

Longtime Assemblies of God Pastors Bill and Esther Ilnisky ‘Walked Together Into Heaven’

Editor's Note: This story will be updated as we receive additional comments from faith leaders.

Longtime Assemblies of God pastors and ministry leaders Bill and Esther Ilnisky died March 1 from complications of COVID-19. Bill was 88, and Esther was 92; they died 15 minutes apart in the same hospital room. Together, they pastored the Lighthouse Christian Center (formerly Calvary Temple Assembly of God) in West Palm Beach, Florida, for many years. A 2003 *Charisma* magazine article featured the story of how Bill led his church to minister to African children orphaned by the AIDS epidemic, a ministry that began with the Holy Spirit using a *Newsweek* article to birth in him a burden for these orphans.

The couple attended Bible college together and then served as missionaries in Jamaica and Lebanon before their work in West Palm Beach. Esther was also the founder of the Esther Network International Children's Global Prayer Movement and author of *Let the Children Pray*. Her vision was “to mobilize children worldwide to pray for revival in their generation,” per her bio at .

The couple's niece, Susan Schmid, shared the announcement of the Ilniskys' deaths on her Facebook page, noting that “they were always full of Jesus, love for each other, and a degree of classiness few can carry so well.”

*“To be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord.”
My uncle and aunt, Bill and Esther Ilnisky, did just that...*

Posted by Susan Schmid on Tuesday, March 2, 2021

Faith leaders and others responded to the news with expressions of sadness as well as love and support. Dr. George O. Wood, chairman, World AG Fellowship, wrote, "Bill and Esther Ilnisky walked together into heaven after their journey together on earth. Dedicated pastors, missionaries, evangelists and lovers of God's people—they are now with the Lord. I can envision a reunion in heaven with people they led to Jesus in countries like Lebanon and Jamaica, as well as the churches they pastored in Missouri and Indiana and elsewhere. They lived a life above reproach and their works follow them. The kingdom of God on earth is richer because of their ministry."

Pastor Dawn McCann of Liberty Life Center shared her heart on Facebook as well, writing that the Ilniskys were "My mentors, my friends."

My Esther and Papa Bill Ilnisky. My mentors, my friends. Thank you for always believing in me and praying for me, my children and Liberty Life Center every day. Prayers are eternal

Posted by Dawn McCann on Monday, March 1, 2021

David Diaz also shared a Facebook post about the Ilniskys, writing to Bill that "God has used you both to do tremendous work in this world ... But it is the impact you have made in my life that makes you like a second father to me."

Pastor William Ilnisky "Bill" and Esther. I can't begin to express how much I love you both. Pastor Bill God has used...

Posted by David Diaz on Saturday, February 27, 2021

Please join the Charisma News staff in praying for family and

friends of this couple who dedicated their lives to honoring God. {eoa}

Follow breaking news like this and more in our new platform, CHARISMA PLUS.