



William "Bill" Harry Rader

March 17, 2019

William "Bill" Harry Rader of Dauphin, PA died Sunday morning, March 17, 2019 at Homestead Village in Lancaster, PA. Bill Rader, known by many as the longtime pastor of St. Johns UCC in Boalsburg, PA and The Shared Ministry UCC/UMC in Harrisburg, PA, was active from early on in the civil rights movement, and continued to fight against racial discrimination and social inequality until his death. With a PhD in theology and a passion for treating people fairly formed growing up serving all comers in "Rader's Market" grocery in Allentown, Bill brought a combination of faith, intellect and love of serving others to his local congregations and to the larger church and community. Some may also remember Bill as one part of the Rader Brothers Trumpet Trio.

Born in Allentown on July 28, 1929 to Earl Franklin Rader and Edna Alma Rader (nee Reitz), Bill graduated from Allentown High School. After graduation from Franklin and Marshall College, where he was awarded the Williamson Medal, he completed a Masters of Divinity at Lancaster Theological Seminary. He later received a Doctorate of Theology from the University of Basel, Switzerland, where he studied under theologians Karl Barth and Oscar Cullman. His PhD thesis, published in 1978 and titled "The Church and Racial Hostility", was based on Ephesians 2:14 ("For Christ is our peace, who has made us both one, and has broken down the dividing wall of hostility").

In 1952, Bill was the first from his seminary to participate in a one-year exchange program in Oxford, PA at Lincoln University, a Historically Black University. At the end of his time at Lincoln, Bill was invited to serve as pastor of an African American congregation in Paragould, Arkansas for the summer months of 1953. Thereafter, while working as a youth pastor in a low-income neighborhood in Cincinnati, OH, Bill met Clara Ann McKee, who joined his summer community outreach team, and they married in 1963. Bill then served as an assistant pastor at Christ United Church of Christ (UCC) in Elizabethtown, PA and as an instructor at Lancaster Theological Seminary. In 1964, Bill worked on forming a human rights commission in the area to combat racial discrimination in public school hiring, taking a stand for racial justice that resulted in him losing his job as a pastor in Elizabethtown. A recent talk Bill gave on his experiences in the civil rights movement is online here: <https://vimeo.com/241110700>.

After living in Basel from 1967 to 1970, Bill and Clara began serving local churches and church conferences for more than 40 years. Bill served from 1970 to 1992 as pastor of St. John's UCC in Boalsburg, PA and from 1992 to 1998 as pastor of The Shared Ministry, a UCC/United Methodist congregation known for urban out-reach in the Allison Hill neighborhood of Harrisburg. He stayed very active in the wider church after retirement both as a pastor and as a member of several committees of Penn Central Conference (UCC). Bill also continued his theological work by translating German scholarly works, including most notably "Drawn to Freedom: Christian Faith Today in Conversation" written by his friend and Karl Barth's biographer, Prof. Eberhard Busch. Bill practiced what he preached and was a responsible citizen of his country and of the world. He never lost his passion for peace and justice, continuing to take an active part in recent political campaigns and protests.

In 2004, Bill and his family founded Freedom Farm Community, a Christian nonprofit organization in Mount Hope, NY. Freedom Farm shares fresh produce with people who are hungry and provides a vibrant place for ministry with young people from surrounding areas such as the South Bronx and Middletown, NY who come to take part in organic farming.

Beyond these roles and experiences, Bill was known for the person he was -- strong, kind, warm, generous, thoughtful, purposeful and always bearing the broadest of smiles. Bill was happiest enjoying the fellowship of others, reading theology books, playing his trumpet or eating a slice of lemon sponge pie. He had a passion for singing and music, whether playing with his two brothers in the Rader Brothers Trumpet Trio, using his deep bass to sing "Were You There" for Good Friday service, singing or playing in countless choirs and orchestras, or on tour (at age 86!) with Singing City in Soweto, South Africa. Bill deeply loved (and struggled for 7 years to overcome the loss of) his best friend and late wife of 49 years, Clara. In the years before her death in 2012, they could be seen every day walking hand-in-hand along the towpath beside the Susquehanna River near their home in Dauphin PA.

In his final hours, Bill was surrounded by his family, and when the five grand-kids arrived and huddled around him in his small shared room, he had just one word along with his big smile: "Wow."

Bill is survived by his two children, Ben Rader (Elke) of Brooklyn, NY and Ann Rader (Edgar) of Middletown, NY; his two brothers, Arlo Rader (Betty) of Harrisburg, PA, and Mark Rader (Alice) of Philadelphia, PA; his sister Linda Slocum (Harold) of Oberlin, OH; his sisters-in-law Kay Rader and Martha McKee Keyser; along with five grandchildren: Joel, Emele, Luke, Josiah, and Micah; and 13 nephews and nieces. He was preceded in death by his wife Clara Ann McKee Rader, his brother Glenn Rader, and his sister-in-law Janet

Rader.

A Memorial Service will be held on Saturday, April 6, 2019 at 12:30 p.m. at Lancaster Theological Seminary in the Santee Chapel, 555 West James Street, Lancaster, PA 17603.

Donations in Bill's memory may be made to Lancaster Theological Seminary, 555 W. James St, Lancaster PA 17603 (either by general donation or to "The Reverends Glenn and William Rader Memorial Scholarship Fund") and/or to Freedom Farm Community, 2407 Mt Hope Road, Middletown NY 10940 (www.freedomfarmcommunity.org).

Previous Events

Memorial Service

APR 6. 12:30 PM (ET)

Lancaster Theological Seminary
555 W. James Street
Lancaster, PA 17603

Tribute Wall



“ *The Groffs Family Funeral and Cremation Services Inc. created a Tribute Video in memory of William "Bill" Harry Rader*



The Groffs Family Funeral and Cremation Services Inc - April 04, 2019 at 05:37 PM



“ *William "Bill" Harry Rader*

October 22, 2023 at 11:34 PM



“ *316 files added to the album LifeTributes*



The Groffs Family Funeral and Cremation Services Inc - April 04, 2019 at 03:50 PM

MM

“ Dear Ben and Ann and families,
Your father was a wonderful and marvelous person. He shared good news (The Good News) in a joyful, sensitive and caring way. He had a quiet charisma. He was a genuine servant of Christ, and his ministry was a servant ministry. He touched many lives in a positive way. We were privileged to have known him and your mother also. May you be surrounded by much love now, by rich and precious memories, and by the assurances of God's eternal care. Peace be with you. Mark and Meta Meckstroth, Huntingdon, PA

Mark Meckstroth - April 03, 2019 at 04:29 PM

BM

“ Dear Ben and Ann,
I am so sorry to Read of your dad's passing. I won't be able to be at the service on Saturday, but you all will be in my prayers and thoughts. Your dad was an amazing person and always so calm and loving in his thoughts and actions. A true man of God!

I am sad not to see him or his brother again (hopefully some day). Since I didn't have either of your addresses I needed to let you know my thoughts.

Trusting you and your families are doing well and know how much your dad was loved and respected.

Blessings and love, Bev Moran

Beverly K Moran - March 31, 2019 at 07:20 PM

BR

“ 1 file added to the album Bill Rader



Ben Rader - March 28, 2019 at 08:05 PM

BR

“ 3 files added to the album Bill Rader



Ben Rader - March 28, 2019 at 08:03 PM

DF

“ *I was privileged to know Bill through Mensch Mill and the Ventures program. His smile and warmth were contagious. Enjoyed many conversations with Bill and was amazed by the many adventures of his life and the causes he championed.*

The music from Bill and his trumpet graced the mornings at Mariawald during our retreats. I am so glad I had the opportunity to meet and know Bill.

Donna Fried - March 26, 2019 at 08:26 PM



“ Wow! Bill was a great translator of German / English: But he was a master at translating the Bible into LIFE! Bill was a graduate of Oasis Ministries "Spiritual Direction for Spiritual Guides" program. Bill and Clara were dear friends and mentors for Fredrika and me. Blessings and prayers for Ben and Elke, Ann and Edgar and families; Mark and Arlo and families.

Kent Ira Groff, Denver, CO

kentiragroff@comcast.net www.LinkYourSpirituality.com www.oasismin.org

Kent Groff - March 25, 2019 at 07:46 PM

GL

“ This is especially for Ann. Remembering our time together on the farm outside of Lewisburg, Pa., walking amongst the chickens and pine trees on the hillside-3 years ago? More recently, your Dad listenend in when we had our Creation Justice morning meetings at the PCC office. And he would always write a response to any greetings sent his way. I will think of his actions and appreciations often. Also, the next time I have a slice of lemon sponge pie! Gail Landers

P.S. Our next scheduled PCC Board meeting is also April 6th in Camp Hill.

gail landers - March 25, 2019 at 02:06 PM

DP

“ I will treasure Bill Rader as a dear colleague and friend on the UEK-UCC partnership committee with our German partner churches in the Rhineland and Berlin-Brandenburg. Bill's kindness, gentleness, and commitment to peace will stay with me. In and through Bill I could see the very heart of God whom I thank for him!

Dietmar Plajer - March 25, 2019 at 01:39 PM

JL

“ Rest in Peace Bill. You were truly a peacemaker for all and I was honored to have worked as your secretary at St. John's in Boalsburg and have you as a pastor for our children n their youth. Your singing was amazing and trumpet playing were amazing.
Judy and John Levers
Florida

Judith Levers - March 24, 2019 at 01:53 PM

SS

“ Pastor Rader & his wife generously shared the grounds of their cottage along the Susquehanna River in Dauphin with our annual summer day-campers from Shared Ministries' tutoring program for several years. From the campfire cooking to science projects and crafts, I will never forget the wonderment & delight in those kids faces. Peace & blessings to the family. Sue Shebosky, Harrisburg, PA

Sue Shebosky - March 24, 2019 at 11:41 AM

JG

“ Or family has good memories of Bill Rader from St. John's UCC Boalsburg. We are very sorry for your loss and will pray for your family. Alice, John, Eric Gibble



John and Alice Gibble - March 24, 2019 at 11:16 AM

AD

“ All of us who knew him, know that the world is a better place because Bill was in it. I'm so grateful that Bill was my pastor at the Shared Ministry and that I got to see first-hand how his kindness and strength impacted others. My heart is with the family.

Ann Van Dyke - March 23, 2019 at 03:27 PM