



Russell Lowell Knight, Jr.

December 14, 1942 - October 4, 2020

Russell Lowell Knight Jr. was born in Baltimore, Maryland, to Catherine Daves Knight and Russell Knight on December 14, 1942. Russell was the second child in a family of eight children. He was raised in Baltimore and attended Dunbar High School. Russell developed a love of music early in life, listening to spirituals with his siblings and parents. He spent time singing in the choir at Grace Memorial Baptist Church until he was inspired by a visiting missionary to leave Maryland and begin training for his ministry.

Russell moved to Chicago in 1960 to attend Moody Bible Institute. While at Moody, he studied Home Missions. There, he started the 412 Project, where he and other students provided mentoring for young children in the local Cabrini Green Housing Projects. While the school initially resisted the program, Russell persisted, insisting that kids come to campus and that his college embrace their mission of outreach within the city with those most in need. He was also known on campus for his particular brand of humor and practical jokes, once disassembling and reassembling an entire car on the stage of Tory Gray Auditorium.

Three months before graduation, against the regulation of the armed forces, Russell was drafted out of college to serve in the Army during the war in Vietnam. While enlisted, he traveled to Vietnam, Japan, and Hawaii. He was shot and injured multiple times, receiving the

Purple Heart for his service. After his honorable discharge, he returned to St. Anne, Illinois, spending one year working at the Bible Witness Camp. In 1969, Russell returned to Moody Bible Institute to complete his coursework and was asked, instead, to stay for one year and provide consultation on updating the school's mission program. It was during this year that he met and fell in love with his life partner, Bethany Ann Kloster.

Russell and Bethany married on March 25, 1972, in Chicago, Illinois. They remained in Chicago, beginning their ministry together. Together they formed Campus Life Clubs at multiple high schools on the South and West sides of Chicago, which provided students a path for success in life and introduced so many to the Kingdom of God. At the height of the program, Russell ran ten clubs per week while working full time for Youth For Christ. He served as the Vice-President for Urban Ministry before forming the Chicago Urban Reconciliation Enterprise in 1985. As President of C.U.R.E., Russ continued his work with his partners in faith, Peter, Tom, Derrick, Forrest, and his lifelong partner in ministry, Beth.

Russ and Beth made Oakdale Covenant Church in Chicago their home church for 17 years. There he served as an Associate Minister of Christian Education teaching Sunday School and coordinating classes for adult education. He joined Christ Bible Church where he remained a member until the time of his passing. He served that congregation as an Elder and the Director of Christian Education until he moved with his wife back to his home state of Maryland in 2017.

Over the years, Russ taught classes at Moody Bible Institute, North Park Seminary, and was a guest instructor at S.C.U.P.E, Garrett Theological Seminary, Trinity University, and countless other institutions. For 35 years, the team of C.U.R.E. ran the Cure Winter Conference each year, hosting upwards of 400 teens for a multi-day retreat which provided them a deeper walk with

Christ. Russ often worked behind the scenes at the conference, using it as an opportunity to train young leaders to develop their own passion for ministry. He served as President of the National Black Evangelical Association, on many advisory boards, and as a consultant at churches and organizations across the nation. He traveled nationally and internationally speaking, preaching the gospel, and teaching about urban ministry and Kingdom building. Russ' life and ministry was written about in multiple books and magazines and he was awarded the Alumnus of the Year award from Moody Bible Institute in 2003.

Russ and Beth shared 48 years of marriage. Together they had three children, Russell III, Aaron, and Catherine. They lived on the south side of Chicago where Beth took over the home ministry portion of C.U.R.E. running after school programs from their family home, taking in travelers from around the globe and operating a park for neighborhood children as Russ continued consulting with churches, teaching, and facilitating racial reconciliation conferences across the U.S. While at home he enjoyed sports, reading, and word puzzles. He passed on his love of music, his humor, and his whistling to his children, though no one could ever quite match his skill. Beyond these things, he shared his love of the Lord, his dedication to racial justice, and his heart for people. Russ spent his last years in the loving care of his wife, whom he adored. She served as his nurse and attended to his care with the same love she gave to being his friend, his partner, and his confidant in the many years they shared. Russell Lowell Knight Jr. departed this life and moved on to glory the evening of October 4, 2020.

He was preceded in death by his parents Russell and Catherine, and siblings, Jean and Deborah. He leaves behind to hold his memory his wife Beth, his children Russell III (Fonta), Aaron (Shaunteyia) Catherine (John); six grandchildren, Russell IV, Aniya, Arielle, Joshua, Jalen, and Micah; and

siblings Lewis, Harold, Carolyn, Carroll, and Sharon, a host of nieces and nephews, extended family and a world of colleagues, students, and friends.

Tribute Wall

RJ

“ I just learned that Russ has gone to the heavenly commonwealth. Russ, I wish I had known of your passing. You made a tremendous impact on my teenage years. I went on to earn that PhD as I told you I would. Thank you for being there for so many teens like me. You taught us leadership skills and to carry ourselves with dignity. Surely the doors of heaven embraced you. My condolences to Beth and the rest of the family. Sincerely Randal Maurice Jelks

Randal Jelks - January 11, 2022 at 06:09 PM

DB

“ Dear Beth , \nWe were very saddened to learn of Russ' passing. Russ (and you) have been such a big part of our lives. - In fact we became friends as a result of attending the Campus Life Club at Lindblom and then a short 7 years after graduation, we married each other ! .So you can add matchmaker to Russ' talents. Besides the adventures of the Campus Life meetings (Including The World's Largest Banana Split) some of our favorite memories are of coming to your house for dinner, games and great conversations on Sundays. The way you both opened your home to God and to others was and will always be an inspiration to us. I'm so glad we were able to see you before you both before you moved to Maryland. May God comfort you, Russell, Aaron and Katy and their children with a lifetime of wonderful memories in the difficult days ahead. Love, Darryl and Deborah

Deborah and Darryl Brown - October 23, 2020 at 11:43 PM

CP

“ With heartfelt condolences,

Carly Woods and Damien Pfister - October 11, 2020 at 02:05 PM

LD

“ I'm sure you will get a ton of memories of Russ' good work in ministry to people and his work for the Kingdom. So ... I'm going to share a bit of humor. Russ had a button collection: advertising buttons, political buttons - a wide variety. I am Irish and a friend had given me a very large button that said \"Kiss Me, I'm Irish.\" I decided to give it to Russ to add to his collection. He chuckled and accepted it. A few weeks later we had a CURE staff in a restaurant. And there sat Russ with the 4\" button on that said \"Kiss Me I'm Irish.\" It happened to be St. Patrick's Day so I guess it's true that everyone is Irish on St. Patrick's Day. I don't know what happened to his button collection, but whoever inherits it now knows the story of one of them. Heaven is a little sweeter with Russ there!

Linda Daniels - October 10, 2020 at 03:46 PM

BT

“ Praying that God comforts and strengthens the entire family during this challenging time - my heartfelt condolences are extended to you all!

Brandon Tilghman - October 10, 2020 at 12:07 AM

BK

“ With loving memories of \"Russell Knight, Jr.\",

Brad & Pat Kloster - October 08, 2020 at 09:04 PM

TS

“ We are holding you and your family in our thoughts and sending warmth and healing.

Tribute Store - October 08, 2020 at 12:27 PM

GK

“ With our most heartfelt sympathies, we are thinking of you all as you celebrate the remarkable life of your husband, father, and grandfather.

Gina, Angie, Kenya, Kari and Kisha - October 08, 2020 at 08:25 AM

DU

“ With deepest sympathy, Catherine, John, Jalen, and Micah. We are so sorry for your loss. Your friends & colleagues in COMM.

Dept of Communication, UMD - October 07, 2020 at 06:31 PM