

Dr. Gabriel J. Fackre

Dr. Gabriel Joseph Fackre was born in 1926 in Jersey City, New Jersey. He died at home in Oregon City, Oregon on January 31, 2018. He is survived by his five children – Bonnie, Gabrielle (and husband Thomas), Judith, Skye (and husband Christopher), and Kirk (and wife Alice) - as well as eight treasured grandchildren and their spouses - Ben (and wife Kristin), Gil (and wife Michelle), Acacia (and husband Michael), Cole, Kyr, Charlotte, Campbell, and Casey - and one great grandson - Sawyer. He has six valued nieces and nephews – Dorothy Neva, Linda, Virginia, Douglas, Donald, and Betsy. His beloved wife of 72 years, Dorothy, died in October 2017. They were able to celebrate 72 years of marriage and were a love story for the decades.



Gabriel Fackre was a preeminent Protestant theologian, ecumenical in his faith. Raised a Baptist, he and Dorothy joined the Evangelical and Reformed Church as they looked for a church in which to begin ministry; the E&R then merged with the Congregational Christian churches to form the United Church of Christ. Dr. Fackre was a formative figure in the UCC, keeping it rooted in the generous orthodoxy he proclaimed and taught. He helped found the Craigville Theological Colloquy and the Confessing Christ movement to give clergy, seminarians, and laypeople forums for theological inquiry to ground their understanding of the faith, preaching, pastoral work, and witness in the world.

He was instrumental on the Lutheran-Reformed dialogue team whose work led to the full communion agreement between denominations celebrated in 1998. As an ordained pastor and a professor, he understood the bond between word and deed, and he lived that as a standard bearer of the faith. Reinhold Niebuhr and Karl Barth were influential in his theology, and his mentor at the University of Chicago Divinity School was James Luther Adams.

Dr. Fackre was Samuel Abbot Professor of Christian Theology, Emeritus at Andover Newton Theological School in Newton, Massachusetts. He was on the school's faculty for 25 years before retiring in 1996. Previous to that he was Professor of Theology and Culture at Lancaster Theological Seminary in Pennsylvania, teaching there from 1961 through 1970. Fackre also served as visiting professor or held lectureships at 40 universities, colleges, and seminaries, including Oxford and Cambridge. His papers are housed in Special Collections at Princeton Theological Seminary Library.

Dr. Fackre's vast scholarship in the fields of theology, ethics, and mission extended to thirty books and monographs, among them five volumes of a series on Christian doctrine, *The Christian Story*. He contributed to another ninety volumes, and published over three hundred articles and book reviews. He

was president of the American Theological Society. Dr. Fackre attended Bucknell University and received his B.D. and Ph.D. from the University of Chicago.

Dr. Fackre's marriage to Dorothy in 1945 began a partnership celebrated by fidelity and mutual affirmation over their long marriage. They committed early to social action, beginning with a campaign to bring Nisei students from World War II internment camps to Bucknell and taking part in a Quaker "peace caravan" in the closing year of the war. At Chicago, Dr. Fackre led a walk-out and protest at the Quadrangle (faculty) Club at the refusal by the majority of its members to include in membership an African-American professor. While at Chicago, after a student trip to study "The Church and the Working-Classes in Great Britain," Dr. Fackre and his wife served a mission congregation in the back-of-the-yards district, then spent a decade in a two-point mission charge in the steel mill towns of Homestead and Duquesne, Pennsylvania addressing issues of the working poor.

In the 1960s when Fackre was a professor at Lancaster Theological Seminary, together they founded a network of "freedom schools" for young black and white Lancastrians, and participated in demonstrations for civil rights in the city. Dr. Fackre joined Martin Luther King's March on Washington in 1963, and was part of a United Church of Christ contingent that assisted in voter registration in Canton, Mississippi in 1964. The couple campaigned together to integrate Lancaster's de facto segregated junior high schools, and helped to found *The Lancaster Independent Press*, and a coffee house, Encounter, out of which much of the foregoing activity emanated.

When Dr. Fackre was called to teach systematic theology at Andover Newton Theological School, the Fackres helped to found another citizens' newspaper, *The Newton Times*. Both he and his wife participated in peace and justice activities during their twenty-five years in Greater Boston. In retirement on Cape Cod, they advocated for the homeless, efforts in environmental amelioration, and peace concerns. Dr. Fackre voted his powerful conscience to the end, holding the faith strong as he watched the nation grapple again with the concerns of his lifetime.

Gabriel Fackre was a servant of his Lord, an icon of the faith, a devoted husband, and a wonderful father. He was humble, private, and deeply kind. He believed the Christian Story was greater than ours alone, and from the age of sixteen spent his life telling that Story. He is considered a great man by the many whose lives he touched. His family is thankful for his wise, loving, and constant presence to the end. Now "side by side" with Dorothy in eternity, he will be utterly missed here on earth.

A memorial service for Dr. Fackre will be held at South Congregational Church, 565 Main St., Centerville, MA, on March 3rd at 3pm. All are welcome. Donations in his memory in lieu of flowers can be made to the Christian Camp Meeting Association either directly or with a note in the memo for the Fackre Scholarship for the Craigville Theological Colloquy (CCMA, 39 Prospect Ave., Centerville, MA 02632), to South Congregational Church, UCC, to Confessing Christ (c/o Wisconsin Conference – UCC, 4459 Gray Road, DeForest, WI 53532), and to the Homeless Ministries of the Cape Cod Council of Churches (320 Main Street, Hyannis, MA 02601).