

Dr. Ray Halm



Dr. Halm throughout his ministry.

The Rev. Dr. Dennis Ray Halm passed away unexpectedly on August 4, 2020, while tending his garden after a happy and peaceful morning. As a university president, pastor, high school principal, and English teacher, Ray was an accomplished man who served his schools and churches with distinction, the details of which can be found in the formal obituaries from Concordia University Irvine and The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. This remembrance is more personal.

Ray was born in Portland, Oregon in 1941 to Anne Edna (Moeller) and Alfred Raymond Jackson. His father passed away when Ray was three years old, and his mother moved to Minneapolis, Minnesota, to raise her young son.

There Anne eventually met and married Ralph Halm, who adopted eight-year-old Ray. They moved to Provo, Utah, the place Ray came to consider home.

After meeting and marrying his college sweetheart, he eventually graduated from Concordia in Seward, Nebraska, and was placed as a called teacher in Ft. Wayne, Indiana. From there he began his extremely varied career in ministry.

Ray was an uncommonly optimistic man; little would get him down for long, either in his professional or personal life. It is easy for his family to see, in retrospect, that the Lord called him from one challenge to another early in his professional life to prepare him for his presidency at Concordia University Irvine. As a result, the Lord moved the family from Indiana back to Nebraska, then on to Wisconsin, Missouri, and Minnesota, before finally arriving in California. Through all these moves, he was forever chipper, quick to help his daughters and wife adjust, and always ready to tease or to hug.

Ray's abundant curiosity shaped many parts of his life. He was adventurous, traveling to numerous countries and camping in dozens of national and state parks. He played the guitar, sang harmony with his wife, and yodeled in any canyon he entered. He never ran across a hobby he didn't think to explore whole-heartedly—at various points in his life he was an avid photographer, model railroader, small motorcycle enthusiast, amateur astronomer, horse rider, tennis player, runner, and cross-country skier (several of these popped up in his life more than once). One of his happiest personal achievements was the "hole-in-one" he earned as a golfer, which might be the one hobby he consistently pursued throughout his life.

Ray never stopped working and never stopped learning. During his last weeks of life, he was mentoring several dozen Lutheran teachers in the colloquy program at CUEnet, while at the same time writing two academic articles for future submission to Lutheran journals. He was always reading. In the days before his passing, he was part-way through a book on the doctrine of justification and a Daniel Silva's newest thriller, he had just reviewed his favorite book in preparation for a breakfast spent discussing Crime and Punishment with his youngest grandson, and had settled on a pre-marriage counseling book for his eldest grandson. There was never quite enough time in the day for Ray.

The gravitational center of his life, however, was steady and enduring: In all things, he strove to share with all the love of Jesus and the message of the Gospel. He believed that good preaching and effective teaching were essential to the health of the Church, and he felt blessed to be able to be used as God's instrument in both areas throughout his life. He was indomitable and generally inexhaustible, and he used his enormous energy to be a blessing to the Church, Lutheran education, and his treasured family and friends.

Dennis Ray Halm was preceded in death by his beloved wife of 52 years, Darlene, and he is survived in death by his beloved second wife of four years, Jean. Ray's sisters, Jean (Halm) Hagen and Beverly (Halm) Anderson, survive him. Ray is also survived by his daughters and their husbands, Heather and Tom Stueve and Shawne and Brian Moore, as well as by the grandchildren on whom he doted: Jonathan Stueve (and his fiancé, Sarah Ladick), Timothy Stueve, and Peyton Moore.