

Beloved Christian Professor and Prolific Author Dies at 71

IVP author and beloved Regent College professor Dr. Donald Munro Lewis, 71, passed away unexpectedly from cardiac arrest on Tuesday, October 19. Lewis taught and served in various roles at Regent College for 40 years, most notably as professor of church history.

“In the normal hubbub of our college life, Don was a kind of fixed point of reference,” said Regent College professor Craig Gay. “He was always there, always the same steady presence, and you knew that he’d do just about anything for you if he possibly could. He was, in short, the kind of friend that defines the meaning of friendship. His bear hugs have become the stuff of legend. And he was a friend and pastor to so many people all over the world! The scale and scope of his personal network is simply astonishing. And, of course, Don was an exemplary churchman, an excellent scholar and teacher, a trusted administrator, and a devoted husband, father, and most recently grandfather. Don’s is an example to me of a life very well lived. We will miss him dearly.”

Born in Sherbrooke, Quebec, Lewis grew up in the Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada and attended Bishop’s University, Lennoxville, where he earned a bachelor’s in history and a diploma in education. He then taught high school in Montreal for three years before going on to study at and graduate from Regent College.

Lewis completed his doctorate at Oxford University in 1981 and then returned to Regent College to teach church history. He eventually became the college’s longest serving faculty member, celebrating his 40th work anniversary in September

2021. His roles at the college included academic dean, summer school dean, secretary of the Anglican studies program, and editor of CRUX.

“The loss of Don Lewis to the world of thoughtful evangelicalism, to Regent College, its students, alumni and professors, and to the many pastors and professionals he shepherded and mentored across the world, is incalculable,” said friend and colleague Ross Hastings, Sangwoo Youtong Chee Chair of Theology at Regent College. “Don was more than a colleague to me. He was a spiritual friend and encourager. We co-taught a course called Soul of Ministry: Persons in Relation, which concerns the spiritual, physical, psychological, and vocational foundations for pastoral ministry and for all vocations, and it was such a pleasure to minister alongside someone so brilliant yet so personal, so accomplished as a historian of Christianity, yet so humble. He understood that the nature of academic work is always ultimately about persons, persons in communion with God, persons in community with neighbor.”

Lewis was a prolific author who wrote 11 books, including the two-volume Blackwell Dictionary of Evangelical Biography, 1730–1860, which he edited, and The Origins of Christian Zionism (Cambridge University Press, 2010). His first book with IVP was titled Global Evangelicalism: Theology, History and Culture in Regional Perspective, which he edited with Richard V. Pierard.

Justin Paul Lawrence, senior director of marketing and sales at IVP, was a student of Dr. Lewis at Regent College. He said, “Don Lewis was a kind and gracious professor. He was extremely helpful in understanding the significance of evangelicalism, especially in its global context. As a Pentecostal growing up in a French speaking province, he understood the unique character of being a stranger in a larger culture that doesn’t necessarily understand your faith. He was full of good ideas, good humor, and hospitality. I was especially glad when we

were able to publish his recent book on Christian Zionism, which unfortunately was his last work. IVP and Christians have lost a great man and a great historian.”

In the early 2000s Don became fascinated with the Christian Zionist movement. In 2009 he published *The Origins of Christian Zionism: Lord Shaftesbury and the Evangelical Support for a Jewish Homeland*. This was followed by his last book, *A Short History of Christian Zionism: From the Reformation to the Twenty-First Century*, published by IVP Academic in September 2021.

Jon Boyd, academic editorial director for IVP, said, “Working with Don on his history of Christian Zionism gave me insight into what the fruits of a life well spent in scholarship can be. The long hours with archival and primary sources shone through, of course, but that’s just a baseline for any historian. What Don added was patience with and even an appetite for feedback to develop the manuscript further, a sincerely charitable attitude toward critics, and a vision for the good he hoped his work might do. What a privilege to watch someone like that at work!”

Don was a longtime member of St. John’s Shaughnessy, later St. John’s Vancouver. In 2013, he moved to the nascent St. Peter’s Fireside, where he was a companion to its clergy, an official adviser for the Bishop of Western Canada, and most recently, Pastor’s Warden.

Don was also a longtime member of the Hunterston Farm community on Galiano Island, where he was known for his inclination for prayer, dry humor, occasional stubbornness, and warm cinnamon buns. He delighted in the beauty of the Gulf Islands, savoring family gatherings, times of solitude, and opportunities to welcome Regent students and pastors.

Don married Lindi White in 1983. Together they had three children, David (Diane), Annika (Keith), and Benj (Sarah), and

one grandchild, Abigail Grace. Don recently wrote that “being a husband, father, and friend are what constitute my primary identity—after, of course, being a follower of Jesus Christ.”
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