

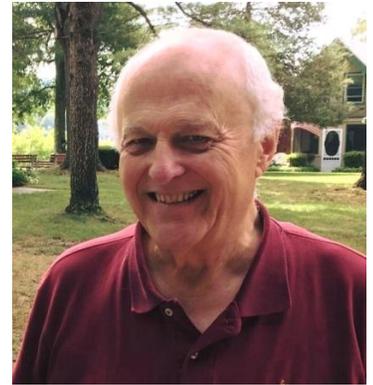
LEE N. WELKLEY AT REST, AGE 79

July 16, 1941 – December 26, 2020

COMMITTED TO SERVING CHRIST IN URBAN MINISTRY AND PREPARING OTHERS FOR CHRISTIAN SERVICE

Reverend Lee Welkley fell asleep in Christ Saturday, December 26, 2020, at the in-patient Community Hospice & Palliative Care facility in Jacksonville, FL. His death followed a twelve-week period of emergency hospitalizations, intensive treatments and many prayers offered on his behalf.

Throughout his life, Lee wholeheartedly pursued his calling as a pastor and leader with a primary focus on ministry to urban areas.



He served as pastor for churches in Mendota, IL; New Milford and Danbury, CT; Chicago, IL (12 years); Waterville, ME; and Jacksonville, FL (31 years). While at Aurora University in 1960, Lee traveled regularly to Chicago to assist Hope Community Advent Christian Church as they went through a major transition. Among other things, Lee taught a Sunday School class there and his experiences helped prepare him for his call as pastor in 1965.



With Hope Church Sunday School class in 1960

For a number of years, Lee and Caroline served part-time as Urban Ministries Consultants and assisted churches in planning for their futures. This included congregations in San Francisco, Los Angeles, San Diego, CA; Fort Worth, TX; Memphis, TN; Chicago, Aurora, IL; Lewiston/Auburn, ME; Miami and Jacksonville, FL.

It was clear to Lee that many more people were needed to meet the needs and opportunities to share the Gospel. He saw Christian higher education as a primary vehicle for equipping others for this challenging work.

Lee served as President of Berkshire Christian College from 1989 until his retirement in 2015. This followed serving as a trustee from 1970 and board chairman from 1987-1989. During his years in Chicago, he participated in an interdenominational program, Urban Ministers Pastoral Institute, which trained pastoral students seeking to minister in urban settings. This effort included Moody Bible Institute and Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, among others. Also, during the Chicago years, Lee collaborated with Ray Bakke, David Mains and other leaders in urban ministry in developing the Seminary Consortium for Urban Pastoral Education (SCUPE). While in Jacksonville, Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary opened a campus there and Lee was asked to serve on their advisory committee.

In 1986 it became necessary for Berkshire Christian College to close campus operations in Massachusetts due to insurmountable debt. Lee played a key role in helping determine new avenues to continue the BCC mission of preparing people for Christian service. These innovations took three forms: a partnership with Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, MA, for preparing Advent Christian pastors, counselors, missionaries; a partnership with Eastern University, PA, for providing excellent undergraduate education in a Christian context; a distance learning program, *eBerkshire*, providing both online education and learning cohort groups around the country. He was able to implement and administer these programs during his years as President.



Preaching in Jacksonville

He was a gifted preacher and teacher, but with many, it was his compassionate pastoral care and servant leadership that left indelible marks. He arranged after-school education programs, summer youth programs, helped with job transitions, needs for healthcare, food, housing, clothing and visitation. He partnered with businesses and joined with other community organizations to address needs beyond the local church.

Lee discovered Camp Bethel in Haddam, CT, early in his pastoral career and helped conduct week-long youth camps there in the 1960s.

In 1984 he was appointed Bible-study teacher for the week-long adult conference and has served as presiding elder and Bible-study teacher annually through this year. The members and attendees at Camp Bethel are yet another congregation that benefitted from Lee's teaching and pastoral care.

Between 1973 and 2010, Lee made eleven trips to Israel/Palestine. Ten of those trips he served as host for groups to pilgrimage the Holy Land and gain deepened understanding of the many social justice issues that exist relative to Palestine. A dear college friend, Rev. Audeh Rantisi, stimulated Lee's understanding of the strife that has and does exist throughout the land where Jesus walked. Lee and Audeh shared in their desire to minister and uplift people who encountered injustice and discrimination while challenging others to engage in Christian social action.



Lee, Caroline, Pat and Audeh Rantisi in 2001

Lee was born July 16, 1941 in Fairport, New York, son of Stanley and Marion Welkley of Fairport and Penfield, New York. He graduated from Fairport High School in 1959. He committed his life to follow Jesus at a young age and developed his gifts of leadership during high school years. During his senior year, he preached most Sundays at the Fremont Advent Christian Church, NY. He attended Aurora University for two years and completed his BA degree at Berkshire Christian College in 1962. He furthered his preparation for ministry at Northern Seminary and Bethany Theological Seminary in Chicago.

He is survived by his wife and partner in ministry of 58 years, Caroline (Frost); brother, Jack Welkley (Carol Comfort) of San Jose, CA; children, Gerald Welkley (Stacy) of Pensacola, FL; Debra Welkley of Sacramento, CA; and Heidi Kalam (Rafiul) of Lake Worth, FL; five grandchildren and three great grandchildren.

The family has announced that a Graveside Service will be conducted January 23, 2021 at 1130am ET at Advent Christian Village, Live Oak, FL.

A Tribute Memorial Service will be conducted January 23, 2021 at 4pm ET via Zoom. The link will be provided January 21, 2021