



Dr. Donald Ray Benton

January 4, 1931 - October 23, 2019

Don Benton, age 88, passed peacefully into eternal life on Wednesday afternoon, October 23rd, with family at his side. Don was born in Doniphan, Arkansas on January 4, 1931 to mother Ruby Mayes and father Harlan Benton. He had two brothers (Fletcher and Jim) and two sisters (Faye and Becky). In July 1948, at McCary's Chapel in Kilgore, Texas, Don Benton was called to the pulpit; and at this young age he preached his first of many sermons. After graduating high school Don hitchhiked to Lon Morris Junior College, where continued preaching until 1950. He continued his education at Texas Wesleyan College in Fort Worth until his graduation 1952, earning his Bachelor of Arts and a Doctorate in Humanities. During his senior year he pastored at the Methodist Church in Godley, Texas; where he was also a member of the TWC Choir. While touring with the choir, Don visited the First United Methodist Church in McAllen, Texas. Andy Hemphill, the senior pastor, offered Don a position as youth minister. This was the first official calling on his life. While serving at McAllen UMC he met his beautiful bride, Rose Marie. They met in December of 1952, were married in May of 1953, and celebrated 65 years as husband and wife. After for two years in McAllen he was called to preach in Austin, where he served as Associate Pastor at First UMC Austin from 1954-1958. While in Austin, he attended Austin Presbyterian and earned his Bachelor of Divinity. In 1958 Don was called to serve as an Associate Pastor in Dallas at Highland Park UMC in Dallas, where he served 1958-1962. In 1962 he was asked to pastor a small church in north Dallas. Excited by the challenge, he left Highland Park and became the Senior Pastor at Spring Valley UMC. He stayed at Spring Valley UMC for 15 years and grew the congregation from roughly 400 to more than 2500. While pastoring at SVUMC, he attended SMU's Perkins School of Theology and received his Doctorate in Ministry. In 1977 Lovers Lane UMC and the North Texas Conference needed a strong leader to become Pastor to the 3rd largest Methodist Church in the world. It was going to be a difficult task for any man, but Don Benton was up to the challenge. So at age 46, after building Spring Valley UMC into a strong congregation, he left to become the Senior Pastor at Lovers Lane UMC; where he was becoming a leading national spokesman for Methodism. D Magazine listed 78 people to watch in the upcoming year 1978, Don was the 4th person named on the list. He served the congregation of Lovers Lane UMC until

1994, during which time he elevated LLUMC into an international ministry. Membership rose from approximately 8000 members to more than 12,000 members in 18 years. He spread God's word in three services every Sunday, with an average attendance of 2000 people per service. In 1995 he was asked to steward The Kindness Foundation. After discussing the opportunity with Rose Marie, he chose to retire from LLUMC and became the President of The Kindness Foundation. Dr. Benton received Distinguished Alumnus awards from Lon Morris and Texas Wesleyan and, in 1991, became a Distinguished Alumni of Southern Methodist University. He was recognized by the Texas State House of Representatives, the United States Senate, and several Dallas Mayors and Texas Governors for his contributions to humanity, especially in Texas. Methodist Hospital in Dallas just recently named and dedicated their new board room, the Rev. Don R. Benton Board Room. Don participated in the organization of the United Methodist Mission to Russian and the Volgograd, Russia Methodist Mission. He led several trips to the Holy Land where, in 1994, he and a 40 member choir participated in the Christmas Eve service at Manger Square in Bethlehem. He was invited to be an observer to the ending of apartheid in South Africa by the Southern Africa Forum. He led the Goals program for the Methodist Church of Poland after the fall of Communism and participated in the distribution of 10,000 bibles throughout Poland. He has been a dedicated and active member for many organizations: Christian Children's Fund – Director Methodist Hospital Board Member Methodist Hospital Foundation Board Member Children's Medical Center – Trustee, Chair of Pastoral Care Lon Morris Board Member United Methodist Foundation for Higher Education Board Member SMU – Student Affairs Committee of the Board of Trustees Trinity River Mission Coalition for a Safer Dallas North Dallas Shared Ministries The Family Place The Promise House – Founding Board Member C.C. Young Body, Mind, & Spirit Foundation Director YMCA – Metropolitan Board Member Dallas Community of Churches The North Texas Conference Of The United Methodist Church Institutional Review Board Wadley Research Center LIFT (Literacy) President Board Girls Adventure Trail Advisory Board Mayor's Task Force On Criminal Justice United Way Central Texas Methodist Conference Board Member Children's Health Services General Board of Global Ministries member (World Division, Executive & Finance Committee) Twelfth St Ministry Board Member United Methodist Committee on Relief – Chair of Finance North Texas Annual Conference Council on Finance & Administration, Chair Committee on Episcopacy, Chair Council of Professional Personnel Board of Global Ministries, Chair Council on Ministries Ethnic Minority Task Force Retirement Homes of North Texas Board Member Methodist Home for Youth Waco Board Member Board of Church Extension Chairman Guest Teacher at Perkins School Theology Lay Pastor's School Delegate to African-American Institute in Gaborone, Botswana Leader for Development Seminar For The Methodist Church of Poland In Don Benton's 70 years of spreading the gospel he visited all 50 states and 52 countries around the globe. Don was

happily married to Rose Marie for 65 years. They had 5 children, Dink and his wife Shelley, Donna, David (who passed in 2015), Dallas and his wife Stacy, and Deborah and her husband Jacob. Don and Rosie left seven grandchildren and four beautiful great grandchildren. He and Rosie also had 3 honorary children: Clayton Oliphint, Tomesha Donsereaux, and Matt Aiken. The family will welcome visitors at Restland Funeral Home on Monday, October 28 from 5pm until 8pm. A private graveside service will be held at The Benton's Family Cemetery on their Ranch in Red River County on Thursday, October 31 under the direction of Clarksville Funeral Home. The Celebration of Life and Memorial Service will be held at Lover's Lane United Methodist Church, Wednesday, November 6 at 11:00a.m. In lieu of flowers donations can be made in the name of Donald Benton to the benevolence fund at CC Young Retirement where he was the active Pastoral Care Coordinator...The family sincerely thanks you!

Comments



“ Dr. Benton was a wonderful Christian man. He will be missed by all of us. I had the pleasure of working with him at CC Young for a year. I played the piano for the Sunday services. God Bless. Mary and Dave Dyer

Mary Dyer - October 27, 2019 at 09:24 PM



“ There are not enough words to adequately describe how Pastor Don Benton and his family touched my life. There is not a big enough church in Dallas for his service. He and his beloved Rosie are back together again.

Susan Stringer - October 26, 2019 at 05:53 PM