



Rev. Cornelius "Neil" Van Heest

September 22, 1932 - November 23, 2018

REV. CORNELIUS A. (NEIL) VAN HEEST, age 86, of Holland On Friday afternoon, November 23, Neil ran straight into the arms of his Lord. Under Hospice care at his Lakeside Vista residence, he was surrounded by the bedside gathering of 20 family members. He ran his race well throughout his 86 years. His high school and Hope College athletic prowess included varsity letters in Cross Country. A long life of running included 5K races in his late 70s and related themes in his sermons on "Second Wind," "Hitting the Wall," "Fear of Failure," "Finish Strong" and "Run for the Prize" to name a few. On Friday he indeed received his Grand Prize. His 2015 book, Run for Life, is a collection of sermonettes on these themes. Neil is survived by wife Mary Lou, the joy of his life. They modeled for family a 64 year love affair in which both sacrificed self for one another. He is survived by sons Jim (Nancy), Wayne (Chantal), Paul, Tom (Barb) and John (Joy), all blessed to be West Michigan residents and in regular fellowship with Neil and Mary Lou. Also surviving are beloved grandchildren Jaime (Kylan), Allie, Simeon, Zoë (Brian), Sam (Jackie), Priscilla and Matt, and great-granddaughter Lorraine. Neil is the son of John and Lucile (Bishop) VanHeest. Born September 22, 1932 in Catskill (NY), he was predeceased by sister Rhea and is survived by brother Gerard (Eloise) and sisters Jacqueline (Donald), Lucille, Harriet (Ted) and Wilma (Lynn). He enrolled in Hope College at age 15, excelled in athletics and studies (and dating Mary Lou) and graduated in 1952. He completed a Masters of Divinity from Western Theological Seminary in 1955, marrying

August 6, 1954 after the completion of Mary Lou's degree at Hope. Neil pastored RCA congregations in Fultonville and Schenectady (NY), Portage, Holland and Grand Rapids (MI) and Sheboygan (WI). He continued in RCA service as Specialized Interim Minister and Calling Pastor in a series of churches in Michigan (Rockford, Forest Grove, Grandville, Portage, Holland, Muskegon and Zeeland) and New Jersey (Peapack). His tireless optimism was most often challenged as a fan of Detroit sports teams, and most often rewarded as a devotee of Hope College athletics. Alternating ecstasy and trademark "snits" over sports were gifts shared with all five sons. His important legacy with family was modeling a life of service, while mentoring and encouraging others to follow his example. Family members adopted these principles of stewardship of time, talent and treasure. He influenced career discernment and passionate volunteer commitment to Church and community. A memorial service will be 11:00am Wednesday, November 28, at Central Park Reformed Church, 614 Myrtle Avenue, Holland. Visitation will be 9:00-10:45am Wednesday, prior to the service at the church. In honor of Neil's ministry and the broader family legacy in ministry and overseas mission, the family encourages consideration of memorial gifts to the John and Lucile VanHeest Mission Fund at Hope College, supporting mission experiences for Hope students. The family is being served by Langeland-Sterenbergh Funeral Home. www.langelandsterenbergh.com.

Tribute Wall



“ *Rev. Cornelius "Neil" Van Heest*

August 31, 2022 at 01:26 PM



“ *"As the daughter of his friends Rev. and Mrs George Murray, I was very grieved to just learn about Neil's passing, yesterday in the Hope News. Though my father is deceased I called my mother, Barbara, and together with my husband, Richard send our sincerest prayers to your family. Neil was a wise, and compassionate friend. Who traveled to the Petoskey hospital during my father's most difficult surgeries. He was our blessing... May God bless you all..."*

Margaret Murray Patmos - April 22, 2019 at 12:00 AM



“ *"Rev. George and Barbara Murray were my parents, and although my father is deceased, it was with great regret that I had JUST yesterday (Easter) read about Neil's passing in the Hope News. I notified my mother (age 91), and she, my husband Richard, and I all send our deepest prayers to your family. Your father was a VERY dear friend, and even stayed at the Petoskey hospital during my father's most difficult surgeries... (And, we'll never forget his heroic efforts at Forest Grove.) God deeply bless you all."*

Margaret Murray Patmos - April 22, 2019 at 12:00 AM

DE

“As a friend and observer I never thanked Neil enough for his tireless work at Forest Grove. For his desire to bring truth, reconciliation, forgiveness, and to get us on a path of healing and growth. His commitment to find truth by listing and developing a timeline was very insightful. He was The Robert Mueller of our time. So I say thank you, to you his family. He was and is a blessing to us. Dan Elzinga”

Daniel Elzinga - December 02, 2018 at 12:00 AM

PF

“Pastor Neil was greatly loved at Lisha'sKill. His ministry here was a special one, which helped our church move on into the future. As a high school student, he personally gave me great encouragement and was thrilled that I was going to Hope. I am sure his letter of recommendation helped me to be accepted there. Thank-you Lord, for his life and ministry.”

Paula Farquharson - November 28, 2018 at 12:00 AM

RP

“Neil became a great mentor, coach, and advisor to me during some critical years for me as a young pastor. I'm deeply indebted to him for sharing his life, love, patience, kindness and wisdom with me. My condolences to the entire VanHeest family. -Reggie and Carmen Padin”

Reggie Padin - November 28, 2018 at 12:00 AM

RR

“As a very close friend and roommate of Paul throughout our days at Hope College, Mr. Van Heest was a part of our growing up, since he was a regular during moving in, moving out, sporting events, and various other occasions. I remember him fondly, with the same sly grin as son Paul, but unquestionably more handsome (as my wife likes to say to me about my own father). The Van Heest family is a wonderful collection of characters, with class and character oozing from their pores. Given their patriarch, it is no wonder why...”

Rick Reece - November 27, 2018 at 12:00 AM

CN

“Pastor Neil encouraged me to pursue vocational ministry when he served as interim pastor of the church our family was attending 20-plus years ago. There have been a few times when I wondered whether to thank him for that or not, but he had a tremendous and positive influence on my life and I am very grateful even though I only knew him for a short time. My sympathies and prayers to his family and loved ones.”

Cindy Nyhoff - November 27, 2018 at 12:00 AM

JG

“I did not know Rev Neil but was drawn to his obituary because his life was so beautifully portrayed. I wish every young couple could emulate this example of a love story based on self sacrifice. What a legacy! God bless you all.”

Joyce Gothman - November 27, 2018 at 12:00 AM

SR

“To the VanHeests.I'm so sorry to hear about your loss.You're in my thoughts and prayers.”

Sue Richards - November 26, 2018 at 12:00 AM

CO

“*Dear VanHeest Family,
Although no words can really help to ease the loss you are feeling,
just know that you are very close in my thoughts and prayers. I
admire you all for your loving care of Neil. His strength of character
and his faith have shown through in his great family. Please accept
my heartfelt condolences.
With Love, Cheryl Ondarko @Relianceccp.”*

Cheryl Ondarko - November 26, 2018 at 12:00 AM