

Rev. Kenneth Beres

1931~ 2023



Rev. Kenneth Beres was ordained to the ministry of the Congregational Church in 1970. He received a Bachelor in Behavioral Sciences, Hartford University, a Master of Divinity, Hartford Seminary, and a Doctorate in Philosophy, Trinity Theological Seminary.

Rev. Beres pastored National Association Churches in Uncasville, Connecticut, Oakville Connecticut, Goshen Connecticut, Montville, Connecticut, Colebrook, Connecticut, as well as congregations in Illinois, Massachusetts.

Kenneth was known for his intellect, creativity, humor, and love for his family.

Rev. Gregory A. Perry

1952 ~ 2024



Reverend Gregory Alexander Perry passed away on January 13, 2024. Greg was a beloved husband, father, grandfather, and for many years a dedicated shepherd to his flock at the Greenville Congregational Church in Norwich, Connecticut. Greg also served as chaplain at the Norwich Hospital.

Rev. Perry's legacy includes his commitment to social justice, reflected in his role as the former President of the Norwich Area Clergy Association, where he organized public vigils and community response events to address major issues such as gun violence.

Reverend Perry was also deeply involved in the NAACP, advocating for racial equality and peace. Greg was integral in organizing events like the annual Martin Luther King Birthday march.

Reverend Perry's life was a beacon of hope and a journey of tireless service and profound empathy for the less fortunate. Greg's sudden departure leaves all who knew him with an enduring inspiration to continue his legacy of community service, unity, and love of neighbor.

Paul Ray

1939 ~ 2024

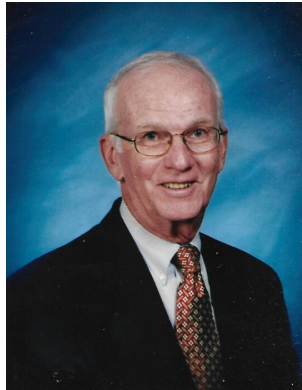


Reverend Paul Newell Ray, a cherished minister and pillar of the Rochester, Wisconsin community, passed away on July 4, 2024. Paul Ray served congregations in Wisconsin, including Dodgeville, Spring Green, Lone Rock, Beloit, and finally, First Congregational Church of Rochester. Paul also pastored churches at Traverse City, Michigan, and in Massachusetts at Yarmouthport, Hanson, and Taunton. In each location, Paul led with a spirit of love, compassion and unwavering faith. His sermons were known for their profound biblical wisdom and ability to connect deeply with parishioners of all ages. His genuine kindness and care for the people he served embodied the true essence of Christian charity.

Paul authored many hymn lyrics, poetry and a book on Genesis, which is soon to be published. He was the author of the hymn, "Christ's Body All Are We." He was known for his jolly laughter, welcoming hugs and his unwavering support for the Green Bay Packers. His joyful spirit and larger than life personality was evident in everything he did, leaving a lasting impression on all who knew him.

James Harmon Walsh

1930 ~ 2024



James Harmon Walsh, passed away peacefully on August 16, 2024. He was 93 years old. Jim graduated from the University of Wisconsin-Madison with a degree in accounting. He served in the U.S. Army for two years. He had a long and distinguished 37-year career with the Arthur Andersen accounting firm, including 25 years as a partner.

Jim was a longtime member of the First Congregational Church of Wauwatosa and served as treasurer of the NACCC for ten years. Known for his warmth, charm, generosity, and sense of humor, Jim was widely respected and admired by all who knew him.

He was a gifted pianist who entertained friends and family throughout his life at various social gatherings. In his retirement years Jim was involved in fundraising projects for several charities.

Rev. Clifford Schutjer

1936 ~ 2024



Rev. Clifford Denton Schutjer passed away peacefully September 16, 2024. Cliff was the minister of the First Congregational Church of Mansfield, Ohio, from January 1961 - March 2007 before he retired after 46 years. He and his wife Pat moved to Arizona in 2012 and to Oklahoma in 2020 to be close to family.

Cliff attended Anderson College in Anderson, Indiana and Union Theological Seminary in NYC.

Cliff served the NACCC in the following capacity:

Congregational Foundation for Theological Studies: 1973–1979

Executive Committee: 1980–1984

Moderator: 1989–90.

Program Committee: 1992–93

Cliff loved his job and his congregation beyond words, embracing every aspect of church life. Cliff was also extremely active in his community. He had a strong creative and musical side. He played trumpet in a local band; sang in church and entertained friends and family on the piano and, on occasion, with his musical saw.

Rev. Charles Sagay

1960 ~ 2025



Rev. Charles Sagay, Director of the Mission School of Hope, in Cameroon, passed away in January 2025. Charles' childhood in Nigeria was characterized by poverty and hopelessness. It was a difficult journey, but due to hard work and the grace of God, he was able to achieve his dream of serving God and giving back to society.

Charles attended Christian Missionary Foundation and All Nations For Christ Bible School in Nigeria, then Vision Student University in Cameroon and finally Dubuque University in Iowa.

Charles had a strong burden for communities of underprivileged people, and to reach the unreachable. The main vision of the Mission of Hope was to bring hope to the hopeless and transform lives by ministering to the whole person as Jesus did, showing God's love by meeting their spiritual needs, feeding the hungry, clothing those who need clothing, providing shelter for the homeless, providing health care for the sick, and education for children.

Deborah Filibrown

1951 ~ 2025



Deborah Ethel Fillebrown, aged 73, passed away surrounded by her family after a short illness on February 19th, 2025.

Deborah grew up in Massachusetts where she met her husband, the late Rev. Bill Fillebrown. They were married 44 years. Deborah served as a pastor's wife with Bill in Rochester, MA, Huntington Park, CA, Randolph, NJ, Braintree, and then Chiltonville, MA.

Deborah was involved in several Congregational Christian Church organizations on the regional, national and international levels. She loved to travel. She enjoyed reading a wide variety of books ranging from theology to murder mysteries. She treasured fellowship and conversation with all of her friends.

William A. “Bill” Barnes

1931~ 2025



William A. “Bill” Barnes, age 93, passed away peacefully at home in Plainfield, IL on March 14, 2025.

Bill and his wife Barbara were charter members of Plymouth Congregational Church, Plainfield, where Bill served faithfully as a Trustee, a delegate to the National Association of Congregational Christian Churches, chairman of the NACCC Financial board, and he played a key role in church growth.

Bill also devoted much of his life to the Plainfield Fire District. Beginning as a volunteer firefighter in 1955, he later served as a Trustee for many years, helping guide the district through a period of rapid growth. In January Bill was honored for his decades of dedicated community service. Known for his leadership, resilience, and unwavering dedication, Bill lived a life of service to his family and his community.

Rev. Victor Hardy

1961 ~ 2025



Pastor Victor Hardy was ordained September 16, 2012. After serving as associate minister, in 2015 Victor was called to be the senior Pastor of the Congregational Church of the Valley, in Chandler, Arizona. He has the distinction of being its first African American pastor.

Pastor Hardy opened the door of his church to the community by hosting various community events and allowing other community groups to use the church for their events. Victor established a special service held in September honoring First Responders. Victor was also a proud veteran. He served in both the Virginia Army National Guard and in the Air Force.

Victor was a gifted vocalist and songwriter. He created the Chandler High School Gospel Choir Club. Under his leadership, the choir performed at local events and at venues with renowned groups such as the Harlem Gospel Choir and the American Rock and Roll and Soul show.

Rev. Hardy passed away in March 2025. Victor and his wife Cynthia were a dynamic team. He is lovingly remembered by her and their adult sons who continue to carry forward his legacy.

NACCC
NECROLOGY 2025