

Frank A. McConnell

Frank Aldrich McConnell, 91, died on Monday, January 10, 2005 of natural causes at Essa Flory Center of Hospice of Lancaster Country, PA.

Frank was born in 1913 in New Milford, Pa., the son of Inez Aldrich and George Pratt McConnell. His older brother Raymond died in 1940. Frank learned to play the piano and organ from his mother, the organist at the local church. He studied formally under T. Tertius Noble, and during the early 1940s was an assistant organist to Dr. Noble at St. Thomas's Episcopal Church, Fifth Avenue, New York. He also held positions in Middletown, Conn., and Newark, N.J. In 1944 he began his tenure of fifty-two and a half years as organist and choirmaster at St. James Episcopal Church, Lancaster. From 1946 to 1987 he was music professor at the Lancaster Theological Seminary. He retired in 1996, though he continued to supply at area churches until a few weeks before his death.

Frank was well loved by those who knew him. They remember his sunny disposition, his natural generosity, and his humility. He delighted people with brilliant organ performances, but he often preferred to play meditative pieces of spiritual value. He gave a religious and musical education to the children and adults who sang in his choirs, because of the music and texts he chose and the way he focused on their spiritual meaning during rehearsals. He displayed the same values in the music course he taught at the Seminary and during his wide-ranging tours with the Seminary choir.

Frank composed anthems and canticle settings, congregational service music, hymns with original words, and songs for solo voice and organ. He served as editor for the hymnal *Sing to the Lord*.

Frank held the degree of Fellow of the American Guild of Organists, and was the founding Dean of Lancaster's AGO Chapter. He is remembered fondly by scores of organ and piano students. He was twice a soloist with the Lancaster Symphony Orchestra, in a Mendelssohn piano concerto in 1964 and the Jongen *Symphonie Concertante* for organ and orchestra a decade later. At St. James he played a regular series of Lenten organ recitals. His choir at St. James often performed large works together with other groups, especially the choir led by Reginald Lunt at First Presbyterian Church, Lancaster. In his later years he was the Organist and Choirmaster Emeritus at St. James and was Professor Emeritus at the Seminary.

Frank was the beloved husband of Rev. Beatrice W. McConnell, whom he married in 1958. They had one son, Mark, in 1960. Frank was a devoted husband and father, strongly committed to his family. He is survived by Beatrice, Mark, Mark's wife Connie, and grandchildren Kathy and Nicholas. Frank and Beatrice became members of Hamilton Park United Church of Christ, Lancaster, in 1996.

A Funeral Service will be held on Saturday, January 15, 2005 at 11:00 a.m. at Hamilton Park United Church of Christ, 1210 Maple Avenue, Lancaster, PA, with the Rev. Dr. David Bushnell and the Rev. Dr. Nathan Baxter officiating. Interment will take place at

Conestoga Memorial Park. The family will greet friends at the Funeral Home of Fred F. Groff, Inc., 234 West Orange Street, Lancaster, PA on Friday from 6:30-8:30 p.m. A viewing will take place at church on Saturday from 10:00 a.m. until the time of the service.

In lieu of flowers, memorial contributions may be made to the Frank A. McConnell Endowment Fund for the Study of Church Music at the Lancaster Theological Seminary, Office of Development, 555 West James Street, Lancaster, PA 17603.

Fred F. Groff, Inc., is handling the arrangements.