

## Tribute for Bruce C. Stewart

by  
Jerry F. O'Neill

Most of us remember Dr. Stewart for his great service to the North Hills Church and to the Reformed Presbyterian Theological Seminary (RPTS) during his years in Pittsburgh. Dr. Stewart, and his wife Roselyn, along with their youngest son, Bradley, came to Pittsburgh in 1973. He served the first few years in Pittsburgh as Professor of Pastoral Theology. Three years later, in 1976, he became President of the Seminary in addition to his responsibilities and Professor of Pastoral Theology, and in this dual role he served from 1976-1995.



During his time in Pittsburgh, the Seminary flourished. For years the Seminary was blessed to have Bruce Stewart as Professor of Pastoral Theology, Clark Copeland as Professor of Old Testament Studies, Renwick Wright as Professor of New Testament Studies, and Wayne Spear as Professor of Systematic Theology. The Seminary was accredited in 1994, and ministry to those outside the Reformed Presbyterian Church was significantly expanded.

During most of Dr. Stewart's years in Pittsburgh, he has also served faithfully on the Session of the North Hills R.P. Church. His desire and commitment to serve the local church set the pace for those who were younger. He always has had keen interest in people, and unlike many who are older, he has always been able to relate well to young people.

Of course, at the same time he carried heavy responsibilities at the Synod and Presbytery level. He was clerk of Synod from 1968-1976, a thankless job, for sure, before the age of word processors. He was moderator of Synod in 1978. He served as corresponding secretary for many years. He served on our Interchurch Committee for many years, served on Geneva's Board of Corporators and Board of Trustees for many years, served as President of our E&P Board for a term, served as President of the Fellowship of Evangelical Seminaries for a year and President of the Reformed Seminary President's Council for a few years, served on the Church Extension Commission of Presbytery that started our Trinity congregation in Maryland, and many other things.

Bruce was born in Philadelphia in 1924, was a great student-athlete, and graduated from high school at age 16, a couple of months short of his 17<sup>th</sup> birthday. He went to Swarthmore College for three years before transferring to Geneva College for his last year of college, graduating in 1945. He played on the basketball team there, and I am also certain that he told me he played in historic arenas of our country, either Boston Garden or Madison Square Garden in New York City.

He graduated from RPTS in 1948, and as a 24-year-old man of God with passion and giftedness, he began his ordained ministry in Cambridge, MA, where he and Roselyn stayed for six years. He then moved to Greeley, CO, where he and his family were for eight years, before moving to Los Angeles in 1962, where he served for eleven years.

Bruce married the love of his life, Roselyn, in 1945. They had four children. Doug, Cyndi, Don, and Brad.

When I came as a student to RPTS in 1979, Bruce was one of my professors; and it was through his teaching that I finally, after years of struggle, embraced wholeheartedly the regulative principle of worship, and our application of this principle to the worship practices of our denomination. I am very thankful for his teaching. The one thing that I remember from these years was his kindness, and his humility. Somehow, without lying, he could approach every student after he had preached in chapel and say, "That was very helpful!" I don't know how that was possible, but I believe for Bruce it was. He was helped by every sermon.

In 1995, in the remarkable providence of God, I had the privilege of following him at RPTS in the dual role of President and Professor of Pastoral Theology. What a joy it was to have Bruce around to mentor me as I grew into my role. He stayed on staff and served as our first part-time Director of Development. He encouraged me at every step, and I hope that in the next couple of years I can be in a position of encouraging Barry York in a similar way.

Bruce was a friend and mentor to many of us. We are thankful to God for his impact on our lives.

The preceding was adapted from a tribute to Dr. Stewart by the North Hills RP Church at Dr. Stewart's last earthly home, Sherwood Oaks, Cranberry, PA, on September 11, 2016.

Dr. Stewart went home to be with the Lord on December 25, 2016.