



Leicester "Les" Longden

November 29, 1946 - July 6, 2022

Leicester "Les" Ralph Longden, age 75, passed away in Muskegon, MI on Wednesday, July 6, 2022. He was born on November 29, 1946, to his parents William and Eva (Rosser) Longden in Fort Macleod, Alberta, Canada. On June 15, 1968, he married the former Linda Maas, and they spent 54 wonderful years together. Les was quite well educated, having received his bachelor's degree from Lewis and Clark College in Portland, Oregon, his Master of Divinity from Union Theological Seminary in New York City, and his Ph.D. from Drew University in Madison, New Jersey. Les was a gifted and precise writer, and throughout his life he collaborated often with leaders of the Methodist Church. He had a knack for taking complex things and making them simple and easier to understand, which came in handy in the 15 years that he was a seminary professor at the University of Dubuque in Iowa. Throughout his life he was a pastor at three churches: Clear Lake in Salem, Oregon, Rose City in Portland, Oregon, and Trinity Methodist in Lansing, Michigan, but he also was happy to fill in preaching wherever he was needed. An avid reader and collector of books, he had over 6,000 books in his personal library. He enjoyed gardening and running, having run several marathons, but he was most passionate about helping people find their God-given direction. Les will be lovingly remembered by his wife, Linda; two children: Leicester (Jennie) Longden and Lisa (Adam) Murrison; six grandchildren: Adam Murrison, Lucas Longden, Matthew Murrison, Brady Longden, Emily Murrison, and Chloe Longden; and two brothers: Warren (Betty) Longden and Paul (Tammy) Longden. He was preceded in death by his parents, William and Eva, and his brother, David Longden. A FUNERAL SERVICE will be held for Les at 1:00 PM on Tuesday, July 12, at Lake Harbor United Methodist Church, 4861 Henry St, Norton Shores, MI 49441. VISITATION will be taking place on Monday, July 11, from 5:00-7:00 PM at The Lee Chapel of Sytsema Funeral & Cremation Services, 6291 Harvey St, Norton Shores, MI, 49444, as well as an hour prior to the service on Tuesday. In lieu of flowers, memorial contributions can be made out to ALS of Michigan. Please sign the family's online guestbook and share memories at [sytsemafh.com](https://www.sytsemafh.com). For those who were not able to attend the service in person, a video recording is available at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JThVvqI_a8U

Cemetery Details

Lakeside Cemetery

2201 Crozier
Muskegon, MI 49441

Previous Events

Visitation

JUL 11. 5:00 PM - 7:00 PM (ET)

Sytsema Funeral & Cremation Services - The Lee Chapel
6291 Harvey St.
Norton Shores, MI 49444

Funeral Service

JUL 12. 1:00 PM (ET)

Lake Harbor United Methodist Church
4861 S. Henry St.
Muskegon, MI 49441

Tribute Wall

DD

“ Just learned of Les' death. I have very fond memories of times shared at Trinity United Methodist in Lansing. Les baptizing Mike and then officiating at our wedding. I also remember visiting both Les & Linda after they first moved to Iowa. Even though we didn't stay in touch you were always thought of. Linda - I am so sorry for your loss and sending prayers for comfort to you and your whole family - Mike & Denise DeVoll (Potterville)

Denise DeVoll - July 25 at 10:02 AM



“ Les left quite the impression with in my time of attending UDTS. He challenged me to think outside of the box and encouraged me to stay true to who I am. He will be deeply missed.

Timothy Delaney - July 13 at 06:33 PM

RH

“ I was sad to learn of the death of Les. When I became pastor of First Church in Lansing, Les and I connected as colleagues - meeting for lunch about once a month for lunch. Trinity and First were in close proximity - which is what initially connected us. Les and I had a common family heritage that was rooted in the Salvation Army and both of us loved the brass band tradition that became a way of sharing recordings and memories. That common thread of music became the entry into much deeper conversation about faith, tradition, calling, ministry, history as well as the future of the United Methodist Church. Conversations were spirited, reflective and prophetic - always with care, respect and honor in our commonalities and disagreements. I remember clearly our conversations around the discernment of moving from the pastorate to the classroom. Les has influenced many people in his various roles in ministry and I appreciate the memories of friendship during an important developmental time for each of us. His family - whom he adored - will be in my prayers.

Rev. Dr. Robert Hundley

Rev. Dr. Robert Hundley - July 12 at 07:39 AM

JT

“ 1 file added to the album *In Memory of Les*



JTAL Team - July 11 at 02:50 PM



I'll always especially remember how he and Dr. Oden and I tried valiantly to help Drew Seminary maintain some kind of connection with traditional Christian theology and pastoral practice as we participated as members of the Search Committee for a professor of Systematic Theology for the Seminary and Graduate School in 1986. We were advocating Randy Maddox, but it was Catherine Keller who was hired - who, to her credit for her honesty, said she would be much more comfortable being named the professor of Constructive Theology instead of Systematic Theology. And so that's what happened.

David Ford - September 03 at 08:21 PM

WF

“ A wonderful pastor, teacher, leader and a true gentleman. Praise God for his life of service in Christ's church. *Walter Fenton*

Walter Fenton - July 11 at 01:03 PM

KA

“ I had fun memories of runs together, card games and many laughs when I visited Lisa and her family. He always had a big smile.

Kathryn - July 10 at 06:45 PM

MC

“ Les and I once disagreed about whether to participate in a particular initiative seeking reform of the United Methodist Church. I called him. We talked. I said to him: “you are too irenic a person to be mixed up with this venture.”

Sometime later Les decided to put distance between himself and that initiative. We ran into one another a year or so later. We revisited that earlier conversation. I remember, Les smiled sadly and said: “In the end, I decided that I was too irenic a person to be involved with that venture.”

He was a person of great integrity and a fine interpreter of the Wesleyan theological tradition. May Les Longden Rest In Peace and Rise in Glory!

Michael G. Cartwright - July 10 at 12:17 PM



“ Arrive in Style was purchased for the family of Leicester "Les" Longden.



July 09 at 05:17 PM

WS

“ Les was a gem. He embodied the Wesleyan spirit of reform and renewal that is the heart of AFTE. No small part of that spirit was his charitable and gracious way of being in the world. He welcomed me generously at my first Christmas Conference at Shakertown. Methodism was blessed by his ministry.

Warren Smith - July 09 at 04:13 PM

RP

“ I was the Lansing District Superintendent who was responsible, along with Bishop Judith Craig, for negotiating Les's transfer to the Michigan Area. Although we had some theological differences, I always respected Les and valued his opinions. We were able to have good conversations together. I introduced him to Lansing: Trinity UMC. It was a challenging and difficult appointment, but he served that church with love, with skill, and with integrity. My love and prayers reach out to Linda and the family. Les was a good man. He fought the good fight; he finished the race; he kept the faith.

Rev. Dr. A. Edward Perkins

Rev. Dr. A. Edward Perkins - July 09 at 02:56 PM

JR

“ Upon Les's arrival at UDTs (two decades ago), he became my advisor when I was midway through my M-Div studies. Memories I treasure include Les's quick wit, charm and welcoming smile, his midweek chapel service sermon on The Lord's Prayer (affirming the validity of all its versions: sins, debts, and trespasses), our mutual development of a course-credit "countdown chart" (toward graduation), his mission—evangelism and pastoral administration classes (especially the enlightening field trip to vibrant churches of northern Illinois), and his wise counsel (with warmth and understanding) then and beyond those seminary years we shared together. Blessings and Peace.

Jim Roth - July 09 at 11:08 AM

MB

“ I worked with Les at Rose City Park UMC in the late 1970's and he was a brilliant and fun part of our ministry team. Rev. Jim Jenkins, Carol Thompson, Carol Walker and Frank Holman were the others. I have fond memories and great appreciation. Les' insisting that I come work at RCP started me on a 38 year career in the United Methodist Church. I'm forever grateful that he believed in me and encouraged all of us. Marcey Balcomb

Marcey Balcomb - July 09 at 01:00 AM

PC

“ Les never stopped believing in me and was a steady encourager. He so enjoyed being a teacher of teachers and preachers. Truly he had a generous heart. Condolences to his wife and family. I miss him very much.



Pastor Kimberly Cheng - July 08 at 07:25 PM

KK

“ Les's passionate mentoring and teaching have been instrumental to my approach in working with mid to larger sized Iowa UM churches. He clearly loved the local church and breathed that passion into his students. I was blessed to study under his tutelage in my D-Min program at UDTs. His "Umbrella of Grace" has been liberally shared as I worked with both lay and clergy in local churches and in working with new pastors in the Iowa Annual Conference's Licensing School. Les, you will be missed, but I am confident we will meet again! - Kerrin Kirkpatrick, Retired Elder, IAUMC

Kerrin Kirkpatrick - July 08 at 05:44 PM



“ Les was always a blessing!! He was such a faithful disciple of Jesus Christ and impacted so many of our lives. I am sorry for your loss, and thank God for Les and all of you!!

Gregory McGarvey - July 08 at 04:23 PM

DS

“ Dubuque Theological Seminary purchased the Simply Elegant Spathiphyllum for the family of Leicester "Les" Longden.



Dubuque Theological Seminary - July 08 at 02:53 PM

LR

“ Although I saw him infrequently, I will miss him. He was such a kind friend to me ever since we discovered we had the same uncommon name. Lester Ruth

Lester Ruth - July 08 at 02:21 PM

SM

“ Les was always so thoughtful and wise in his comments, not given to dramatic pretense. he also brought such could contextual and historical perspective to the church. we need more Les' in the church today! steve moore

steve moore - July 08 at 02:01 PM

SR

“ Les was one of those "older" John Wesley Fellows, when I joined the Fellowship, who was very warm, welcoming, and accessible. Les and I would see each other, on occasion at church and scholarly functions. He was unfailingly kind and engaging. I always looked forward to talking with him.

As a scholar, he was also something of a model to me as he combined pastoral ministry (and a pastor's heart) with his scholarship. He was a real churchman.

May Les rest in peace and rise in glory.

Stephen Rankin - July 08 at 01:13 PM

PD

“ Hello. I met Leicester "Les" in the mid-eighties in Madison, NJ. We were both at Drew U. together, and became friends during my years there. He was one Canadian that I saw eye to eye with when it came to theology. Most don't know this but I'm the one who told him about A Foundation for Theological Education and encouraged him to apply for one of their scholarships. He was a good investment for A. F. T. E.! I'm sure he was a good teacher/pastor.

Paul D. - July 08 at 01:00 PM



“ Les was one of the most gracious and kind Christian persons I met as a John Wesley Fellow. He was a wonderful contributor to our lively discussions about our faith and our church, and he will be sorely missed at our meetings. He modelled irenic and loving orthodoxy, and was never obnoxious for Jesus, but always, always devoted to the God-man Jesus. Blessings and prayers for his family. Ben Witherington, III

Ben Witherington - July 08 at 12:58 PM

CH

“ I have known, appreciated, and loved Les since he first became a John Wesley Fellow in 1986. I am so very sorry for the loss of such a wonderful person.

Craig C. Hill - July 08 at 12:54 PM

BB

“ I know I speak for the entire Michigan Conference of The United Methodist Church when I offer appreciation for Les' service to Jesus Christ through the UMC. Well done, good and faithful servant. May God's love embrace all who are mourning. Bishop David Bard, Michigan Conference of The United Methodist Church

Bishop David Bard - July 08 at 11:53 AM

JF

“ Judy McPherson, Rachel H and families purchased the Divine Peace Bouquet for the family of Leicester "Les" Longden.



Judy McPherson, Rachel H and families - July 08 at 11:28 AM



“ Beautiful Dreams was purchased for the family of Leicester "Les" Longden.



July 08 at 10:24 AM

MN

“ He made us see the Bible in ways we didn't see before. We loved his flair for drama. We always looked forward to his sermons. TUMC members. So sorry for your loss.

Marcia Nelms - July 07 at 10:33 PM

JT

“ I'm going to miss our conversations about books and other things whenever we had the pleasure of seeing Les when he came East. He was the most educated and erudite person I've ever met. Also one of the most down-to--Earth . A rare combination. R. I. P. Linda, so sorry for your loss.

Jeff Topps - July 07 at 10:28 PM



“ Arrive in Style was purchased for the family of Leicester "Les" Longden.



July 07 at 06:14 PM