



Rev. Dr. Melvin Dale Hugen

April 28, 1931 - March 28, 2025

Rev. Dr. Melvin Dale Hugen, 93, of Grand Rapids, Michigan, passed away peacefully on Friday, March 28, 2025, at the Raybrook Campus of Holland Home.

Melvin was born April 28, 1931, a twin to sister Milly. Mel and Milly had four older brothers making them the 5th & 6th children of Dick and Wilhelmina (Grootveld) Hugen. The family farm was in Leighton, near Pella, Iowa. He graduated from high school and attended Calvin College. Melvin was called to the ministry and after graduating from Calvin College and also Calvin Seminary, he received his doctorate from the Free University of Amsterdam, the Netherlands. Melvin received a pastoral call to Richton Park CRC, South of Chicago, then at Eastern Avenue CRC in Grand Rapids, and finally was the founding pastor of Honolulu CRC on Oahu, Hawaii. In 1970, Melvin then was called to serve as a professor at Calvin Seminary. He taught at Calvin Seminary for 28 years before retiring in 1998. Melvin was a co-founder of the Timothy Institute of Calvin Seminary, training and equipping African Pastors in Kenya and East Africa.

Melvin met a lovely young woman, Sylvia Van Baren, as a senior at Calvin College. Eventually Mel and Sylvia married on May 28, 1954, in South Holland, Illinois, and they raised four children together. Mel and Sylvia are members of La Grave Avenue Christian Reformed Church and have been

residents of Raybrook Campus of Holland Home in recent years.

Mel is survived by his wife of 71 years, Sylvia, their children: Beth Steiner, Mark Hugen and Cathy Bills, Brian and Rose Hugen, Joel and Kandi Hugen; 10 grandchildren, 5 great-grandchildren, in-laws: Gise and Carolyn Van Baren, Anna Mae Nymeyer, Eileen Van Baren, and many extended family and friends.

A funeral service will be held at 12:00 noon EST, Saturday, April 5, 2025, in the Chapel at Raybrook, 2121 Raybrook SE, Grand Rapids MI 49546.

Visitation will be 10:30-11:45 AM EST, prior to the service at Raybrook.

Memorial donations may be made to the Timothy Institute or Holland Home.

Arrangements by Yntema Funeral Home, 251 S. State Street, Zeeland MI 49464.

www.yntemafh.com

Previous Events

Visitation

APR 5. 10:30 AM - 11:45 AM (ET)

Chapel at Raybrook
2121 Raybrook St. SE
Grand Rapids, MI 49546

Funeral Service

APR 5. 12:00 PM - 1:00 PM (ET)

Chapel at Raybrook
2121 Raybrook St. SE
Grand Rapids, MI 49546

Tribute Wall



“ *Langeland-Sterenberg Yntema Funeral Homes created a Rev. Dr, Melvin Hugen funeral service in memory of Rev. Dr. Melvin Dale Hugen*



Langeland-Sterenberg Yntema Funeral Homes - April 07, 2025 at 11:57 AM

PH

“ *Pat Hoeksema lit a candle in memory of Rev. Dr. Melvin Dale Hugen*



Pat Hoeksema - May 12, 2025 at 01:20 PM

PH

I choose the color green for the candle, it reminded me of the wonderful view from the CRC church in Honolulu. He presented an uplifting sermon that Sunday morning. He was a pastor I've never forgotten. In sympathy.

Pat Hoeksema - May 12, 2025 at 01:26 PM

RP

“ Mel was part of God's design for my life.

Upon completing my BD, I was still not satisfied with my pastoral care education. When Dr. Hugen came, we decided I should stay for a Masters of Theology. But there wasn't one. So Mel created one incorporating CPE, a course from U of M, weekly reading and reflection at afternoon meetings in his office, joining in courses and in teaching a course, and supervising my dissertation. When I questioned myself, Mel encouraged me-the only prof to give me a bear hug.

Upon graduation Mel was instrumental in my landing in Hawaii in a co-pastorate that he had designed. We also lived in the Hospitality House mansion that he and Sylvia had designed and decorated for ministry.

During my ministry it was to Mel that I turned for advice in the calling process. He was always helpful.

When I was EurAsia supervisor for CR World Missions, Bud Ipema and I partnered to bring the Hugen/Snapper Timothy Leadership training to sites in Europe and Asia.

Fittingly, when we retired we both joined the Lagrave congregation. During the postlude while walking down the aisle, Mel with still some recognition in his eyes, would pause to shake my hand as he exited the sanctuary.

For over 50 years Mel was a mentor and friend for which I am deeply grateful to him and to God..

*Russ Palsrok
Southport, NC*

Russ Palsrok - April 05, 2025 at 10:33 AM

JB

“ I came to Calvin Seminary as a student the same year Mel joined the faculty as professor of pastoral care. His teaching was notable for the combination of theological depth with pastoral wisdom. This surprised some students who were passionate about the practice of ministry and considered academic theology something of an obstacle to their goals. Others, of whom I count myself one, who loved academic theology, were challenged to keep in mind that theology was for the church and the benefit of God’s people. For Mel, good pastoral care demanded a solid theological foundation and good theology had to be pastoral.

When I was privileged to become Mel’s colleague at the Seminary for a few years, my appreciation for his mastery of this balance only grew as we shared responsibilities for evaluating students for ministry and recommending them for candidacy in the Christian Reformed Church. I remember Mel as one of my significant teachers and am grateful for his life of ministry and service to our Lord and his church. I pray that God's grace and comfort will surround Sylvia and Mel and Sylvia's family.

John Bolt

John Bolt - April 04, 2025 at 11:12 AM

“ I met Mel Hugen when I was 9 years old. He was pastor of a mission church at Richton Park, Illinois. Members of our South Holland church would support the mission by attending the Sunday evening service. With my sisters and brothers, we were always glad go. We appreciated Mel’s sermons. They were brief and to the point.

Ten years later, as professor at Calvin Seminary, Mel helped engineer a deferment which prevented my draft into the army during the Vietnam War.

It took me another ten years to enroll at Calvin Sem and discover through Mel’s classes the rich and relevant tradition of Christian pastoral care. A few years later he gave a seminar on pastoral counselling in the context of a French language church plant in Montreal. A participant from that seminar recently told me, “Thanks to Dr. Hugen, I discovered that I could be both a psychologist and a Christian.”

When I began teaching pastoral theology in France in the 1990’s, Mel came to give lectures and guidance. His wisdom and friendship were priceless. In the context of that relationship, and with the input of many others, Timothy Leadership Training was born.

Mel left me with many rich memories: hiking in the Alps, long distance biking, so many conversations in Grand Rapids, Montreal, France and Africa.

And all those memorable meals, Sylvia, that you fashioned and hosted with Mel !

God used Mel in a significant way in my life. I miss his attentive and perceptive friendship. And oh ! his hearty laugh !

Harold Kallemeyn
Sherbrooke, Canada

Harold Kallemeyn - April 03, 2025 at 04:35 PM



“ *Fiery Lily and Rose was purchased for the family of Rev. Dr. Melvin Dale Hugen.*



April 02, 2025 at 03:02 PM



“ A [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) was planted in honor of Rev. Dr. Melvin Dale Hugen.

April 02, 2025 at 03:02 PM



“ *To Sylvia,
It was my preparing for pastoring that Mel enhanced. I'm grateful.
Also glad to experience him and yourself as friends later
Wishing you our Father's Shalom.*

George Vink - April 01, 2025 at 04:55 PM

MN

“ *My condolences to all who loved Mel.*

I would love to share my profound gratitude for this man who helped shape me as a person and as a professional.

Dr. Hugen's wise counsel and solid teaching was wonderful, practical, and fresh. As a young and green seminarian, I had more answers than questions - especially in the face of Dr. Hugen's edges and edginess.

However, once I actually began practicing ministry, more than once I returned to Mel following seminary for hands on help. Then I had the questions I could have had earlier. Gratefully, he had some answers and direction for me in all of my needfulness. He was gracious and he was a premier pastor and teacher of pastoral care.

I am grateful for his teaching, his presence, and his wisdom. Mel Hugen was - and is - an important part of my narrative.

Gratefully,

Rev. Marc Nelesen, PhD

Marc Nelesen - April 01, 2025 at 10:51 AM

JE

“ *Jean And Verland Engle lit a candle in memory of Rev. Dr. Melvin Dale Hugen*



Jean and Verland Engle - April 01, 2025 at 10:43 AM

JE

Precious Memories of a very dear step-brother.

Jean and Verland Engle - April 01, 2025 at 10:44 AM

CZ

When hearing of Mel Hugen's passing last week, I shared with anyone who would listen the following impacts he had in my life.

First, as a boy, with few exceptions I never listened to ministers' sermons. I would "write" stories in my mind instead. But when, as an early teen, "Dr. Hugen" became my pastor at Eastern Avenue I was transfixed by his preaching and just two years later at age 16, I professed my faith. During my half century of preaching and even briefly teaching preaching I have tried to always try to emulate the pastor who got that teenager to actually listen to God's Word.

Second, as his student at Calvin Seminary he provided me the deep understanding of the pastoral dynamic that underlies all acts of ministry. As fellow classmate John Bolt pointed out in his tribute, we learned from Professor Hugen that ministry is itself a deeply theological act. One of his sayings that struck home to me and that I have often repeated to youth considering marriage as well as to adults considering whether to continue their marriages, "The Bible never tells you to marry the person you love -- it says to love the person to whom you're married."

Third, when my father passed away in his mid nineties having lost meaningful contact with any church during an time in a nursing home with dementia, it was Mel Hugen the family thought of to ask to officiate the funeral. Mel's ministry was still so meaningful and we knew once more why our father who had been a leading elder as Eastern for many years had always admired Dr. Hugen as the best pastor he had ever had.

What a blessing Mel Hugen was to so many. And what blessings this good and faithful servant now enjoys. May God's peace rest on Sylvia and the family.

Carl E. Zylstra

Carl E Zylstra - April 06, 2025 at 01:28 PM

KL

Dr. Mel Hugen's supervision and pastoral care have impacted my life as pastoral counseling teacher and pastoral counselor. When I came to Calvin Seminary in 1987 to study in pastoral care and counseling in the Th.M. program as his second Korean student, he immediately became a role model for me so that he has been internalized in my heart as a "good object." He led me to a track of CPE for my clinical experiences so that I was able to become ACPE Supervisory Candidate. Sylvia and he willingly drove to Louisville, Kentucky to celebrate with me for my Ph.D. graduation from Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in 1994. I remember his sitting with students in my J-term teaching at Calvin Seminary January 2017.

Mel will be remembered in my life and teaching as long as I live. Peace and grace to Sylvia!

Kwanjik Lee

Kwanjik Lee - April 14, 2025 at 09:43 PM