



Rev. John H. Brown

FEB 28, 1937 - FEB 15, 2020



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Rev. John H. Brown

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The Rev. John H. Brown, age 82, passed away Saturday, February 15, 2020, after a brief illness. He was born February 28, 1937 in Old Hickory (Nashville), TN to Odell T. and Julia F. (Howard) Brown. He then went on to graduate from Allgood High School in 1955, Belmont College in 1964 and Southern Baptist Seminary, in 1967. John was never one to shy away from hard work. While attending Belmont and Seminary, he worked a fulltime job, helped care for his children at home, with his wife, Betty; and still managed to graduate Valedictorian of his seminary class.

He had started the Washington Avenue Baptist Church in Cookeville, Tennessee in the early 1960's; and was the pastor at the First Baptist Church in Ellettsville, Indiana in the late 1960's. He was also the mental health director at Bloomington Hospital in Bloomington, Indiana in the early 1970's.

In 1975, Rev. Brown moved to Muskegon and served as pastor of First Baptist Church for 33 years. It's been said, "John's congregation was not just the church, but the community in which he lived." He was instrumental in starting the church's award-winning TV Ministry, which has served the community since 1977. It was Ecumenical in Spirit and he has remained active in it, especially enjoying the series, "Out to Pastors", with Jerry Hagans, Alan Alpert and Elsa Pressentin. John was deeply appreciative of all the assistance, from the beginning of the church ministry, of his long-time friend and church secretary, Donna Scott.

John was deeply involved in hosting a group of Muskegon County educators at church, to press the issue of how to have a "Graduation Generation." First Baptist hosted programs for the National organization for the advancement of the black community; and allowed the Islamic community to have a dinner at First Baptist, again being Ecumenical. He has been to Nicaragua seven or more times starting different programs and clinics. One of them being a safe water drinking system for a river area of Nicaragua. On one of these educational trips he included several of the teens from the church. He was always forward thinking and early on, even had the nerve to let women be at the Lectern on Sunday morning reading scripture. In John's humility, he



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was often heard saying, "It's not about me, but it's the right thing to do." He was not above doing the seemingly ridiculous. At one point the pipe organ at First Baptist needed refurbishing, so he rode his bicycle from Muskegon to Indianapolis to raise money for the project. John also saw the church through his shepherding in building its Family Center from the end of the 1990's through its completion, in 2000. He currently attended St. Paul's Episcopal Church, which he immensely enjoyed.

On May 7, 1955 he married the former Betty J. Duke, and she survives him along with his children, Sonja (Nels Gunderson) Brown of Madison, IN, Julia (Mark) Conlin of Bloomington, IN, John H. Brown, Jr. and Jennifer (Jeff) Costin of Indianapolis, IN; 7 grandchildren, Sara (Jeff Kotmehl) Renneisen, Jaclyn (Page) Cotton, Elizabeth (Courtney) Curson, Wade Costin, Chase Costin, Parker Brown and Logan Brown; 2 great grandchildren, Connor and Sydney Cotton and 1 brother, Jim (Judy) Brown of Allgood, TN.

A CELEBRATION OF LIFE for John will be held 6:00PM Friday, February 28, 2020 at St. Paul's Episcopal Church, 1006 Third St., Muskegon, MI 49440. VISITATION with John's family will be 5-7:00 PM Thursday, February 27, 2020 at the Lee Chapel of Sytsema Funeral and Cremation Services, 6291 S. Harvey St., Norton Shores, MI 49444. For a more lasting memorial, you are asked to consider First Baptist Church of Muskegon or St. Paul's Episcopal Church. You are also invited to sign the family's Online Guest Book at www.sytsemafh.com



Events


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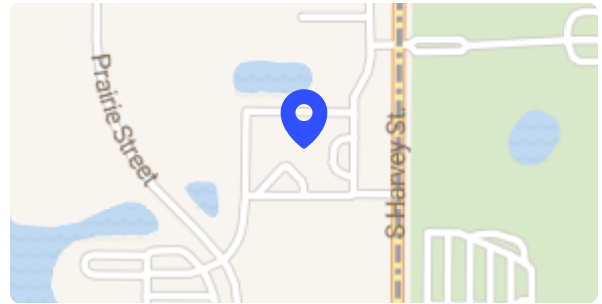
Visitation

 **Thursday**, February 27, 2020


 5:00 PM - 7:00 PM ET


 **Sytsema Funeral & Cremation Services - The Lee Chapel**

6291 Harvey St., Norton Shores MI 49444



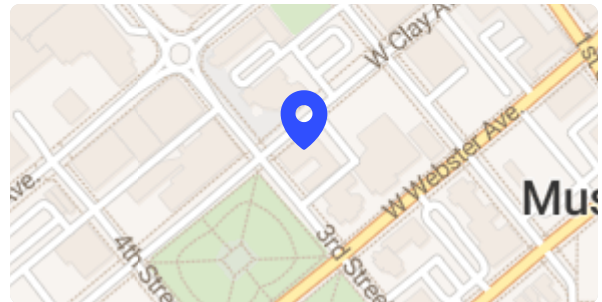
Celebration of Life

 **Friday**, February 28, 2020

 6:00 PM ET

 **St. Paul's Episcopal**

1006 3rd Street, Muskegon MI 49440





Tribute Wall

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BG

Beth Gaw posted:

My Uncle John was the type of person you never forgot--he was such a great listener and always had a funny twist to bring out a laugh in every conversation. His voice was captivating and peaceful. I feel honored to have spent the time we had together over the years. He left the world a better place than he found it and encouraged others to do the same. I know he is receiving his reward by hearing the words: Well done thou good and faithful servant--enter in. So thankful that I one day will get to see him again.

March 2 at 12:56 PM

EP

Ethal Peliotes lit a candle in honor of John .



March 1 at 12:21 PM

JD

Jd posted:

I've never met a more open minded, encouraging Pastor in all my life.As a person who doesn't stay in one place for more than a few years and has been involved in the spectrum of biblical circles, for over half my life, this should not be taken lightly.I've been all over the map in my journey of Faith and the one thing that stuck with me was how learned Pastor Brown was. Always interested in what he did not know and encouraging people in their Faith at their own pace.He knew ultimately Who was in charge of our futures and I believe he respected each persons journey as an individual. Keeping every encounter in his heart and using it to help others along their way.I appreciate all he has taught me. His manner & voice will be missed but he will certainly not be forgotten.Please be sure to decorate your office as I remember it in your next life. With all the same couches, artwork, lamps, books, fish and good music.Thank you for all you have given me to remember you by & for your humble guidance in this mystifying journey of life.J D

February 28 at 8:35 PM

RB

Rev. Miriam Bush posted:

John was a "long-term pastorate" mentor for us in Muskegon. We give thanks for the gift of his life and his expansive and graceful ways.

February 28 at 6:01 PM



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DM

Don Mathews posted:

Don Mathews gives thanks for a long friendship with John, and remembers what a blessing John has been to the community. He sends deepest sympathies and love.

February 28 at 12:15 PM

JB

Jon Batch posted:

I had the privilege of working alongside Pastor John as the youth pastor from 1997-1999 and learned so very much from him. The simple humbleness and grace he showed was amazing. We had our first of four children while serving at first baptist. He will always be a special person in my life and ministry. Sincerely. Jon Batch

February 27 at 2:19 PM

RM

Richard Myers posted:

In the years during which John was pastor for my parents, Merrill and Ellen Myers, we came to cherish him for his thoughtfulness, grace, humor and faith. Always one of the calls we wanted to make when we were visiting in Muskegon. We always felt his support and his very steady friendship for our family. The photo reminds us of the peace in his heart. Richard and Elizabeth Myers

February 26 at 7:20 AM



Anonymous sent a Beautiful Dreams to the Brown family.



February 24 at 5:27 PM



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Patricia posted:

My beloved Julia, Sara, Jaclyn, Elizabeth + whole Family ❤️: one of the most precious gifts you've given to me was getting to meet Sir Lord John H Brown . He will always be remembered by me as one of the wisest men, most charming, most gentleman and most genuine humanist! So kind, so intelligent, so soulful, so light-hearted, so subtle, with the wittiest sense of humour! We 've had many deep soul-searching talks in those Jamaica beaches. It was such a special treat hanging out with him! John will continue to inspire us to aspire for our best throughout our lives! And that is why he is Eternal! So, don't be sad, querido John; be cheerful for you've touched our souls with your Grace + Beauty! My Namaste & Peace & Love! ♡:revolving_hearts:♡:revolving_hearts:♡

February 24 at 7:22 AM



Gordon And Carlene Bracey posted:

Our hearts are sad today as we learn of John's passing. What a gentle man he was, kind and understanding. Gordon and I have known John since our school days, and we all knew then that he was destined to serve the world in some significant way. God chose well when he picked his servant, John. We have kept in touch over the years, and now we are all in our 80's. we remembered those days. We talked of family and work and blessings we received each day. We learned of all the work John was doing in his service to God and our world, and we were so happy for him for making a difference. Betty, we send our love to you and your family, and pray you find comfort in John's memory. Carlene and Gordon Bracey Class of '55

February 24 at 6:45 AM



Gordon And Carlene Bracey sent a Sweetest Sunrise Bouquet to the Brown family.



February 24 at 6:22 AM



Richard L Ciezak Sr. posted:

I met John at both my mother-in-laws funeral service as well as my father-in-laws. What a sweet and soulful individual man he was. We spoke of my in-laws passing as well as the recent loss of my dog at the time. He was very comforting and I will never forget him. I speak of him often. John: May you rest in peace and I know that you are with your Lord...Richard L. Ciezak Sr.

February 23 at 11:01 AM



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SA

Sandra lit a candle in honor of John .

I only knew him thru funerals or speaking in a pastor's discussion group. He touched so many lives, churched and unchurched folks. He will be missed by so very many people because of his ability to love everyone alike.



February 23 at 8:19 AM

KH

Kristen Kendall Hansen posted:

I am so sorry and sad to learn of your dad's passing. He was such a wonderful, friendly kind person. Not only knowing him as a neighbor he did my marriage a few years ago which was extra special. Sending my condolences to Betty, Jenny, John and the rest of the family. Sincerely, Kristen Kendall Hansen.

February 22 at 10:15 AM

TF

Terry Fulk posted:

Pastor Brown was indeed a precious brother in the Lord. Our acquaintance was through the television ministry and he was so gracious and always seemed to have a minute to talk and shared positive, uplifting comments about other ministers and ministries in the area. He was a faithful steward and servant and all round nice guy. Pastor Terry Fulk, Host The Believer's Voice

February 20 at 11:53 AM

ZH

Zen And Margaret Hanger posted:

Betty, so sorry to hear this. Missed the obituary on Feb 23. Just heard today. He will be missed by so many. He did so much in the community. Zen and Margaret Hanger.

February 20 at 9:36 AM

CP

Cynthia Price posted:

Rev. Brown was an extraordinary person. He touched my life in many ways, ways that are different from others I've spoken with; and there are probably hundreds more he would have influenced and cared for in ways that are still different, all reflecting his compassion, kindness and intelligence. Our community is diminished by his loss, but we can only be grateful that it was made so much better over the years by his presence. Cynthia Price

February 20 at 6:37 AM



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Anonymous sent a Beautiful in Blue to the Brown family.



February 20 at 5:19 AM



Anonymous sent a Simply Elegant Spathiphyllum to the Brown family.



February 19 at 8:54 PM



Sally C. posted:

Pastor John meant a lot to my family from marriage ceremonies, funerals and visitations with my daughter and son-in-law. He helped with a memorial service for one of our new parishioners along with Dennis Baaso. Pastor John will always hold a place in my heart. May he rest in peace. May God look over Betty and the family at this time.

February 19 at 7:36 PM



Don Vanderwest posted:

I sure will miss Rev. Brown. I worked with him a few times which made me aware of his great skills and gifts. I got to know him better at St. Paul's. What a great individual. My condolences go out to his Betty and their family. Don Vanderwest

February 19 at 7:09 PM



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Timothy Allen Monroe lit a candle in honor of John .



February 19 at 7:01 PM



Susie Engle February 19 at 7:21 PM

Rev Brown came to My house and without knowing my husband at all gave one of the most beautiful services that I have ever attended and while he was at my home I found out what a beautiful and accomplished man he was. He not only listened about us he told us about himself. I was extremely impressed. The world will be a sadder place without reverend Brown in it.



Timothy Monroe February 19 at 7:02 PM

Thoughts, Prayers, and Condolences to the Brown Family.



Anonymous sent a Divine Peace Bouquet to the Brown family.



February 19 at 6:25 PM



Sheri Sander posted:

Pastor John will always hold a special place in my heart. He performed the service for Jeff'. He came to our house to get to know about Jeff, and left knowing what a wonderful guy Jeff was. And he left with us knowing what a wonderful man Pastor John was. He did a wonderful job at the service and gave us peace. Please RIP. You are loved

February 19 at 5:38 PM



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Bob Curson posted:

We were so blessed to have spent time with John in Jamaica. He was a wonderful person and will be missed by all. Our sincere condolences to his family and friends.

February 19 at 4:16 PM



Kimberley Willis February 19 at 5:04 PM

RIP Pastor Brown, You recently preformed my husband's funeral which gave me such comfort. You had such a calm and soothing voice and wonderful to listen to. Prayers going out to your family and many many friends.



Sharon Rindfusz posted:

Please accept my sincerest condolences for your loss, it is a tremendous one. I am beyond honored and blessed to have known him. We moved to Muskegon when I was 11 years old, where we began attending First Baptist Church. It seems as though there isn't much in my life that he has not been a part of. He was always providing guidance, support and love, every step of the way. He was one of my most favorite men and human beings, ever. He was one of a kind. He was a true example of Faith, Hope, Love, Kindness, Knowledge, Compassion, and Christianity. He was a true legend and touched every life who was blessed enough to have crossed paths with him. "When God calls one of his most blessed angels home, the heavens and angels rejoice; while we are left behind to weep with the rain." The world will never be the same without him.

February 19 at 3:20 PM



Joann Privasky posted:

Thoughts and prayers are with the entire family knowing only Jennifer!Your father was a gentle gentleman and will be missed by many!! knew him mostly thru the Sytsema Funeral Home where I had worked !God Bless you allJo Privasky

February 19 at 12:07 PM



Anonymous sent a Guiding Light Bouquet to the Brown family.



February 19 at 9:00 AM



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Julie lit a candle in honor of John .

Condolences to you and your family Julia. You are all in our thoughts and prayers. Steve, Julie, & Jensen Conlin

February 19 at 8:16 AM



Brian And Stephanie Borlik sent an Arrive in Style to the Brown family.

February 19 at 8:10 AM





Memories only last if you share them

Join us in honoring John by contributing to a collection of shared memories.



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