

The Reverend Dr. Robert Harry Mills
1933-2020

The Rev. Dr. Robert Harry Mills, 87, of Halifax passed away on November 28, 2020 at home following a short illness. Born in Moncton, N.B., the son of Harry and Evelyn Perl (Cosman) Mills, he was a proud graduate of Moncton High School where he studied, sang, played in the band and won badminton tournaments. At Mount Allison University he attained a Bachelor of Arts while also pursuing any opportunity to sing - the Mount A Chorale, touring Male Quartet and the opera and operetta society. As with everything he did, Bob embraced his Mount A experience with his enthusiastic love of life, passion for music and interest in the people he encountered. While at Mount A he met, fell in love with, and married the coloratura soprano who captured his heart, Karen (Keirstead). He completed post-graduate studies at Pine Hill Divinity Hall and was ordained to the ministry of The United Church of Canada in 1956. Following ordination, he and Karen offered a team ministry, bringing their gifts of music, firm faith and pastoral concern wherever they went. He served pastoral charges in Port Mouton, Tatamagouche, Wolfville and Bridgewater in Nova Scotia before moving to St. John's, N.L., in 1975. He enjoyed seven happy and fulfilling years as Senior Minister at Wesley United and part-time radio host on Wesley's own VOWR. He returned to Nova Scotia in 1982, serving Fairview United in Halifax. Finally, he served as Executive Secretary of the Maritime Conference (1989-1995) and Interim General Secretary of the Canadian Council of Churches (1995-1997). In 2005 he was awarded an honorary Doctorate of Divinity for outstanding service, leadership and commitment to ecumenism by the Atlantic School of Theology. Karen's sudden death in a car accident in 1991 was the most crushing blow of his life, the memory of which never left him. However, he was amazed to find love again and he and Helga (Kutz) began their lives together in Waterloo, Ont., in 1995. Bob made his way back "home" to Nova Scotia in 1999 where he and Helga settled in to a happily busy and fulfilling retirement in Halifax. They were passionate about all that they were involved in - church, music, theatre, a wonderful circle of friends, and family. More than almost anything Bob loved to sing and so he continued to find wonderful choral experiences well into his 80s. A year ago, Bob sadly found himself on his own again after Helga's death. As he did all his life, he drew on his enduring relationship with God and his love of family and interest in others as he walked the painful journey through grief and eventually found peace and contentment that allowed him to bask in and talk about happy memories of his long life whilst always expressing thankfulness for all that he had been given - family, music, enriching life experiences and "two wonderful wives". Bob is survived by daughters, Deborah (Jim) Ballinger and Katrina Pecknold; sons, Michael (Susan), Stephen (Susan) and David (Nancy), all living in Nova Scotia; step-daughter, Ingrid Harder, New Zealand; "adopted daughter", Betty (John) Theriau MacKay; grandchildren, Kate (Ryan), Kaitlynn (Lucas) and Robert; step grandchildren, Julie, James, and Rory; and several step great- grandchildren, nieces, nephews, great-nieces and great-nephews. He was predeceased by his sister, Vera; and his brothers, Ron and Doug. Due to current pandemic restrictions, there will be a private family burial in Brookside Cemetery, Bridgewater. A memorial service will take place when it is possible for friends and family to properly honour and remember our dear father, grandfather, uncle, minister, and friend.