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PITTSBURGH THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY REMEMBERS DIRECTOR EMERITUS ROBERT MENEILLY

Pittsburgh Theological Seminary is remembering the Rev. Dr. Robert H. Meneilly '47, who passed away July 20, 2021, at the age of 96. He was a graduate of Pittsburgh-Xenia Theological Seminary (an antecedent of PTS), served on the Seminary's Board of Directors from 1981 to 1989, and was a director emeritus until the time of his death. Additionally, he co-chaired The Pittsburgh Seminary 199th Year Campaign, which raised more than \$13 million. Meneilly served as the Distinguished Pastor in Residence at the Seminary in 1984 and the following year received the Seminary's Distinguished Alumnae/i Award.

"Rev. Meneilly made a lasting impact on his congregants, his local community, and the Seminary," said the Rev. Dr. Asa J. Lee, president and professor of theological formation for ministry. "In addition to his capable leadership of the Board, the Seminary continues to benefit from the Robert Meneilly Professor of Leadership and Ministry endowment, which supports our faculty."

Meneilly was the founding pastor of Village Presbyterian Church in Prairie Village, Kan., one of the largest congregations in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). He served the church he founded for 47 years, retiring in 1994. The church grew to more than 7,000 members under Meneilly's leadership and was the PC(USA)'s second-largest congregation during his tenure. He was named pastor emeritus of Village PC.

Over the years, Meneilly played a major role in the civic and social fabric in the Kansas City area and received a number of awards and honors. Through his sermons, Meneilly never shied away from controversy, speaking out against the crippling effects of injustice. During the height of the nation's civil rights movement in the mid-1960s, Meneilly delivered several sermons encouraging members of his suburban congregation to welcome their Black neighbors. Within a few years, he'd become a vocal critic of the Vietnam War. He attended the Vietnam War Peace Talks in 1972. His 1993 sermon "The Dangers of Religion," which denounced what he called the stealth campaigns of the religious right, was reprinted in condensed form in The New York Times and other publications.

Longtime Village Presbyterian Church member Carol Cowden said Meneilly was a servant leader who encouraged his staff to be creative, and the church attracted hundreds of children. It was a place, she said, where people of diverse faiths and backgrounds were welcome and where Meneilly took a personal interest in all his congregation. Over his 47-year tenure, more than 32,000 people called Village Church their spiritual home. Congregants and friends remembered "Dr. Bob" for his humility, his ingratiating sense of humor, and for his inspirational guidance in leading a life devoted to the teachings of Jesus.

In retirement, Meneilly remained active in civic affairs, including serving on various boards. Among them: Johnson County Community Services, Kansas City Planned Parenthood, Metropolitan Lutheran Ministries, Ozanam Home for Boys, Kansas City Mayor's Commission on AIDS, Midwest Christian Counseling Center, and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference of Greater Kansas City.

Meneilly was born in Mount Lebanon, Pa., and began preaching when he was 13. He married Shirly Ann Dunlap in 1947 (died 2014), and the couple had three children. In addition, he is survived by eight grandchildren and 10 great-grandchildren.

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