



Rev. Russell Henry Birdsall

March 14, 1927 - February 3, 2021

Rev. Russell Henry Birdsall, 93, of Huntington, IN was called to spend eternity with his Lord at 4:30 pm Wednesday, February 3, 2021 surrounded by his family at his residence.

Russell was born on March 14, 1927 in Wadena, IA, the son of Stanley Birdsall and Minnie (Shields) Birdsall. He was a 1947 graduate of Mount Carroll High School and married Nellie S. Elser on September 3, 1951 in Chambersburg, PA. He was a proud member of the United States Navy serving on the USS Bunker Hill Aircraft Carrier CV17 during W.W. II. Russell graduated from Huntington College in 1953 with a Bachelor of Science degree in Education, and, in 1957, he completed a Master of Theology degree from Huntington College Seminary. He also holds a Master of Arts degree in School Administration from Ball State University. In 1957, he and his wife Nellie became Missionaries for the Church of the United Brethren in Christ, in Sierra Leone, West Africa. In 1968, Rev. Birdsall became the Dean of Students at Huntington College and later served as the Director of Church Services and Alumni. He pastored New Hope Church of the United Brethren in Christ, in Huntington and served as the Central Conference Superintendent. He was a coin collector and enjoyed attending car shows, and judging the antique cars during the Heritage Days Parade. His passions were Huntington University, United Brethren Global Ministries, and spending time with people. He was a wonderful grandfather, great grandfather, and was a great uncle to many

nieces and nephews.

Survivors include his loving Wife, Nellie S. Birdsall of Huntington, IN; Daughter, Sharon K. (Kevin) Cherry of Huntington, IN; Two Granddaughters, Amy Marie (Andy) Wiebe, of Bornheim, Germany, Allison Cherry of Huntington, IN; Three Grandsons, Ryan (Katie) Cherry of Chicago, IL, Jason (Michelle) Cherry of Lakeside, MT, Andrew (Kayla Herrmann) Cherry of Huntington, IN; Eight Great Grandchildren, Andy Matthew Wiebe, Alec Wiebe, Austin Wiebe, Aaron Wiebe, Adele Wiebe, Benjamin Cherry, Isabella Cherry, Adalyn Cherry; and Sister, Mildred Gleason of Ossian, IN. He is preceded in death by his Father, Stanley A. Birdsall, Mother, Minnie E. Birdsall, Sister, Maxine Livengood, and Brother, Roger Birdsall.

Visitation will be from 3:00 pm - 7:00 pm Friday, February 12, 2021 at Bailey-Love Mortuary, 35 West Park Drive, Huntington, IN. Funeral services will be held at 11:00 am Saturday, February 13, 2021 at College Park United Brethren Church, 1945 College Ave., Huntington, IN with Dr. Ray Seilhamer officiating. There will be one hour of visitation prior to the service. Burial will be in Marion National Cemetery, Marion, IN.

Preferred memorials may be made in memory of Rev. Birdsall to Huntington University, or United Brethren Global Ministries in care of 865 Bailey-Love Mortuary, 35 West Park Drive, Huntington, IN, 46750.

Please sign the online guest book at www.baileylove.com.

Bailey-Love Mortuary is honored to serve the family of Russell Henry Birdsall.

Previous Events

Visitation

FEB **12**. 3:00 PM - 7:00 PM (ET)

Adkins Bailey-Love Mortuary
35 West Park Drive
Huntington, IN 46750
(260) 356-1710
wecare@baileylove.com
<https://www.baileylove.com>

Service

FEB **13**. 11:00 AM (ET)

College Park Church
1945 College Ave.
Huntington, IN

Tribute Wall



“ *Bailey Love Mortuary has created this Video Tribute in memory of Rev. Birdsall.*



Adkins Bailey-Love Mortuary - February 09, 2021 at 03:52 PM

CS

What a beautiful video for a wonderful gentleman. I loved him. Niece, Cindy Elser Spiess

Cindy Spiess - February 09, 2021 at 08:34 PM

RK

Wonderful kind and Godly man. Always a joy to talk with. Great example. Randy Kreps

Randy kreps - February 12, 2021 at 04:36 PM

JR

“ I was thinking of Russ, Nellie and Sharon this morning so decided to see if I could locate them online -- only to find this notice of Russell's death nearly a year ago.

Russ and Nellie are amongst the warmest, most modern and caring people my husband Jack and I have known -- just leagues ahead with their progressive attitudes about so many things.

We knew them in Sierra Leone from 1966-69 and have the fondest memories of them. We are ever appreciative for their warmth, hospitality, humour and loving kindness -- to say nothing of Nellie's fabulous cooking.

I am very glad I decided to follow through to find them this morning.

*Jane Ross
Story's Way
Alberta, Canada*

Jane Ross - January 19, 2022 at 03:12 PM

PB

“ Russell was such a great, nice, happy man who had a wonderful wife, Nellie and a daughter, Sharon whom I didn't know. You can tell he was a people person & family man. He was mostly with a smile on his face or laughing. His faith was strong & he knew where he'd be going after he died, with Jesus in Heaven. He will be missed by many. God's Blessings to All of You and may God comfort you through the loss in the days to come.



Pat Brown

Patricia A Brown - April 29, 2021 at 03:04 PM

LI

“ We are so thankful for how God used Russ Birdsall in our lives. After college, I worked 6 years in Macau as a single missionary. During that time I had the privilege of working with Russ and Nellie. They were so hospitable, inviting us single missionaries over for meals and games. The things that I remember most about Russ are his generous smile, his conversation that both cared and informed, his willingness to trust people, and his courage to face challenges. Nellie must be mentioned, too, as she truly served and complemented Russ. As a couple, they were a great blessing to all who knew them.

When I returned from the mission field in 2000, I was eager to find a husband. I had been out of the States for so long, that I really had no prospects or even a church home. I was able to settle into a teaching job near Marion, IN, the first year, but no developments. The following year, I settled into a new teaching job near Lafayette, IN. That year, I met my husband-to-be on eharmony, a newly developed website at that time, It was a very quick courtship. Tim and I began communicating in February, met each other in April, got engaged in July, and planned to marry in September. This was too much for the pastor at the church I was attending. I don't blame him as he didn't know me well. I did know that Russ knew me from our time working together in Macau, so I wondered if he might be willing to give us counsel and officiate our wedding. He readily agreed. It was a great honor to have him play that role in our lives! After Tim and I were married, and as our family grew, we stopped regularly to see Russ and Nellie, which was another huge encouragement to our marriage and family. Our fourth child, Joseph Russell, was named in honor of Russ, because through God's grace in using Russ in our lives, we have been so blessed.

Thank you, and may God comfort and sustain your family during this time!

Linda - February 18, 2021 at 12:26 PM

HK

“ Our deepest sympathy in the loss of such a great man. We were able to see the service on-line and appreciated hearing all the stories and tributes. He was a great asset to our community and definitely a builder of God’s kingdom. Our thought and prayers, Jim and Kris Hittler

Hittler Kristine - February 15, 2021 at 10:41 AM

LR

“ Nellie, Sharon, you are in our prayers. I always greatly admired Russ. Lynn Ramsey Jr. and Family.

Lynn Ramsey - February 13, 2021 at 10:35 AM



“ Beautiful in Blue was purchased for the family of Rev. Russell Henry Birdsall.



February 12, 2021 at 06:56 AM

G'

“ So sorry for the family’s loss. May God grant u the peace & comfort only He can grant. Seems like the end of an era. Many memories with Dean Russ, he did many favors for us, back in the”day.” God bless u Nellie & your family.

Gary Brandeberry HC/HU ‘72

Gary Brandeberry HC/HU ‘72 - February 11, 2021 at 07:47 AM

KZ

“ So many memories of "Uncle" Russ and "Aunt" Nellie in both Sierra Leone and then at College Park Church! He was a gentle, caring man who made a difference in this world because of the life he lived. I am sure he was very welcomed in heaven!

Komeh (Towne) Zilka - February 09, 2021 at 09:46 PM

PK

“ Peggy Kendall sent a virtual gift in memory of Rev. Russell Henry Birdsall



Peggy Kendall - February 09, 2021 at 06:16 PM

PK

No one I know had a more giving, loving heart than Russ. His spirit radiated his love and devotion to Jesus our Lord and Savior. Now that same spirit is in the presence of God.
Dear Nellie and Sharon,
I'm keeping you in my prayers and holding you both close to my heart.
Much Love ~
Peggy

Peggy Kendall - February 09, 2021 at 06:22 PM

JG

We have many fond memories of Russell and Nellie working together with them in Central Conference and being in their home. He drew people together in song leading and with his love of people. My favorite memory of Nellie was her working with the Pastor's wife's and she always had a smile. We are so sorry for your loss Nellie and family.
John and Barbara Goodwin

John and Barbara Goodwin - February 12, 2021 at 02:52 PM

PB

“ So sorry to hear of Russ' passing but I know he is in better hands in the presence of Jesus. I have many fond memories of him at New Hope Church when I was in Huntington. I always enjoyed his sense of humor and the fellowship we shared together. He was a very caring individual, I remember talking to him on my apartment phone one day and my phone quit working. I unplugged the phone, drove over to K-Mart and bought a new one and when I returned to my apartment, Russ was at the door making sure that I was okay.

Paul Barber - February 09, 2021 at 12:22 PM

RB

“ As I think back about Uncle Russ, I have so many special and wonderful memories. Our paths first crossed in 1957. That was Uncle Russ and Aunt Nellie's first term in Sierra Leone. He was the Education Secretary for the UBC Mission work and had the challenging job of following up on all the primary schools, mainly in the Southern Province of the country. He had to check up on the teachers, see what their needs were, help with getting their salaries, and encourage them. One of the more physical parts of his work was just getting to the schools. Many of the village schools could only be reached on foot, and he often had to walk many miles just to get there. On one of the occasions (1957) he invited this young boy, Ron Baker, to accompany him. I had just learned to shoot a .22 rifle. Uncle Russ had his shotgun. Talk about being excited! Wow! We went to the Gerehun School which was about a 3-4 mile walk from where we left his vehicle to get to the village. On the way there and back we did eliminate a couple monkeys. From that time on and through the years Uncle Russ has always been a great friend, mentor, encourager, and godly example to me. Thank you, Uncle Russ.

Ron Baker - February 08, 2021 at 08:29 PM

RB

“ 1 file added to the album Memories Album



Ron Baker - February 08, 2021 at 08:27 PM

JC

“ My wife, Lynne and I were privileged to be HC students when Russ was dean. But more than that, we pastored sister UB churches in Huntington for 6 years and he and Nellie hosted us many times in their home for support and fellowship. Russ and Nellie were my two favorite volunteer youth leaders in my HS years at College Park. My call to ministry happened during those years and their love and prayers were so encouraging. Russ modeled for me the gifts of compassion and caring - true love for Christ! We were so blessed to know him here and look forward to a wonderful reunion in heaven! Blessings to Nellie, Sharon and all the family.
Mike Caley

Jerry Michael Caley - February 08, 2021 at 07:03 PM

CF

“ Russ and Nellie provided a "home away from home" to SO MANY Huntington College/University students over the years. I was one of those students. Their love, care, encouragement, mentoring, and hospitality impacted me deeply. I have so many fond memories of times spent with them. They helped me grow and mature in my faith and were constant examples of servant leadership.

Cindy Forstrom

Cindy (Hoobler) Forstrom - February 08, 2021 at 06:25 PM

WM

“ Wayne McLaughlin lit a candle in memory of Rev. Russell Henry Birdsall



Wayne McLaughlin - February 07, 2021 at 03:03 PM

DW

“ Rev. Birdsall was an excellent supervising pastor. I enjoyed my days working with him.

I remember Russ and Nelly stopping at our house to see how we were.

Wonderful couple.

Duane Walter - February 06, 2021 at 03:35 PM



“ Emerald Garden Basket was purchased for the family of Rev. Russell Henry Birdsall.



February 05, 2021 at 03:39 PM



“ Russ Birdsall was many things to me - boss, parishioner, uncle, but mostly he was a role model for me. He taught formally, but mostly through example how to be a loving, engaged Pastor.
God's blessings to you, Aunt Nellie, and to all your extended family.
Brent Birdsall

Brent Birdsall - February 05, 2021 at 02:41 PM

BH

“ In 1978, my husband was a freshman at Huntington College, with the Birdsall's nephew Paul. Paul and Tim ran together in cross country and track. The Birdsall's were pastoring at New Hope Church, and Paul would come to this and that, and sometimes we'd come also --- like to the Fall Party hayride. Paul was in our wedding, and he and New Hope were very dear. Now, after many years of spinning events, I've ended up at New Hope as the secretary. We were privileged to Pastor a few years in Texas, and then work in the Unit Ministry Teams of the military. All seeds planted by a dear Pastor at a dear church with a dear nephew. THANK YOU to Russell and Nellie Birdsall.

-Barbara Hilterbrand

Barbara Hilterbrand - February 05, 2021 at 01:48 PM

JG

“ Many memories with Russ! He always was smiling! A wonderful man. Prayers for Nellie, Sharon and family. Hugs!

Joe and Diana Grogg - February 05, 2021 at 01:01 PM

DC

“ We have been friends with Russ since he was our Pastor at New Hope Church. He was a great example of a man of faith. He and Nellie became our extended family! Through the years they were a part of many of our family gatherings. He will be dearly missed. I have been honored to call him friend. We will always cherish his memory. He is rejoicing in heaven now and hugging a lot of family and friends!



Don and Janet Cox

Don and Janet Cox - February 05, 2021 at 09:59 AM

DD

“ *Dawn Downs lit a candle in memory of Rev.
Russell Henry Birdsall*



Dawn Downs - February 05, 2021 at 09:06 AM