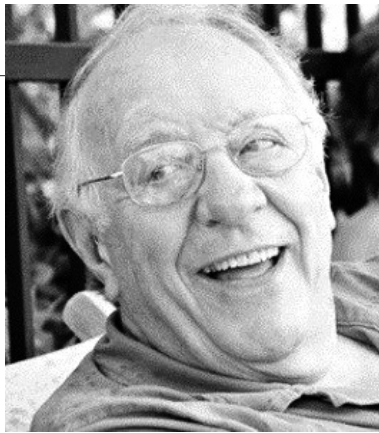

Rev. Theodore W. Loder (“Ted”) -38 year pastor at the First United Methodist Church of Germantown (FUMCOG), died on April 1, 2021 at the age of 90. His mischievous sense of humor would have appreciated his passing at the conjunction of April Fools’ Day and Maundy Thursday. Ted was a scholar and poet, champion of social justice, minister, and beloved husband, father and grandfather. His books gave achingly prayerful voice to thousands of congregants and readers.



Rev. Theodore W. Loder

Born in Crawford Nebraska, Ted’s family moved to Oregon when he commenced high school and from where he was recruited to play basketball for Willamette University. He was an honors student and hardwood standout, leading Willamette to four Northwest Conference championships and earning 3 first team all-conference awards, which landed him in the NAIA Division 2 Basketball Hall of Fame and an offer to try out with the New York Knicks.

His kids only vaguely recall hearing of these feats, but remember the cherished story of the Willamette career record for personal fouls he held for two decades—a milestone that, when broken, received 1972 Scorecard mention in Sports Illustrated, with Ted playfully observing: “Although the quantity of my personal fouls may be surpassed, I suspect the quality may not... If my opponent could still stand at the foul line without shaking and could still see without blurred vision, then I would question whether the quality of the foul was sufficient to merit real notice.” His former coach concurred that Ted’s fouls “were generally of high quality.”

Rather than pursue an NBA career, Ted chose a different path. He and his wife Doris McCain Loder (Willamette, 1952) and first born of four children moved East, where Ted earned his Theology degree from Yale Divinity School. After parish posts in Yalesville, CT and New Rochelle, NY, Ted arrived in Philadelphia to begin his urban ministry at the church that became affectionately known as “FUMCOG”.

Ted gained notoriety for his dynamic sermons that were part homily, part poetry, part dramatic performance, and always intellectually and morally challenging. In drama sermons, he would narrate the mystery of the nativity as a common stable hand or inn-keeper, or script and stage plays that would wrestle with the anxiety of “getting Christmas right” and discern in that human struggle its authentic meaning.

Under Ted’s leadership, FUMCOG was in the vanguard of social change and often at the forefront of history itself. He led a church delegation to Selma, Alabama in 1965 to march with Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. During Ted’s FUMCOG ministry, the church led protests against the Vietnam War, was active in the anti-nuclear movement, became a leader in the Sanctuary movement, welcomed LGBTQ members as a Reconciling Congregation, and sent a delegation to South Africa to observe that nation’s first universal elections won by Nelson Mandela.

Closer to home, the Church sponsored numerous social justice nonprofits, including Covenant House Medical Services and Germantown Inter-

faith Housing, helping people in need to find affordable medical care, housing and job training. The list of dignitaries who graced FUMCOG’s pulpit at Ted’s invitation included Rev. Fred Shuttlesworth, Jean-Bertrand Aristide, Shirley Chisholm, William Sloane Coffin, Fred Gray, Maynard Jackson and many other visionary leaders of conscience.

Ted authored eight books of poetry, biblical profiles, and prayers. His most well-known book was an imaginative collection of plaintive prayers, entitled “*Guerillas of Grace*.” In his retirement years, Ted regularly lectured at retreats and universities. A Bishop once introduced Ted at a Methodist retreat by describing the Bishop’s visit to the study of a nervous divinity school graduate starting his first parish assignment. Taking his seat, the Bishop noticed three books on the young pastor’s desk, whereupon he quickly reassured him “I see you have your Bible and two of Ted Loder’s books - - you’ll be just fine.”

A searching soul, a champion of social justice, an avid basketball fan, a prophetic public intellectual, Ted was a complex man who in his prayers, plays and sermons gave voice to the vulnerable, the afflicted, and those struggling with their faith, embracing the poignant and eternal questions honestly, acknowledging the frailties and shortcomings common to humanity. His books are profiles in humanity, humility and awe. One typical prayer, “*The Deepest Wonder of All*”, begins: “O God of imponderable elegance, the wonder of it all is that we are here at all” and ends “. . . and loving at all is the wonder of us, even as all loving is the wonder of you.”

He is survived by his second wife, Jan Filing, his children Mark, David, Karen (Stephen Duffy), and Thomas (Amina), stepsons Chris (Valerie) and Jon (Hilary) Long, eight grandchildren and five step-grandchildren.

Copy of Inquirer obituary, May 2021

List of Ted’s Books:

**Guerrillas of Grace:
Prayers for the Battle**

**No One but Us:
Personal Reflections on Public Sanctuary
by an Offspring of Jacob**

**Eavesdropping on the Echoes:
Voices**

**Tracks in the Straw:
Tales Spun from the Manger**

**My Heart in My Mouth:
Prayers for Our Lives**

**The Haunt of Grace:
Responses to the Mystery of God’s Presence**

**Wrestling the Light:
Ache and Awe in the Human/Divine Struggle**

**Loaves, Fishes and Leftovers:
Sharing Faith’s Deep Questions**

For more information on the availability or printing of the above publications, please contact FUMCOG’s Church Office at (215) 438-3677.

