

WILLIAM A DAVIS 1925-2018

The Reverend William A. Davis, a retired Lutheran minister who worked to further the Church's role in the community, died on December 2, 2018, at home. He was 93. Over nearly a century, Pastor Davis was witness to a changing world, but remained an active and beloved member of the community throughout his time here. Davis lived his life intentionally, a principle that he evidenced to family and friends every day.

Bill Davis was born at home on May 19, 1925, in Parkside Pennsylvania, the youngest of four children. His formative years during the Great Depression instilled in him a strong work ethic he would maintain throughout his life. Despite his family's poverty, Davis sought every available opportunity for education and experience, graduating near the top of his class from Chester High School and proudly earning the designation of Eagle Scout from the Boy Scouts of America. After his high school graduation in 1943, Bill volunteered for the United States Army Air Forces and was commissioned a Second Lieutenant after completing Officer Training. He served in World War II as a navigator for the B-17 and later, as a navigational instructor in Texas through 1946. He learned navigation through "shooting the stars" and maintained a life-long love of the stars and flight.

After his discharge, Bill enrolled at Muhlenberg College in Allentown, Pennsylvania, majoring in Chemistry. While at Muhlenberg, he was a member of various organizations, including Lambda Chi Alpha fraternity and spent summers working at Sun Ship in Chester. He made many lifelong friendships at Muhlenberg, including one classmate with whom he attended games of their beloved Phillies for 62 consecutive years. He also met the love of his life, Irene Dodd of Montclair, NJ, a student at nearby Cedar Crest College, whom he would marry. During his third year at Muhlenberg, Bill said he became "plagued" with the idea of going to seminary, and after much wrestling, made the decision to change his professional focus to becoming a minister. "I blame it on God", he noted. Many years later, Bill served on the Board of Trustees for Muhlenberg, a post he enjoyed holding for 15 years.

Irene and Bill married in August 1950 after their respective graduations. During their courtship, Bill visited and fell in love with Piney Point, Irene's family summer cabin in the Adirondack Mountains. Bill and Irene, and later, their children and beloved dogs, spent time at Piney Point every summer, where they shared a love for family singing, sailing, canoeing, nature walks and hiking Pocomoonshine Mountain. Bill also loved being a handyman, replacing the roof, installing electricity, upgrading plumbing and building a dock, often with the help of friends and family. During the summers between seminary, Bill and Irene served as camp counselors in the Poconos, fostering their outdoor skills and passion.

Bill entered the Lutheran Theological Seminary at Philadelphia in 1950 graduating in 1953 with a Master's Degree in Divinity. After ordination, his first church call was to St. Luke's Lutheran Church in Dublin, Pennsylvania. During his 10 years in Dublin, Bill grew his congregation and had the vision of building a new and larger church. He was instrumental in leading his congregation to the culmination of this vision, a new church, which would win an architectural award from the AIA. During the Dublin years, Bill and Irene's four children, Ellen, Mark, Rebecca and Evan were born. Tragedy struck when

their 6-year old son, Mark, died from a brain tumor during his first-grade year. Bill and Irene established the Mark Davis Library and The Mark Evan Davis Scholarship in honor of their son. Both memorials still exist.

In 1963, Bill accepted a call from St. John's Lutheran Church in Kutztown, Pennsylvania. While in Kutztown, Bill was instrumental in establishing a Lutheran Campus Ministry at Kutztown University and an Interfaith Council, the first ecumenical effort in the local area.

In 1968, the family moved to Phoenixville, Pennsylvania, after Bill accepted a call to St. John's Lutheran Church. Bill would remain at St. John's until his retirement as Pastor Emeritus in 1987. While in Phoenixville, Bill remained committed to deepening ties between the Church and the community based on his belief that if not isolated, the Church could be an effective and meaningful agent of positive change. To that end, Bill was a founder of the Phoenixville Area Community Service (PACS), whose mission is to end poverty in the community by connecting people in need with resources for food, health and financial stability. He also was a member of the Chamber of Commerce and a Director on the Morris Cemetery Board. As in Kutztown, Davis began an Ecumenical Ministry group, the first of its kind in Phoenixville. He also assisted in opening a dialogue to improve race relations in the school system during the sixties. After retirement, Bill and Irene moved to Riddle Village in Media, in late 2001, where Bill was an active and beloved member of the community. He became a member of Reformation Lutheran Church and would serve meals at City Team ministries as well as add his knowledge in Bible Study classes. He also served as a guest preacher at various congregations.

Bill was an avid golfer, playing as he could, even to the end of his life. He was especially proud of shooting his own age (92) last year. As a proponent of daily exercise for health and longevity, he would exercise daily and swim when he could no longer play tennis and racquetball. He loved following Philadelphia sports and the teams of his children and grandchildren. In retirement, he also pursued his passion for investment, taking courses and getting credentialed so he could work independently with Morgan Stanley. He also used his financial skills to provide assistance as a volunteer income tax preparer for those in need. Always wanting to do more, he ran for Commissioner of Elections and served in that capacity for some years. Bill also kept up with all things technical, teaching his peers how to use their smartphones to text and helping others understand how to use the computer.

Bill Davis is survived by his wife of 68 years, Irene Dodd Davis, two daughters and a son: Dr. Ellen Conroy, and her husband, Thomas, Rebecca Prince, and her fiancé, Dr. Robert Funk, and Evan Davis and his wife, Wendy. Bill and Irene have eight grandchildren and two great grandchildren.

A memorial service to celebrate Bill Davis' life will be held on Saturday, December 29, at 11 am at Reformation Lutheran Church in Media, Pennsylvania, with visitation beforehand, beginning at 10 am. A reception will follow the service, in the church hall. All are welcome. In lieu of flowers, donations in Bill's memory are requested to be given to the Mark Evan Davis Scholarship Fund c/o Reformation Lutheran Church; 102 West Rose Tree Road, Media, PA 19063 or to the Chester Children's Chorus c/o Swarthmore College; 500 College Avenue; Swarthmore, PA 19081.