



RIP: George Werner, Former Dean of Trinity Cathedral, Leader in The Episcopal Church, dies at 85

The Very Rev. George L.W. Werner, Dean of Trinity Cathedral from 1979 to 1999, and who served as the Episcopal Church's House of Deputies president from 2000 to 2006, died February 6 at age 85 after suffering since at least last year from a progressive dementia. Werner's death was announced by his son, Bill Werner, [in a Facebook post](#).



"While we will surely miss his humor and good spirit, we can give thanks that he passed along our way. President Werner provided leadership in our church that was both deeply faithful and open to new insights, truly just and genuinely kind," Presiding Bishop Michael Curry said in a written statement to Episcopal News Service. Curry was bishop of the Diocese of North Carolina during Werner's tenure as House of Deputies president.

"His leadership was deeply rooted in the Gospel of Jesus Christ and a reminder that good leadership is still possible in complex and difficult times. May he rest in peace and rise in glory."

Werner was born in New York in 1938. He came to the Episcopal Church as a teenager, after a fellow gold caddy invited him to come to his church, [All Saints Episcopal Church](#) in Bayside, Queens. Werner later said that the parish "adopted" him.

A frequent Facebook user, Werner used his page to discuss his physical health in recent years, for example, noting in June 2022 that he was dealing with arterial fibrillation. Twice in 2022, with an apology

in the second post for perhaps repeating his message, Werner wrote that he was “sinking deeper into dementia.” He wrote that he had “few illusions” about his future, having cared for loved ones who suffered from the same illness.

“[My wife] Audrey remains fabulous and by my side... other family members & friends are aware. In my middle 80s, I have had a wonderful run, so I hope I can keep gratitude as my daily companion,” [he wrote on Oct. 2, 2022](#). “So thank you to so many, who have blessed and accompanied me on my journey.”

Werner held a Master of Divinity degree from Berkeley Divinity School, now known as Berkeley Divinity School at Yale. He was ordained as a transitional deacon by Bishop Walter Gray of Connecticut in 1962 and Bishop Suffragan John Henry Esquirol of Connecticut ordained Werner to the priesthood in 1963. Werner served in several parishes in Connecticut and New Hampshire before becoming dean of Trinity Cathedral in Pittsburgh in 1979, where he served until 2000.

In Pittsburgh, Werner turned his energies to urban mission, working with The Episcopal Church’s Venture in Mission effort, to make the cathedral a welcoming space for the entire community, from unemployed steel workers to teenagers and white-collar executives.



Berkeley Divinity School and Nashotah House Theological Seminary each awarded Werner an honorary Doctor of Divinity degree. Werner also served for a time as a trustee of the Church Pension Fund and its Church Hymnal Corp.

Werner [told Episcopal News Service in 2006](#) that he “was especially proud of bringing more young people into the workings of General Convention.”

“I was anxious to appoint youth to positions at the table,” he said. “We had talked about that ever since I have been in the church.”

He also said he made a conscious effort to stay in touch with all parts of The Episcopal Church.

“I have chosen to go out and visit the church because we are in a time of some tension, and I have tried to connect,” he said. “That’s something a beat-up old parish priest like me was told to do back in the ’60s.”

On Sept. 10, 2009, Werner served as guest chaplain to the U.S. House of Representatives. [In introducing him](#), then-Rep. Jason Altmire, D-Pennsylvania, said Werner had “earned a special place in the hearts of Western Pennsylvania and especially The Episcopal Church” and had “made a career out of advocating for fairness for all of our citizens and helping those less fortunate.”

We ask you to keep Dean Werner's family in your prayers. We will share details regarding further arraignments as information becomes available.

O God, whose mercies cannot be numbered: Accept our prayers on behalf of thy servant George and grant him an entrance into the land of light and joy, in the fellowship of thy saints; through Jesus Christ thy Son our Lord, who lives and reigns with thee and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen. --
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