

Dad loved God, His church, and his family. He loved the Word and stood zealously on it and for it. Dad enjoyed reading, hiking, and singing. He also enjoyed going to garage sales and estate sales as part of the process of keeping inventory on hand for Roth's Curiosity Corner in Woodburn, Oregon. Along with all the rest of us, he and Mom enjoyed the annual family outing they planned and put together for us and our families. He did so well at allowing the love of God to balance his attention to family and church.

Dad was a man with a sensitive conscience, a meek spirit, and a servant heart. He was an encourager, a builder, and a peacemaker. He taught the Word ably, applying it first to himself. He would want you to know that any successes attributed to him were the work of God's Spirit. The failures he would readily claim as his own doing.

Dad was preceded in death by his parents, Jacob and Mary, as well as three of his siblings: Lois (Shetler), David, and Susan (Heatwole). His surviving siblings are Rosana Roth, Ruth Georgiades, and Sam Roth.

He is also survived by his wife Noreen and their two children and spouses: Miguel & Karen Ureña and Mark & Ruby Roth. James and Noreen presently have eleven grandchildren — Luke and LaVay Mullet, Russell and Shari (Kropf) Roth, Levi and Dora Smith, Brandon and Karina Boss, Eric and Chayli Baer, and Andrew Roth. They also have eight great grandchildren — Juli, Trey, Trenton, and Jason Mullet; Megan, Amber, Kenzie, and Zoe Roth. May all of us who live on have the life of the Son.

“For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake. But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us” (2 Corinthians 4:5,7).

“And he hath put a new song in my mouth, even praise unto our God” (Psalm 40:3).

—for the family, Mark Roth

James Christian Roth



October 2006 photo

The earthen vessel known as James Christian Roth began breathing on his own on September 12, 1934. He was the fourth of seven children and the first of three sons of Jacob and Mary (Buckwalter) Roth.

Jesus joined James in his earthen vessel when pre-teen James accepted Christ's atoning work and yielded to His Lordship.

From 1953 to 1955, James did his 1W service for the Selective Service at a mental health institute in Iowa. In 1957 he served Spanish-speaking churches in south Texas with a bookmobile.

James married Noreen Byers on June 13, 1958. Son Mark was born in McMinnville (Oregon) on September 22, 1959.

At Hopewell Mennonite Church (Hubbard, Oregon) on November 15, 1959, James was ordained minister for missionary service in Mexico. Late that same month, the little family of three moved to Mexico, eventually settling in Ciudad Obregón, Sonora. From there they helped start outreach in other areas, including the state of Sinaloa to the south.

In the fall of 1964, James opened a much-needed Christian bookstore in Ciudad Obregón and by it served many individuals, congregations, and denominations in Mexico's northwest for the next twelve years. Christian outlets of that sort were rare in those years. Gradually word-of-mouth brought about an extensive mail-order customer base from all over Mexico.

Daughter Karen was born in Ciudad Obregón on December 3, 1964.

James and Noreen retired from missionary service in the spring of 1976. They moved back to Oregon and soon transferred their church membership back to Hopewell.

In mid-1981, James spearheaded a mission outreach into Sonora's Guaymas Valley. James, Noreen, and Karen returned to Oregon in 1982. On December 5 of that same year, James was ordained Hopewell's bishop.

At one point in his pastorate at Hopewell, James led the congregation in memorizing Psalm 40. Each Sunday morning we'd review previously learned verses and work on a new one together. Eventually, we all quoted the Psalm together, with James quoting verses 9 and 10 by himself:

I have preached righteousness in the great congregation: lo, I have not refrained my lips, O LORD, thou knowest.

I have not hid thy righteousness within my heart; I have declared thy faithfulness and thy salvation: I have not concealed thy lovingkindness and thy truth from the great congregation.

James retired as Hopewell's bishop and pastor in 2008. Early in the spring of 2014, James retired from active ministerial service at Hopewell. By the middle of 2015 he had also effectively retired after close to twenty years on Hopewell's mission board.

Long a strong, healthy man, James began struggling with heart and liver issues which eventually took their toll on him physically and mentally.

In November 2013 James and Noreen's old home congregation in Ciudad Obregón celebrated the 50th anniversary of their founding. At the invitation of the congregation there, Dad and Mom attended part of the celebration. They presented Dad with a plaque commemorating and thanking him for his service among them as "founder" of the church. That was the first trip that Dad's health did not permit him to do all the driving. Granddaughter Karina and her husband Brandon Boss accompanied them for that purpose.

In addition to Hopewell, Dad also provided bishop oversight to three other congregations: New Hope Mennonite Church (Washington), John Day Valley Mennonite Church (Oregon), and Iglesia Cristiana Emanuel (Mexico).

In the years after their retirement from missionary service, Dad and Mom made dozens of road trips to Mexico. The work in Guaymas Valley was by far their most frequent destination.

Shortly before 2:00 pm on January 28, 2017, God was finally done with Dad's service on earth. So Jesus vacated Dad's earthen vessel, releasing Dad from it as well. Those of us present are happy to let you know that he died gently and asleep. In fact, we were just singing the end of a series of Spanish choruses when he left. His last breath came as we sang, "I go with Him. I do not stay. I go with Him." What a glorious moment — praise God!

Many of you joined us in burying Dad's well-used earthen vessel on February 4, 2017. Thank you for being with us!

As God shared Dad with us, we as family shared him with the church. As a symbol of that, we shared pallbearer duties with the six ordained men who served most recently with him at Hopewell. We had Maynard Headings as honorary pallbearer for both sets of pallbearers, acknowledging the Headings-Roth ties from their Mexico service as well as their time serving together in the Hopewell ministry. We also had David Strubhar, youngest son of the late Levi Strubhar, serving as honorary pallbearer with the ordained pallbearers to acknowledge his father's service with Dad in Hopewell's ministry. To each of them, thank you for your help to Dad in the service of Christ and His church.