

# Rev. Bill COUCH, Jr.

*Class of 1956*



Friends say our Great Graduate from the Class of 1956 had considerable trouble pronouncing a simple two-letter word.

When asked to go above and beyond the call of duty in spreading the word of God, or take in a needy child or helping people suffering from substance abuse, Rev. William L. (Bill) Couch, Jr. found that simple little word “no” somehow always came out as “yes” or “I’d be delighted,” or “thank you for asking.”

Maybe that explains why in 40 years as a minister he built a resume that includes director and developer of Career Effectiveness Training for Word Processing Service in Oak Ridge, Tenn.; chairman of the Campus Ministers Council at the University of Tennessee; president of the Tennessee Association of Alcoholism and Drug Abuse Counselors; director of Knox County Metropolitan Drug Commission, board chairman of Lutheran Services of Tennessee; vice chairman of Knoxville’s Martin Luther King Jr. Commemoration Commission; chairman of the Knoxville Association of Christian Denomination Leaders, instructor of Biblical courses for Crossways, International; instructor for Southern Appalachian Lay Leadership Training in Greenville, Tenn., and chairman of both the Memphis and Shelby County chapters of the Fellowship of Christian Athletes.

In his spare time, Couch also authored a number of published

articles. And then there were times like the one when he was a minister in Memphis. He became aware of a boy from Little Rock, Ark. who had come to town to attend a school for the deaf but had no place to stay. Somehow it just seemed natural that Bill and his wife, Ruth, would do what they had done any number of times before – open their arms and welcome the youngster to be part of a family that already included a son and three daughters.

Long-time friend Ina Dilldine notes that Couch, who was president of the Class of 1956, didn’t originally have his sights set on the ministry. His aim in enrolling at Northeastern State University was to practice medicine. That changed abruptly during 1958-1959.

According to Bob Steinberg, that’s when Couch was seriously injured in a traffic accident that took the lives of his father and sister. After recovering, he answered a “calling” by enrolling in Concordia Theological Seminary in Springfield, Mo., where he received his Master of Divinity Degree in 1963 and was ordained a Minister of the Gospel in the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod. Later, he earned both state and national certification in alcohol and drug abuse counseling.

Today, Bill and Ruth are living the good life as retirees, comfortably settled in Knoxville, Tenn. where he devotes himself to maintaining a showplace lawn and flower garden and joining his wife in spoiling the bristles off their eight grandchildren.

Without question, Couch says God has been good to this proud former Tiger.

