



Vance Richard Knutsen was born on February 21, 1926, in Fallow, Iowa, to Reynold Severin (R.S.) and Florence (Sandvig) Knutsen. He grew up on the family farm in Graettinger, Iowa, attending Graettinger High School where he met the love of his life, Geneva Osher. Vance and Geneva were elected King and Queen of their high school senior year. He continued to correspond with and court Geneva after he enlisted in the U.S. Army at the end of World War II. Due in part to his facility with languages, he was recruited by the C.I.C. (Counter Intelligence Corps) to serve as one of their agents. In 1947, he was deployed to Korea. After his discharge in 1948, Vance enrolled at Drake University and majored in psychology. In August, he proposed to Geneva and they were married on December 26<sup>th</sup>, 1948. Soon after, he felt the call to the ministry and upon graduation from Drake he enrolled in Luther Theological Seminary in St. Paul, Minnesota, for three additional years of study. In 1951 their first daughter, Kathleen Ann, was born, followed in 1953 by their second daughter, Janet Gayle. He graduated from seminary in May, 1953. His first letter of call from the ELC was to organize and establish a new Lutheran church in the small town of Elgin in northeast Iowa. He began holding services in a high school gym but by Christmas of 1954 built a new self-sustaining church. Their third daughter, Joyce Alayne, was born there in 1956.

In late September, 1956, Vance accepted a call to establish a new congregation in "Salubrious Santa Clara" California, as the Chamber of Commerce brochure described it. Vance, Geneva and their three daughters packed their belongings in a U-Haul and made the long drive to California in January, 1957. He conducted his first worship services there in an abandoned unfinished furniture store near the busy thoroughfare El Camino Real. After much consideration, the new church was named Hope, which, for Vance, has always been the heart of the Christian message. The congregation grew, buildings were erected and a beautiful new sanctuary was dedicated in February, 1967. In 2004, Hope Lutheran named a new fellowship hall Knutsen Hall in honor of Vance's early ministry in the years when Santa Clara was an orchard valley, not Silicon Valley.

In August, 1969, Vance accepted a call to serve as senior pastor at Clairemont Lutheran, a large, established church in San Diego, California. His fruitful years there with Geneva by

his side were a testament to the extravagance of God's grace, another of Vance's central themes. At his farewell dinner in San Diego, the MC said, "Pastor Vance would often say something to make us open our mouths in laughter and then he would put something in for us to chew on." Vance officiated at two of their daughters' weddings, Kathleen and Joyce, while serving in San Diego.

In 1985, Vance accepted a call to serve as Senior Pastor at Salem Lutheran in Glendale, California. All three of their daughters had settled in the Glendale area and the move enabled Vance and Geneva to see more of their grandchildren. In March, 1986, he officiated at their middle daughter Janet's wedding. In 1991, Vance retired from active ministry but continued to serve in many capacities. He served as a representative for Bishop Anderson in 1993 and for five months between 1994-1995 served as Interim Bishop for a synod comprised of over 150 congregations. He continued to perform occasional baptisms and weddings and to fill in for pastors who were ill or on vacation. The Holland Cruise line recruited him to serve as Cruise Chaplain which enabled him and Geneva to travel around the world extensively. Retirement also afforded them time to spend with their children and seven grandchildren, all located within a five-mile radius.

Vance's ministry began and ended on an Easter Sunday. The bridge between his years of service in a rapidly changing world was hope. Hope, grace and love are the messages Vance imparted in his ministry just as they shone through every aspect of his gentle life. As the end neared, he was filled with gratitude for the many blessings in his life. He was more concerned with others than he was for his own comfort. He left us physically on the morning of March 18<sup>th</sup>, but his spirit of kindness lives on in the many lives he touched, just as he lives forever in our hearts. He is survived by his wife, three daughters, seven grandchildren and one great-grandchild.

**Funeral Service will be held on  
Saturday, March 28th at 11:00am**

**First Lutheran Church  
1300 East Colorado Street, Glendale, CA  
The Rev. Kurt Christenson Presiding**

*Luncheon Reception Following in First's Fellowship Hall*

Online  
Giving



**Salem Lutheran Church**  
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Church: 818.243.3193 School: 818.243.8264



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