



Rev. Richard Benke

March 30, 1937 - July 21, 2019

MORTON – Rev. Richard Benke, 82, of Morton, passed away Sunday, July 21, 2019 at OSF St. Francis Medical Center in Peoria.

Born on March 30, 1937 in Milwaukee, WI, Richard was the son of George and Venus (Moore) Benke. While preparing to become a pastor at Concordia Seminary in St. Louis, MO, Richard met Carlee Mutschink, a nurse in training at Lutheran School of Nursing. He and Carlee married on November 26, 1961 in New Braunfels, TX.

Richard is survived by his wife Carlee Benke of Morton; one daughter, Dawn (Joel) Conrad of Haymarket, VA; one son, Mark (Nicole) Benke of Katy, TX; four grandchildren, Kate Benke, Rick Benke, Joshua Conrad, Andrew Benke; one sister, Georgene Kerr of Castle Hayne, NC; and his mother-in-law Viola Mutschink of Katy, TX.

He was preceded in death by one son, Steven Benke.

Richard began his ministerial career in 1962. He was ordained as Assistant Pastor at Holy Cross Lutheran Church, Racine, WI, and also served as Head of the Religion Dept at Racine Lutheran High School. While at Racine LHS, he also coached football and girls basketball and became a guidance counselor.

In 1970, Richard moved his family to Maryland when he accepted a call to Baltimore Lutheran High School, again as Head of the Religion Dept. While there, he accepted the additional responsibilities of Girls Basketball Coach, fundraising to build a student activity center, and Dean of Students.

In 1980, he accepted a call to Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, MO, to serve as Director of Admissions and Ministerial Recruitment. Professor, Asst. Dean of Students, and Assistant Coach for basketball were further responsibilities he took on.

Pastor Benke returned to parish ministry in 1985 when called as Senior Pastor to St. John's Lutheran Church in East Moline, IL. Over his 10 years there, he supervised 9 vicars from the seminary and joined the Civil Air Patrol, where he achieved the rank of Major. His extensive work in local hospitals led to an invitation to train other pastors how to handle emergencies.

Pastor Benke began serving at his final parish in 1995 at Bethel Lutheran Church. A stroke forced him to retire early in March 2002, after which he did vacancy preaching in area congregations, coached 3 seasons of basketball at Bethel Lutheran School, and

served as school librarian for 3 years.

Upon moving to a newly-built assisted living center, he was elected to serve as the first president of the Resident Council and was serving a second term when his health forced him to step down.

Richard (aka Rich, Dick, Dad, Pastor) will be remembered as a devoted son; loving husband and spiritual leader of his family; caring, involved, and wise father; natural leader; gifted preacher, teacher, and mentor; and a lifelong learner. His personal enjoyments included avid reading, playing cards and board games, playing and teaching chess, and being a loyal Green Bay Packers fan. He was trying his hand at painting when his health decline accelerated.

Visitation will be Monday, July 29, 2019, from 5-7 p.m., at Bethel Lutheran Church in Morton. A memorial service will be held at the church on Tuesday, July 30, 2019 at 10:30 a.m., with Rev. Jeff Anderson officiating.

Memorials may be made to Bethel Lutheran Church in Morton or Concordia Seminary in St. Louis, MO.

To leave an online condolence for the family, visit www.knappjohnson.com.

Events

JUL Visitation 05:00PM - 07:00PM

29

Bethel Lutheran Church

325 E. Queenwood Road, Morton, IL, US, 61550

JUL Service 10:30AM

30

Bethel Lutheran Church

325 E. Queenwood Road, Morton, IL, US, 61550

Comments



“ Pastor Behnke and Carla played a very significant roll in Alemash's and my integration to the American culture and society. I was struggling with the English language, my wife, Alemash, spoke no English during my vicarage year, 1989-1990. Pastor Benke and Carla, however, took an exceptional interest in the two of us. Their investment is evident in the work that we have been able to do by God's grace. To mention a few:

1. I served Zion Lutheran Church of Holland, MI, as well as any new pastor could from 1991-1995 because of the teaching of Pastor Benke
2. More than 183 LCMS congregations were serving African immigrants in 2010. This is an increase in ministry to African Immigrants from 4 groups in 1995 when I began my ministry as a missionary at large in the Southeastern District in 1995 to 183 congregations in 2010.
3. I was involved in the conceptual development and implementation of the Ethnic Immigrant Institute of Theology (EIIT). The EIIT also became an inspiration for the beginning of the Specific Ministry Pastor distance theological education leading to ordination.
4. I served the LCMS as the director of urban and specialized missions, church planting, and EIIT at different times.
5. I am currently serving as the Mission and Ministry Facilitator, Area B of the Texas District-LCMS.

Not in my wildest dream did I ever think that I would be involved in very significant ministries as I have and continue to do in the LCMS. God had a perfect plan for me, and he determined to bring faithful servants Like Pastor Benke to guide it. Pastor Benke and Carla saw something in us, and they invested in it selflessly.

We mourn his death with all of you as we also rejoice his presence in the arms of Jesus. Well done good and faithful servant!

Yohannes and Alemash Mengsteab

Yohannes Mengsteab - July 30 at 01:09 PM



“ The Rev. Richard Benke was my friend and mentor for 44 years, godfather of my youngest child, and the man most responsible for my following the Lord's call into pastoral ministry. He drove 1500 miles to perform my wedding. Scores of times Karen and I would be faced with touchy problems or difficult decisions and we would ask ourselves, "What would Dick and Carlee do?"

Thank You, Father, for giving me Dick Benke to know and love on this earthly pilgrimage.

Greg Mech

Rev Gregory Mech - July 28 at 05:38 PM



“ Pastor Benke was a vital link in my personal spiritual journey. I will always respect him for the faith and friendship he shared. I enjoyed the times my husband and I spent in his Bible study and the fun of working in the school library with him. He was sincere in his belief and it came through to all of us. Thank you Pastor and rest in peace. Sandra and Phillip Hess.

Sandra Hess - July 26 at 10:30 PM



“ I always looked forward to hear Pastor's messages over the years. His words inspired me and my dear wife Ruth. Pastor passed on the same day as Ruth July 21, 2012'

Bob Goggins - July 25 at 05:01 PM



“ Pastor Behnke taught me so much and I never got to thank him in a manner that I should have. I have several of his recordings that I listen too from time to time. Thanks for your service, Pastor. Signed a John Colclasure St. Paul Lutheran Church Lexington, Illinois

john colclasure - July 26 at 02:48 PM



“ Pastor Behnke was a wonderful mentor for initiating evangelistic ministry. He trained Mary Miller and me, who has also joined the Lord to make calls and share the Good News of our Savior. Many Sunday nights were devoted to making these calls. Of course, we grew spiritually far more then any person we called on. Yet many people were thankful we called on them. I personally enjoyed being around the family. They were innovative about so many things, including how they celebrated Christmas. Blessings to the family. May you live on in the knowledge that he served his Lord and brought many to the knowledge of the truth. Ralph Grotelueschen

Ralph D Grotelueschen - July 29 at 11:17 PM