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PITTSBURGH THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY REMEMBERS DIRECTOR EMERITUS OF THE DOCTOR OF MINISTRY PROGRAM

Pittsburgh Theological Seminary is mourning the loss of the Rev. Dr. John E. Mehl, who passed away April 25, 2021, at the age of 84 after a long illness. He was a graduate of Pittsburgh Seminary, served as director of the Doctor of Ministry Program for 14 years, and upon his retirement was named director emeritus.

“John was a wonderful man,” said the Rev. Dr. David Esterline, president and professor of cross-cultural theological education. “He was my first contact with Pittsburgh Seminary more than 20 years ago. He was the Doctor of Ministry director at Pittsburgh at the time and befriended me when I arrived at another seminary as its new DMin director. Our current Doctor of Ministry program continues to equip those who serve God’s people in part because of Dr. Mehl’s good work decades ago.”

Mehl he was born in Wilkes-Barre, Pa. After moving with his family to Mt. Lebanon, he attended public schools there and graduated from Mt. Lebanon High School in 1954. He earned a bachelor’s of arts at Dartmouth College in 1958, a bachelor’s of divinity from Pittsburgh Theological Seminary in 1962, a master of theology from Union Presbyterian Seminary in 1967, and a Ph.D. from the University of Pittsburgh School of Education in 1976.

Throughout his career, Mehl held a number of positions in various church-related organizations. In his first job, he served as minister of Christian education at Unity Presbyterian Church (formerly Wallace Memorial United Presbyterian Church). Mehl, along with the Rev. Frank C. Bates—a fellow Pittsburgh Seminary graduate—was instrumental in the creation of Thesis Theological Cassettes, and he also served as its editor. The cassettes provided a source of continuing education for pastors and were distributed in the United States and Canada. Mehl served in several capacities for the Kerygma Bible Program. He was a co-founder, Board member, author, editor, and teacher. He was also a devoted Board member of Desert Ministries, founded by the Rev. Dr. Richard Cromie, also a PTS alum. As a pastor, Mehl served the Bethel Presbyterian Church, and held positions as Interim Pastor at Southminster Presbyterian and Shadyside Presbyterian churches. As administrator and teacher, he held the position of director of the Doctor of Ministry program at Pittsburgh Theological Seminary.

In response to his quest for justice in all things, he traveled to Hattiesburg, Miss., in 1964, with a group of pastors from the National Council of Churches in Pittsburgh. The purpose of the trip was to register the citizens to vote. During their efforts, they were arrested and spent time in a workhouse and in jail before they were released. Mehl will be fondly remembered for his sense of humor, his modesty, and his deep concern for the well-being of others. He is survived by his wife, Margaret Ann Ross Mehl, his sons Christopher (Laura) and Bradley (Lynette), and two grandsons, Austin and Gavin.

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