



Norman A. Hjelm

November 20, 1931 - February 13, 2024

With heavy hearts but thanks for a life well-lived, we, Krister, Lars and Maria, announce that our father, Rev. Norman Arthur Hjelm, died at the age of 92 years on Tuesday, February 13, 2024, in Wynnewood, PA.

Born on November 20, 1931 in Worcester, MA to proud Swedish descendants, Rev. Arthur and Ruth Hjelm, Norman grew up with two older siblings, Louise and Ralph. Arthur served as a Pastor in Lutheran churches and Norman grew up primarily in Washington, DC, during World War II, an event that profoundly helped shape his education and career. The nation's capital also gave Norman a passion for football and baseball.

His education reflects his faith and a career devoted to Christian theology. He graduated from Princeton University in 1953, majoring in Religious Studies and English. In his 70th reunion yearbook, he said of his Princeton experience, "At Princeton – in lectures and classes, in my eating club and friendships – I began, I think, to grow up and am still on the way. Deo Gratis!" Norman went on to Augustana Theological Seminary to receive a Bachelor of Divinity in 1957 and Union Theological Seminary to receive a Master of Sacred Theology in 1960, where he concentrated on the theological works of Gustaf Aulen, Dietrich Bonhoeffer and Reinhold Niebur. In 2009, he received an honorary doctorate from Uppsala University in Sweden in recognition of his contributions to theological scholarship.

Norman was a President of the Lutheran Student Association of America and Chairman of the United Student Christian Council of America. As part of these activities, he traveled to Sweden and met his Swedish sweetheart, Ingalill Hellman, on a transatlantic voyage from New York City. They were married on July 13, 1957 in New York City, lived in Sweden, and raised us, his three children. In 1962, the family settled in the Philadelphia suburbs and remained in the area, with brief departures for work stints in Cleveland and Switzerland.

Ordained in 1960, Norman started his career as a parish priest at All Saints' Lutheran Church in Orland Park, Illinois, and then transitioned to book publishing in 1962 and was the Senior Editor and Director of Fortress Press in Germantown, PA. He was an early publisher of Walter Brueggeman, Elaine Pagels, CT Vivian and even Coretta Scott King. In 1985, he became the Communications Director for the Lutheran World Federation in Geneva, Switzerland. Norman's work took him all over the world, until his return to the US to serve as Director of the Commission on Faith and Order at the National Council of Churches in 1991.

Retirement held little interest for Norman, so he continued to write, consult, edit and devote himself to the ecumenical movement and to Christian unity. Expanding on his original academic interest in poets and theologians in WWII, he edited and wrote the introductions for two books about the church's role in the Cold War. "The unity of the church, the unity of humankind. Unity in a fractured world. Unity – a goal to be cherished," was the theme of a sermon he preached in 2003, and it was the theme of Norman's life's work.

He was devoted to Ingalill, who died in 2006, and is survived by his three children and eleven grandchildren (Nikolaus, Max, Kerstin, Britta, Jakob, Kent, Maya, Patrik, Ethan, Erik and Alannah) and four great grandchildren (Stella, Clara, Beckett and Bo). Norman's family and friends will remember him for his

genuine kindness and his gift of conversation (Ingalill was often frustrated by his tendency to talk more than eat at the dinner table).

Norman was an accomplished pianist and a lover of classical music. In his retirement, his season tickets to the Philadelphia Orchestra were amongst his greatest pleasures. Professional sports – baseball in particular – always brought Norman joy and frustration. He regaled his grandchildren by recounting important games that he had attended in his own childhood and he would entertain folks with his uncanny ability to speak backwards. He loved watching the Phillies, the 76ers, and the Eagles and did so until the very end. Likewise, Norman was never not reading a book. He left the biography, “King: A Life”, half-read at his passing.

A funeral for Norman Hjelm will be held on Saturday, February 24, 2024 at 1 pm at the Philadelphia Episcopal Cathedral in Philadelphia. In lieu of flowers, the family asks for donations to Cathedral Table Ministries, in support of the cathedral’s food pantry held in partnership with Philabundance.

Please visit <https://secure.myvanco.com/L-Z497/campaign/C-14P5B>

Previous Events

Funeral Service

FEB **24**. 1:00 PM (ET)

Philadelphia Episcopal Cathedral
19 S 38th Street
Philadelphia, PA 19104

Tribute Wall

EZ

“ Elvada Z. purchased the Peaceful White Lilies Basket for the family of Norman A. Hjelm.



Elvada Z. - February 23, 2024 at 11:14 PM

EZ

“ Elvada Z. planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Norman A. Hjelm.

Elvada Z. - February 23, 2024 at 11:14 PM

MK

“ Norman Hjelm and I worked closely together for two decades through the National Council of Churches, especially on the Council's "ecclesiology study" and through its Commission on Faith and Order. He was, in the truest sense, a “churchman,” deeply and effectively committed to the wholeness of the Body of Christ and its ministry in the world. Even more important to me, however, was his friendship. He was a wise counselor when I needed one, but also a friend with whom I could relax over a good meal and great music. My life was richer for his presence in it. Michael Kinnamon, former General Secretary, NCC

Michael Kinnamon - February 23, 2024 at 05:27 PM

BR

“ Beatrice Rosario sent a virtual gift in memory of Norman A. Hjelm



Beatrice Rosario - February 23, 2024 at 12:29 PM

PF

“ I grew up in Ardmore and knew Norman through Fortress Press, since my father Raymond T. Ohl worked there at the same time as Norman. Our two families became friends and we spent delightful times visiting back and forth. I remember babysitting for one of the infant Hjelm kids, and their dog stood guard between me and the baby the whole evening! Years later Norman was part of an ecumenical trio of clergy (Roman Catholic, Episcopalian, Lutheran) who married my first husband and myself in the St. Thomas More Chapel at Yale University. The last time I saw Norman was at Ingall's funeral. Norman and I had recently been making plans for me to drive down from Harleysville (where I now live) but we were snowed out on the date we had chosen. I deeply regret not having been able to visit him and also that I will be unable to attend the funeral. He and his family will always be in my thoughts and prayers. Patricia Ohl Fogal

Patricia Fogal - February 22, 2024 at 06:10 PM

PT

“ 1 file added to the tribute wall



pradip thomas - February 22, 2024 at 02:05 AM

VC

“ 1 file added to the tribute wall



Vada Conant - February 21, 2024 at 10:33 PM

PT

“ *Dinners at TK and Anna's with Norman and Ingalill and Jan and Birgitte. I remember good food, great company and a lot to drink! Norman inviting me to the Princeton Club in NY for dinner. Wonderful memories of a fine human being. Rest well dear friend. Pradip & Preetha, Brisbane*

Pradip Thomas - February 21, 2024 at 07:42 PM



“ *Arrive in Style was purchased for the family of Norman A. Hjelm.*



February 19, 2024 at 09:34 PM

TB

“ *With great sorrow we learned about the passing of Norman. A wonderful man, a wonderful soul, a wonderful colleague. May he rest in peace! Nadia Kizenko and Thomas Bremer.*

Thomas Bremer - February 19, 2024 at 06:35 PM

EK

“ *Eva, Tobias, Lottie, Torbjörn och Karin purchased the Basket Full of Wishes for the family of Norman A. Hjelm.*



Eva, Tobias, Lottie, Torbjörn och Karin - February 19, 2024 at 03:38 AM

EK

“ *Eva, Tobias, Lottie, Torbjörn och Karin planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Norman A. Hjelm.*

Eva, Tobias, Lottie, Torbjörn och Karin - February 19, 2024 at 03:38 AM

MH

“ *2 files added to the album Hjelm Family*



Maria L Hjelm - February 18, 2024 at 06:29 PM

PE

“ *To Lars and the entire Hjelm Family. Condolences from The Elmore's in Richmond, Virginia. 92 is a good life lived. My Dad passed away at 90 years old exactly one week prior to Norman's passing. We send peace and love to you all.*

Pete Elmore - February 18, 2024 at 02:41 PM

DL

“ Praise be God for Norman's life now given. It was my great joy and honor to work with Norman directly for many years and on many projects between 2005 and 2015 and then, I would say indirectly, from 2015 until now. "Indirectly" because Norman was always a great influence and encourager in my work even if we did not have the chance to meet anymore. I believe that last time we were together was when we hosted in our home in the Twin Cities. I think of him often now that I am in Geneva. Grateful for his major contribution on the Lutheran World Federation: From Federation to Communion. This book remains a reference book on the first decades of the LWF. I remember talking much about you all though unfortunately we never had a chance to meet. Many blessings and continued prayers with you all in this difficult time. Again, praise be God for Norman. He was an extraordinary companion! Dirk G. Lange, Professor and Assistant General Secretary Ecumenical Relation, Lutheran World Federation.

Dirk Lange - February 18, 2024 at 10:59 AM

CM

“ 2 files added to the album Hjelm Family



Chadwick & McKinney - February 17, 2024 at 07:26 AM