

Herbert Brokering

In memoriam

(From the ELCA NEWS SERVICE)

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Herb Brokering, Lutheran Hymn Writer, Author, Poet, Dies

CHICAGO (ELCA) -- The Rev. Herbert F. Brokering, pastor, author, lyricist, speaker and hymn writer of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA), died Nov. 7 of congestive heart failure at his apartment in Bloomington, Minn., according to his son, Mark. A memorial service is planned for Nov. 21 at Central Lutheran Church, Minneapolis. Brokering, 83, was a member of St. Stephen Lutheran Church, Bloomington.

"Herb Brokering's legacy includes carefully crafted words on the lips of believers gathered around the means of grace. He has helped us bring our faith to rich expression," said the Rev. Michael L. Burk, bishop, ELCA Southeastern Iowa Synod, Iowa City. While ELCA director for worship, Burk oversaw the churchwide "Renewing Worship" project, which developed the ELCA's new series of "Evangelical Lutheran Worship (ELW)" resources.

"Thine the glory, thine the story, then the welcome to the least. Then the wonder all increasing at thy feast, at thy feast," he said, quoting one of Brokering's best-known hymns, "Thine the Amen." (ELW 826) He wrote other popular Lutheran hymns such as "Earth and All Stars!" "Praise, Praise! You Are My Rock" and "Alleluia! Jesus is Risen!"

Born May 21, 1926, in Beatrice, Neb., Brokering graduated from Wartburg College, Waverly, Iowa, in 1945. He earned a master's degree in child psychology from the University of Iowa, Iowa City, in 1947 and a bachelor of divinity degree in 1950 from the Evangelical Lutheran Theological Seminary (now Trinity Lutheran Seminary), Columbus, Ohio. Wartburg is one of 28 colleges and universities of the ELCA, and Trinity is one of the ELCA's eight seminaries.

Brokering pursued graduate studies at the University of Kiel and the University of Erlangen in Germany, and at the University of Pittsburgh. Wartburg College, Trinity Seminary and Concordia College, Austin, Texas, presented Brokering honorary doctorates. Wartburg and Trinity also recognized him as a distinguished alumnus.

While in Germany after World War II he worked with the Lutheran World Federation services to refugees.

He served as pastor of Good Shepherd Lutheran Church, Pittsburgh; Incarnation Lutheran Church, Cedarhurst, Long Island, N.Y., and St. John Lutheran Church, San Antonio, Texas.

Brokering was director for confirmation education with the former American Lutheran Church, Minneapolis, 1960 to 1970. He became a free lance educator, writer and consultant working in the United States, Europe and Japan. Brokering co-directed the film, "Where Luther Walked" in 1981. He also taught at Luther Seminary, St. Paul, Minn., for several years.

Brokering was a promoter of healing, justice and peace, leading more than 100 pilgrimages in his lifetime to places in Europe, the Middle East, China and India. The East German Ministry of Culture presented him with a peacemaking award.

He authored more than 30 books for Augsburg Fortress, the publishing ministry of the ELCA, and more than 100 lyrics for almost 60 composers.

"Herb was a gifted poet, author, speaker and composer. He was also a delight -- a man who cared deeply about his God, his family, his many friends and this publishing ministry," said Beth A. Lewis, Augsburg Fortress president and chief executive officer.

"Herb was the youngest octogenarian I've ever known. Even as his body aged, his mind was young, and his curiosity and joy in living each day fully was reflected in his sparkling eyes. He will be missed by all of us at Augsburg Fortress who were privileged to work with him," Lewis added.

In his retirement Brokering served 11 years as a staff associate for Wheat Ridge Ministries, an independent Lutheran charitable organization based in Itasca, Ill., that awards "seed" grants to health ministries. He was an ambassador for Wheat Ridge, promoting and encouraging the seeding of new ministries of health and hope around the world. After leaving that role in 2007, he continued to write devotions for Wheat Ridge, sharing many of his hymns, poems, prayers and stories. Wheat Ridge recognized him as "Poet Laureate of the Lutheran Church."

In 2004 the Luther Institute, Washington, D.C., presented Brokering with its Wittenberg Award for his outstanding contribution to church and society.

Brokering married Lois Redelfs in 1950. She preceded him in death in 2004. They are survived by their children -- Mark, Beth, Jon and Christopher.

Shortly before his death, Brokering established the Herbert and Lois Brokering Healing Arts Endowment Fund at Wartburg College to support activities promoting the healing arts.

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