



## Rev. George H. Yoder

June 1, 2020

Rev. George H. Yoder, 96, of Allentown, PA, died June 1, 2020 in Phoebe Home. Married to the late Vivian H. Yoder for 66 years, he was born in Souderton, PA, the third of nine children, to the late Paul and Katie (Hunsicker) Yoder. He will always be remembered for his helpfulness, which led him to become a minister, social worker, community organizer, social justice advocate, spiritual guide, and small group leader. An extraordinary listener, he enjoyed hearing people's stories and helping them reflect on their lives. He loved to laugh with joyful abandon. An avid photographer, croquet player, bicyclist, journal keeper, and memoirist, he delighted his family and friends with scenes from his life growing up in the country.

As a child George saw his grandfather butcher a pig and decided he would not be a butcher when he grew up. He got struck by lightning in the root cellar, fell through a hay hole while playing brumsock and got knocked out, trapped a skunk and stunk for a week. He attended a one-room schoolhouse through eighth grade and a three-room school through eleventh. He enjoyed crafting meticulous technical drawings and won an essay contest about why he wanted to be a research chemist, which he would have done if he'd gone to college right away, but WWII intervened. He worked for his father at the Railway Express, an essential service, then served almost three years in the Army, in combat in France and Germany, where he learned that his younger brother Paul had been killed in 1945, soon after the Battle of the Bulge.

After he and Vivian married, he told her he thought he wanted to be a minister. She said, "I knew that." He was grateful for her insights and for introducing him to literature, theater, and music.

A tireless advocate for peace and justice, he devoted forty years to Allentown churches, social service agencies, and community groups. While he served as pastor of St. Paul's UCC (1958-67), he fostered interracial, inter-church Bible studies and actively engaged in community projects through the Allentown Council of Churches (now Lehigh Conference of Churches) promoting fair housing and social services for migrant farmworkers, minorities, and the poor. He directed H.A.R.T. (Hanover Acres Riverview Terrace) Neighborhood Center (1967-68), became a caseworker (1968-71) and then directed Lehigh County Children and Youth Services (1972-83) while serving as supply pastor at Christ UCC Church. He was instrumental in the 1981 merger of Christ UCC with St. John's UCC, where he then served as assistant to the pastor until 1997. He sponsored spiritual renewal retreats in Penn Northeast Conference of the UCC and was a cofounder and active member of CUNA (Congregations United for Neighborhood Action), advocating for socially conscious urban renewal in Allentown from 1995 to 2008.

A lifelong learner and teacher, he exuded warmth and exemplified integrity, compassion, and commitment to helping people. He often said he wanted his epitaph to read: "He was always there when he was needed." We will hold him forever in our hearts with gratitude and love.

Survivors: Children: Rev. Rebecca Stephens, wife of Barry Stephens, of Allentown; Phillip Yoder, husband of Stef Brok, of Birdsboro; Susan Bauer of Moundsville, WV; Barbara Yoder, wife of Edward Connor, of Berkeley, CA. Grand and great-grandchildren: Eric and Jen (Tice) Stephens and daughter Hazel Grace; Emily (Stephens) and Christian Sutter and son Casper;

Bhagavan Bauer and Ananga Manjari and sons Nava Kishore and Nitya Navine; Sukadevi Bauer; Narahari Bauer and Cliff Kavara and newborn daughter. Brothers (and spouses) Charles and Louise Yoder and Jim and Ann Yoder, sisters Betty Reiff and Marie Wenner, and many nieces and nephews.

A service for immediate family will be arranged by the J. S. Burkholder Funeral Home, [www.jsburkholder.com](http://www.jsburkholder.com). A celebration of his life will be planned at a later date. In lieu of flowers, memorial gifts may be made to St. John's UCC, 36 S. 6th Street, Allentown, PA 18101.

# Tribute Wall

ST

“ Dear Becca, Philip, Susan, Barbara and families, I just got a letter from the Hunsicker cousins which informed me of your father's death. I feel that my family's life passages were always intertwined with George and Vivian. They introduced my parents on a blind date (something about marrying cousins off to the theological students). George officiated at my parent's wedding, many of my sibling's baptisms, and provided tender words at many memorial services and graveside services. I was thinking about George earlier this week and was wondering how he was doing since he moved to a more advanced care at Phoebe a year and a half ago. I feel so blessed that my husband and I were able to quietly reconnect with him on that short visit in the fall of 2018. I always enjoyed our visits with George and Vivian - gosh, she was such a spitfire, so unlike my mild-mannered mom. I adored her pizazz. George was always mirthful and kind, especially with my brother David. I remember when Bruce Hatt came back East a couple decades ago for the last time, near the end of his time with his brain cancer, and the 3 couples (George and Viv, Bruce and Millie, and Paul and Arlene) got together for a couple hours ,and kids where not invited to attend. Now, I can just hear all of the 'Mensch Millers' together again, telling stories and sharing concerns of their families and the past and current times. So many good memories, Love to you all, Shirley (Eberts) Tinsley

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Shirley Tinsley - June 15, 2020 at 08:39 AM

BY

*Dear Shirley,*

*Thanks so much for sharing your memories of Mom and Dad. They were quite the matchmakers, Mom especially. I loved hearing your stories and so appreciate your sweet note!*

*Please keep in touch with the Hunsicker cousins this week, because there will be a recording of the service you'll be able to view this coming weekend. Or if you don't mind, maybe you could call Burkholder -- contact info here: <https://www.jsburkholder.com/who-we-are/> -- and give them your email address to give to me and I'll add you to the list.*

*For the record, I loved your mom's quiet charm!*

*Sending love and hugs your way,*

*Barbara*

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**Barbara Ann Yoder** - June 16, 2020 at 12:08 AM

EM

“*Dear Becca, Philip, Susan and Barbara, I am so sorry for your loss. So many memories. He was wonderful and the memory I have in the mind the most was when my Grammy was dying and he was there to pray with her . I will always be so grateful for that. All the memories we all have of Halstead street and the reservoir, snow storms. Anyway he was a great man and I am so lucky to have known him. Much love, Liz Maikisch*

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**Elizabeth Maikisch** - June 08, 2020 at 10:23 AM

BY

*So good to hear from you, Liz! Thanks for sharing your memory of Dad. Yes to the reservoir and the snow. What fun we had!*

*Barbara*

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**Barbara Ann Yoder** - June 08, 2020 at 01:11 PM

HM

“ Dear Becca, Phil, Susan and Barbara,  
Your dad was a very special man who meant a great deal to my family. He provided strength and comfort when my dad and my grandmother died and helped guide my mother during those difficult times  
There were many good times that we shared with him, your mother and you kids when we were next door neighbors on Halstead St.....times I still recall.  
The Good Lord has blessed your dad with a long life; may he now rest in peace, with your mother, forever.  
In loving sympathy,  
Helen Maikisch

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**Helen Maikisch** - June 08, 2020 at 08:53 AM

BY

*Thanks for your sweet note, Helen! It's good to hear your memories from Halstead Street. Those were the days!*

*Barbara*

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**Barbara Ann Yoder** - June 08, 2020 at 01:11 PM

PL

“ Rev. Yoder's last official service at St. Paul's was the performance of Howard's and my marriage ceremony on Sept. 30, 1967. He gave us communion as part of our ceremony, and I never forgot his telling us not to say, "I do," but, "I will," when we took our vows. He was such a warm man, with the most awesome sense of humor. Howard went Home on Mar. 5, 2017, and I imagine he was right behind Vivian when it was time to welcome this wonderful man into God's Heavenly Kingdom. Wishing you all beautiful memories ----- the kind that make you smile ----- of your dad/grandfather/great-grandfather.

*Paula Lilly*

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**Paula A. Lilly** - June 07, 2020 at 07:12 PM

BY

*Such a sweet story. Thank you! You made me smile, just like my dad would!*

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**Barbara Ann yoder** - June 07, 2020 at 10:17 PM

BY

“ *Dear friends,*

*Thank you for your friendship, condolence notes, and the memories you've shared via email. If you have time, please feel free to share your memories and stories about Dad on this forum. Since we can't all be together because of the virus, it would be lovely to have this virtual place to read remembrances of George.*

*Stay safe and well! Sending virtual hugs, peace, and love.*

*Barbara*

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**Barbara Ann Yoder** - June 06, 2020 at 08:57 PM