



## Howard Wayne Norton

January 24, 1935 - October 22, 2023

Howard Wayne Norton, 88, of Searcy, Arkansas, passed from this life on Sunday, October 22, 2023, surrounded by his children. He was born January 24, 1935 in Saginaw, Texas to Thomas Herbert and Ila Mae Norton and grew up surrounded by the attention of a loving family who brought him up to be a preacher. Howard made friends easily and was successful in school, with both classmates and teachers. He was active in student government and Junior ROTC. Between his junior and senior years of high school, he went to Texas Boys' State where he was elected Governor. This success was followed by a trip to Washington D.C., as the Texas representative, where he was elected President of Boys' Nation. These successes opened other opportunities to him, such as being sent to Washington D.C. by the Fort Worth Star Telegram for President Eisenhower's inauguration.

After graduating from North Side High School in 1953, Norton went to Abilene Christian College (now University) to study Bible. At ACU, he washed pots and pans in "The Bean" (school cafeteria), worked at a gas station on Saturdays, and often drove to surrounding towns to preach on the weekends. In the fall of 1954, he met Jane Maethelle Pearce, who changed his life forever. On May 31, 1956 they were married and spent their first summer with Howard selling books in the "book field" of Ohio. They took their honeymoon

trip at the end of the summer to Niagara Falls, before returning to Abilene for their senior year.

Norton was president of the student body his senior year at ACU, they lived in the barracks, and began making post-college plans. Howard's first full-time preaching job was in Lingleville, Texas. In January 1958, he took a job as an associate minister for the MacGregor Park Church of Christ in Houston. In 1961, Howard and Jane, with their children Laurie and Tom, moved with a large mission team to Sao Paulo, Brazil. Their third son, Ted, was born two months after their arrival.

In Brazil, Norton wore the many hats worn by missionaries around the world: preacher, teacher, evangelist, friend, mentor, and of course husband and father. At various points in that 16-year ministry, the Nortons made trips to the U.S., where Howard often taught college level courses. His interest in higher education led him to pursue his PhD from the University of Sao Paulo (USP) on his "day off" over a number of years.

Norton accepted a faculty position at Oklahoma Christian in 1977 and moved the family to Edmond, Oklahoma, where he became a popular Bible teacher on campus. His dedication to Brazil continued as he and Jane led many students on summer mission trips there over the next 20 plus years. In 1981, he completed the doctorate he had begun at USP, freeing him to pursue yet other adventures. He eventually became Dean of the College of Bible at Oklahoma Christian, editor of the Christian Chronicle, and a pulpit minister at

Memorial Road Church of Christ.

In 1997, Harding University invited Norton to direct the Institute of Church and Family, so he and Jane moved to Searcy, Arkansas and placed membership at the College Church of Christ. They put down deep roots in Searcy, as Norton became an elder for the College Church, continuing to teach and preach at every opportunity.

In his 70s, Norton accepted a position as President of Baxter Institute in Tegucigalpa, Honduras, so the couple moved one more time, tackled one more language, and fell in love with yet another people. Their three and half years in Tegucigalpa were a delight to them as their final full-time ministry position.

In the years following their sojourn in Honduras, Norton made multiple trips to Brazil to preach and teach, sometimes as many as 11 lessons in 6 days. Usually, one of the annual trips to Brazil was for the duration of a month and included a longer stay in Sao Paulo, teaching and encouraging the national Christians. He also served on numerous boards, including World Bible School and Southern Christian Home, until this year.

Less than three weeks before his passing, Norton was predeceased by his

wife of 67 years, Jane Pearce Norton. He is survived by his three children: Laurie (Allen) Diles, Thomas (Magaly), Ted (Beverly) ; seven grandchildren, Harrison (Jessica) Norton, Pearce Norton, Wil (Lacey) Norton, Rachel (Victor) Maitland, Jordan (Colin) Dean, Andrew and Luke Diles; and ten great-grandchildren. He is also survived by his sister Donna (Terry) Roberts and his brother-in-law, David (Barbara) Pearce, as well as a host of nieces, nephews, and cousins.

In lieu of flowers, contributions can be made to a Southern Christian Children's Home, P.O. Box 649, Morrilton, AR 72110 or World Bible School, P.O. Box 2169, Cedar Park, Texas 78630. A joint memorial service for Howard and Jane Norton will be held Friday, October 27 at 2:00 at the College Church of Christ.

Arrangements are entrusted to Powell Funeral Home of Searcy. [www.powellfuneralhome.net](http://www.powellfuneralhome.net)

# Previous Events

## Memorial Service

OCT **27**. 2:00 PM (CT)

College Church Of Christ  
712 E Race Ave  
Searcy, AR 72143-4421  
(501) 268-7156

# Tribute Wall

ZG

“ Howard was one of my favorite Bible instructors when I was at OC. We had Fort Worth, Texas in common and would chat about Fort Worth - we knew a lot of the same stomping grounds. I specifically remember a lesson he taught at the mission club meeting - “Dream Big Dreams!” He kept repeating Dream Big Dreams. I will never forget. Thank you Howard. God Bless.

Zack Giles - October 27, 2023 at 12:27 PM



“ Rainbow Of Remembrance Spray was purchased for the family of Howard Wayne Norton.



October 25, 2023 at 11:57 PM



“ A [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) was planted in honor of Howard Wayne Norton.

October 25, 2023 at 11:57 PM

KB

“ My memories are flooded from our times at Nove de Julho and at Acampamento Monte das Oliveiras. From those times what I miss most, is the love that permeated between all of us kids and the families there. I used to love to hear Mr. Norton preach and always loved the kind way he interacted with us. Peace be with all of you.  
Kimberly Brown Blaine

Kimberly Blaine - October 25, 2023 at 06:06 PM



“ *Sweetest Sunrise Bouquet was purchased for the family of Howard Wayne Norton.*



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October 25, 2023 at 05:57 PM



“ *The last time I saw Howard and Jane was at the reunion at Fogo de Chão in Dallas. He reminded me that I had typed his dissertation for his doctorate. There were so many varied ways we interacted in São Paulo. Lucia was still with us then. I think the one aspect about the Nortons was their patience. On the mission field that has to come from God!*  
*Allen Huff*

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**Allen Huff** - October 24, 2023 at 10:46 PM



“ *Peaceful White Lilies Basket was purchased for the family of Howard Wayne Norton.*



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October 24, 2023 at 04:14 PM



“ *Basket Full of Wishes was purchased for the family of Howard Wayne Norton.*



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October 24, 2023 at 01:51 PM

SC

“ *Southern C. purchased the Peaceful White Lilies Basket for the family of Howard Wayne Norton.*



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**Southern C.** - October 24, 2023 at 12:47 PM

AO

“ *Ted and Bev, and all your family,  
We are asking our compassionate God to bless each of you with wonderful memories of your dad and mom. We remember their quiet and gentle spirits, their kindness, sweet smiles, and genuine interest in others. With Heavenly guidance, they've created an incredible legacy for all of you and for the Lord's church! We praise God for their example that will live on in everyone they've influenced.  
Sending our love, our sympathy, and virtual hugs to you,  
David and Alice O'Neil*

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**Alice O'Neil** - October 24, 2023 at 10:34 AM