

Pause to Say Goodbye: Christians Who Died in 2014

At the close of every year I always look back to see which members of our Christian family passed away. I don't have room to include everyone, but here are some believers who left behind a special legacy.

1. Louis Zamperini. I'll start my list with this army hero, since his amazing story of courage was immortalized this year in the movie *Unbroken*. During World War II the Olympic runner-turned-soldier survived 47 days on a raft in the Pacific, then endured two horrific years in a Japanese prison camp. Unfortunately he died (at age 97) five months before the movie hit theaters. An Italian immigrant, he came home after the war and embraced faith in Jesus at a Billy Graham crusade in 1949—and this led him to seek out his Japanese captors so he could forgive them. (A documentary about Zamperini's faith, *Louis Zamperini: Captured by Grace*, will air Dec. 31 and Jan. 1 on Fox.)

2. S. Truett Cathy. He was not your typical billionaire. The Southern Baptist entrepreneur, who grew up poor, began his Chick-fil-A restaurant chain with one odd-shaped diner in Atlanta called the Dwarf House. Today the company's tasty boneless chicken sandwiches are sold in 1,800 locations—with \$5 billion in annual sales. Cathy's Christian faith not only shaped his store policies (always closed on Sundays) but also his giving: He donated millions to build foster homes for kids and launched a scholarship program to provide career opportunities to underprivileged youth. Cathy was 93.

3. Ann Kiemel Anderson. With her hippie hairdo, maxi dresses and chirpy, high-pitched voice, Ann Kiemel was an unlikely evangelist in the 1970s. But she personified the simplicity of the Jesus Movement when she took to stages all over the United

States and challenged young people to serve Jesus. "I am just one young woman ... but one plus a giant of a God can do anything," she said. Her 18 books, including *I'm Out to Change My World*, sold 28 million copies. Later in life she developed a drug dependency because of medical problems, but she talked openly about her weakness and always pointed people to Christ. She died of cancer at 69. (You can see her speaking at a youth rally [here](#).)

4. Steve Hill. Pentecostals knew him as the voice of the Pensacola Revival, a marathon series of meetings hosted by the Brownsville Assembly of God from 1995 to 2000. A former drug addict who was disciplined through the Teen Challenge rehab ministry, Hill brought a folksy Alabama drawl to his famous pulpit in Florida. But he aimed for the jugular vein when he gave altar calls. Never afraid to confront sin, he spoke several times a week in Pensacola and saw hundreds of thousands of decisions for Christ in meetings that attracted more than 4 million people over the course of five years. He and his wife, Jeri, later moved to Dallas to plant Heartland World Ministries Church. He battled cancer for years and died in March at age 60. The Dallas ministry is now raising funds to create a digital library of Hill's sermons.

5. Myles Munroe. The world-famous Caribbean faith preacher died with his wife, Ruth, and seven other members of their church when their ministry plane crashed in severe weather in November. Munroe became a hero to many Christians in the developing world because he rose from poverty in his native Bahamas to attend Oral Roberts University. He later planted a thriving church, Bahamas Faith Ministries, in Nassau and began authoring motivational books such as *Releasing Your Potential*. The prime minister of the Bahamas, Perry G. Christie, told reporters that Munroe "was indisputably one of the most globally recognizable religious figures our nation has ever produced." Munroe was only 60. Dave Burrows, a Bahamian who also graduated from ORU, will reportedly replace Munroe as

pastor.

6. Stanley M. Horton. Some people make a big splash in life. Others spread their impact more quietly over decades. That was true of Horton, a Harvard graduate who became the most respected Pentecostal theologian of our lifetime. Author of *What the Bible Says About the Holy Spirit* and many other books, he served as professor of Bible at Assemblies of God Theological Seminary in Springfield, Missouri, from 1978-1991. He then continued to travel and speak until he was 92. An expert in Greek, he most recently worked on the Modern English Version of the Bible, which was released this year by Charisma House. He died at age 98.

7. Ann B. Davis. The world knew this ditzy actress as the housekeeper Alice Nelson on ABC's 1970s sitcom *The Brady Bunch*. Few knew that she was also a charismatic Episcopalian who shared her testimony wherever she went. When she retired from show business she fully dedicated her life to ministry at a time when many Episcopalians were being baptized in the Holy Spirit. She told *People* magazine: "I'm convinced we all have a God-shaped space in us, and until we fill that space with God, we'll never know what it is to be whole." In her later years she led a Bible study at her home church in Texas. Unlike the maid she played on TV, she did not enjoy childcare or cooking. She died after a fall at age 88.

8. Richard Dobbins. He was both a Pentecostal and a psychologist—terms that do not often go together. But Dobbins, an Assemblies of God pastor and prolific author, believed that Pentecostals should do a better job addressing mental health challenges. He started a nonprofit Christian counseling ministry, Emerge, in 1973 after he realized there were few counselors who integrated faith and psychology. Also a local church pastor in Akron, Ohio, he broke new ground by offering counseling resources to ministers—who are often expected to have no emotional problems of their own. Dobbins was 86.

9. Maria Von Trapp. The last survivor of the seven Von Trapp children portrayed in *The Sound of Music*, Maria was called Louisa in the film to avoid confusion with her famous stepmother. When she contracted scarlet fever as a child, her father, Georg, decided to employ a governess, Maria, who was played by Julie Andrews in the film. The musical family fled the Nazis in Austria and came to the United States in 1938, where they purchased a lodge in Vermont and made it their base. Like her famous stepmother, Maria was influenced by the Catholic charismatic renewal movement of the 1970s and spent 30 years as a missionary in Papua New Guinea. She was 99.

10. The martyrs of 2014. Perhaps the most “famous” people on this list are the ones we forget. In November, Sajjad and Saima Massih, a Christian couple in Pakistan, were beaten and then thrown alive into a brick kiln near the city of Lahore. They were falsely accused of blaspheming Islam—and incinerated. Hundreds of thousands of people like the Massihs were killed for their Christian faith in 2014 in places such as Nigeria, Syria and Iraq—where 40,000 have reportedly died at the hands of ISIS terrorists. Mark Arabo, a spokesman for Iraqi Christians, told CNN in August that Islamic militants were beheading children of Christian parents. “The world hasn’t seen an evil like this for a generation. There’s actually a park in Mosul that they’ve actually beheaded children and put their heads on a stick,” Arabo said.

All of these people made a mark on the world because of their faith. I pray you will do the same in 2015. Happy New Year.

J. Lee Grady is the former editor of *Charisma*. You can follow him on Twitter at [leegrady](#). His newest book is *The Truth Sets Women Free* (Charisma House). You can learn more about his ministry, *The Mordecai Project*, at [.](#)