

Rev. Tom and Joyce Warnick



Churches Served: Wingo, Bradford, Murfreesboro, and Oak Ridge Cumberland Presbyterian Churches

Offices Held: Clerk of the General Assembly of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church (1974-1985)

Information provided by the donor: Tommie Vernon Warnick was born October 1, 1928, on a farm in western Kentucky, the younger of two brothers. He attended a one-room schoolhouse throughout his elementary years, but his childhood and youth followed the rhythms of the seasons, with plantings, harvesting, and livestock chores. The Church was the center of their family life. "I never have forgotten my roots—who my people were and where I came from, including the powerful influence of home and church in my life," he later wrote. "We were poor and humble by today's standards, but we didn't know it."

After graduating from high school in a class of 14, he worked in a shoe factory in Paducah for three years. During the Korean War, he served in the Navy at bases in Millington, Tennessee, and Virginia Beach, Virginia, where he repaired airplane bodies as a structural mechanic.

Tom next traveled to McKenzie, Tennessee, to attend Bethel College. There, he met Joyce at a coffee shop and immediately noticed her pretty smile. They were married nine months later in 1954 and later had two children, Bruce and Marta. Tom graduated in 1956 from Bethel with a major in Bible and Religion, and in 1959 from the Cumberland Presbyterian Theological Seminary with a thesis on worship. He was ordained in the ministry and began a 20-year career in pastoral care, serving churches in Wingo, Kentucky, and Bradford, Oak Ridge and Murfreesboro, all in Tennessee. "I have never regretted this vocation and have always felt my life was counting for something that really mattered," he wrote.

In 1975, the General Assembly of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church elected him Stated Clerk, its highest executive office. He also served as the church's chief ecumenical officer, traveling on behalf of the denomination to Scotland, Liberia, Canada, Cuba, and most of the United States. He left office in 1984 with health problems and wrote adult Sunday school curriculum and other church-related materials, allowing him to fulfill a lifelong avocation to write.

Eventually, his struggle with Parkinson's Disease forced him to curtail his writing and adapt his life style as best he could, reluctantly giving up his hobbies of travel, hiking, and photography. "Only those who have experienced Parkinson's can possibly know what it is like," he said. During his retirement, Tom took great enjoyment sharing time with Joyce and their four grandchildren: Matthew, Courtney, Ben and Michael. He became a keen-eyed coin collector, tilled a backyard garden, and still was able to take daily bike rides in the mornings during his best hours.

No matter what his circumstances, Tom always expressed his desire to serve the church in some way. His faith in God, church and family was never shaken.

Tom died at Methodist North Hospital, Memphis, Tennessee, on March 28, 1996, at 2 a.m.

Burial was in Mt. Olivet Cemetery in McKenzie, Tennessee.

Endowment provided by: Marta Warnick Aldrich, Rose O'hare, Joyce Warnick McConnell, Bruce and Karen Warnick