of his family with sympathy. Paul and Lucinda Johnson

Lucinda Johnson - April 16, 2020 at 09:32 PM



“ When in Rehoboth, I attended Westminster Presby; my church and pastor away from home!



Linda P. - April 16, 2020 at 03:45 PM



“ He was such a caring person. Prayers to the family. Carol Lingo



Carollingo - April 15, 2020 at 01:12 PM



“ I had the pleasure to work with Rev. Dean when he was on the Cape Henlopen School Board years ago. He was an excellent school board member who always had a big smile and a hearty laugh to go with it! He ran a good school board meeting and handled 'issues' in a firm and fair way. He was just a very nice guy and had the respect of all in the room. I have nothing but wonderful memories of him for the years he was on the Cape board of education.

Dr. Gary D. Wray
Cape Henlopen School District
Teacher/Admin 1974-1995

Gary Wray - April 15, 2020 at 01:12 PM



“ I got an impulse to attend church in 1985 after many years without and the Rev. Dean drew me right in. It's been a wonderful ride ever since. Thank you John.

Thurlow Cunliffe - April 15, 2020 at 12:55 PM



“ To the Dean family. John created an unforgettable wedding ceremony for us in 1997 and we are so thankful he counseled us and started our family on its journey. His witness for Christ for us in those early days gave and gives fruit to this day. We can only imagine how many lives he has touched. Our prayer for comfort in the coming days. Russ & Bonnie Meredith Rehoboth (& Newark) Delaware

Russ & Bonnie Meredith - April 15, 2020 at 12:22 PM



“ I remember John and the crew at the captains table, where they had their special table in the back of the restaurant. Depending on my section that day I would have the pleasure to wait on them, Doris would always come out to say Hello! He was a special man always made you smile! so miss those days:(Dawn Schwartz

Dawn Schwartz - April 15, 2020 at 08:29 AM



“ A wonderful caring man. Always a smile..Sending Prayers for his family. Rest in Peace . Lisa and Joey (your McDonalds family)

Lisa and Joey Muzzi - April 14, 2020 at 11:24 PM



“ You have my deepest sympathy.



Dr. Doris Person - April 14, 2020 at 10:18 PM



“ To the Dean family;
Rev Dean was a man who will never be forgotten! I remember he would come in to Quillen's Hdw and tell jokes(clean ones)and was always in a happy mood.He will be missed. Donna

Donna - April 14, 2020 at 06:46 PM



“ My sincere sympathy to John's family. I remember him fondly when I worked at Browseabout Books in Rehoboth Beach. He had a wonderful sense of humor and I enjoyed having conversations with him.

Jody Barbarulo

Jody Barbarulo - April 14, 2020 at 02:49 PM



“ I pray the love of God enfolds you during your journey through grief. I send you thoughts of comfort.” Wow, where did you begin to share a memory for a man so beloved by all. I remember meeting your dad at my first open house at RJHS and knowing from that moment on that he was a “no nonsense” guy who expected his children and the students to “do right”. Although we weren’t friends, I always knew your dad would be there if I needed a helping hand and I learned later in life when you became my colleague where you got your helping ways from. The world is a better place because of Rev. Dean. God Bless You. John Myers

john myers - April 14, 2020 at 01:24 PM



“ How fitting that John should pass away at the end of Easter Sunday. He made an impressive mark on the town of Rehoboth during his service at Westminster Presbyterian Church. My sympathy is shared by many who knew him. Betty Carnahan

Betty Carnahan - April 16, 2020 at 02:20 PM