

ROBERT PETER VANDE KAPPELLE



Washington & Jefferson College Professor of Religious Studies and College Chaplain

Robert Peter Vande Kappelle, 79, of Moon Township, died July 20, 2023, at Allegheny General Hospital after a three-week struggle to overcome a bicycling accident. Born April 2, 1944, in Costa Rica to missionaries Jacob Peter and Bertha Brower Vande Kappelle, Bob

came to the United States to study at The Stony Brook School in NY. He received a Bachelor of Arts from Kings College in NY and a Master of Arts in Latin American Studies from Indiana University. At Princeton Theological Seminary, Bob earned the Master of Divinity and Doctor of Philosophy degrees.

Dr. Vande Kappelle was ordained a minister in the Presbyterian Church (USA) in 1974 and worked as a pastor for two years in Fords, NJ. On November 30, 1974, he married Susan Elizabeth Hutton in the Princeton Seminary chapel. Beginning his teaching career at Grove City College, he came to Washington & Jefferson (W&J) College in 1980 to serve as Chair of the Religious Studies Department and College Chaplain until his retirement in 2014, when he continued teaching as Professor Emeritus. In addition to his scholarly writings, Dr. Van, as he is affectionately known by his students, authored over 40 books on a wide range of subjects, promoting lifelong learning and spiritual well-being.

Throughout his life, Bob was an avid cyclist. In 1989, he biked across the United States to raise funds to build a Habitat for Humanity house in Washington. He was also a multilinguist and world traveler, having studied nine languages and explored diverse cultures across five continents. His passions further extended to music. For six years, he played tenor saxophone with the W&J Wind Ensemble. Other interests included tennis, kayaking, cross-country skiing, and coaching and following his children in their various sports and activities.

Surviving in addition to his wife, the Reverend Dr. Susan Vande Kappelle; are his son, Dr. Robert Peter Vande Kappelle, Jr. (Erin) of Poland, OH; daughter, Sara Elizabeth Vande Kappelle (Kevin Matthews) of Rocklin, CA; and six grandchildren: Jacob Peter, Benjamin Anson, Katherine Elizabeth, Emily Grace, Ryan Charles, and Evelyn Jane.

As a professor, minister, author, husband, father, and friend, Robert Vande Kappelle dedicated his life to renewal and growth while teaching, encouraging, challenging, and inspiring others to learn and grow.

A memorial service will be held at 3 p.m., August 27, 2023, at the Fourth Presbyterian Church, 1000 Jefferson Avenue, Washington, PA.

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