**Obituary**

**The Rev. Dr. David Georg Gelzer, Ph.D.**

郭大衛牧師

(7 October 1919 - 23 January 2016)

The Rev. Dr. David Georg Gelzer, Ph.D., 96, of Rydal Park, Rydal, PA, died in the evening of January 23, 2016. A commissioned career educational missionary with the Presbyterian Church USA, David Gelzer was born in Vevey, Switzerland, October 7, 1919. He grew up in the city of Basel. Emigrating to the United States at age 17, he graduated the University of Dubuque in 1941, Dubuque Seminary in 1943, and Yale Divinity School in 1952. Ordained a Presbyterian minister in 1943, he served churches in Washington State, Iowa, Connecticut and Missouri before being commissioned in 1952 with his wife, Elisabeth Bennett Gelzer, by the Board of Foreign Missions of the Presbyterian Church, USA .

Before leaving the United States for a lifetime of service worldwide, Dr. Gelzer was Acting Head of the Department of Religion at the College of Idaho, where from 1946-1950, he taught Bible and German and served as Dean of Chapel. A decade later, he was founding pastor for the International English Language parish in Yaounde, Cameroon. At the same time, he served 3 other Yaounde parishes of the Presbyterian Church of Cameroon. He began his mission service as in administrative leadership and as a member of the founding faculty at the College Evangelique de Libamba in Cameroon, where he was professor of German and Bible. He became founding director, the first Dean of the Faculte de Theologie Protestante de Yaounde, Cameroon, where he also was Professor of Church History and Reformation Theology. In 1975-1984, he joined the faculty of Tainan Theological Seminary in Tainan, Taiwan, as professor of Church History and Theology. During his tenure, he was appointed Scholar in Residence at Yale Divinity School in 1982, teaching Missions and Ecumenics. In 1984, he was appointed Visiting Professor of Missions and Ecumenics at McCormick Theological Seminary. In 1985 he was appointed Acting Principal of the Talua Ministry Training Center in Vanuatu, and Professor of Theology and Church History. He returned to the Faculte de Theologie Protestante in Yaounde in 1994 as Visiting Lecturer in Church History.

Dr. Gelzer served as a delegate to a meeting of the **World Alliance of Reformed Churches** in São Paulo, Brazil, in 1959, and to a conference of the **World Council of Churches** in Belfast, Northern Ireland, in 1963.

He was an ardent advocate of self-determination, political freedom and peace making. He also demonstrated his dedication to reconciliation, liberty and equality when on furlough in the United States. In 1965 he participated in voter registration work in rural Mississippi. In 1988 he was among those demonstrators against apartheid, arrested in front of the South African Embassy in Washington, D.C. During his years in Taiwan, Dr. Gelzer quickly found that the engagement of Taiwanese Christians on behalf of human rights matched his own lifelong convictions. Living by his conviction that activism for democracy and self-determination was integral to and not a distraction from the work of ministry, he joined Presbyterian ministers in Taiwan who were leaders in the outlawed movement for Taiwanese independence from the mainland Chinese exile government. In 1984 the government expelled Dr. and Mrs. Gelzer for ‘activities detrimental to the country.’ The next decade saw a transformed political landscape in Taiwan and Dr. and Mrs. Gelzer were invited back to the country.

Dr. Gelzer received an honorary doctorate from Wilson College in Chambersburg, Pennsylvania in 1972, and an honorary doctorate from Tainan Theological College in 1994. In recognition of his more than 20 years of service to Cameroon, he was made a Chevalier de la Legion d’Hpnneur, in 1974. In 2003 he received a Citation of Appreciation from the Taiwan Foundation for Democracy.

As a retired member of the Presbytery of Philadelphia, he served on the Church and Society Committee, the Peacemaking Committee and as Ministerial Assistance in Presbytery congregations without installed pastors. He was a long-time member and president of the Canterbury Clerics, a Presbytery association of retired ministers. Dr. Gelzer was a valued and dedicated member of the Presbyterian Historical Society, where he volunteered his experience and service over the 25 years of his retirement. He and Mrs. Gelzer worshiped at Swarthmore Presbyterian Church, Swarthmore, where he helped found the Mission Committee and served on the Peacemaking Committee.

Dr. Gelzer is survived by four of his five children, Charlotte Weaver-Gelzer (Gary Weaver) of Lancaster, PA, Rebekah Wozniak-Gelzer (Karl Wozniak) of Salem, OR, Christian Gelzer (Stephanie Smith) of Tehachapi, CA, and Stuart Gelzer, of Las Vegas, NM, and his siblings, Renatus Gelzer (Joe) of Winston-Salem, NC, and Priscilla Grob-Gelzer, of Solothurn, Switzerland, grandchildren Daniel Weaver (Lancaster, PA) Rachel Weaver (Baltimore, MD), Phoebe Gelzer-Govatos (Ryan Seay) of Ann Arbor, MI, Asher Gelzer-Govatos (Leslie) of St. Louis, MO, and David Wozniak (Marcia Corinna) of Shoreline, WA, and six great-grandchildren. He was preceded in death by his daughter Miriam Gelzer-Govatos, and his wife, Elisabeth Bennett Gelzer.

A service of witness to the Resurrection will be held on 20 February 2016, at Swarthmore Presbyterian Church, 917 Harvard Avenue, Swarthmore, PA, USA at 2:30 p.m., with a reception to follow.

In lieu of flowers, donations may be sent: **In memory of Rev. Dr. David Gelzer to the Presbyterian Historical Society**, 425 Lombard Street, Philadelphia, PA 19147-1516 USA – thank you.

Messages of Condolences can be sent to David’s family by post to:

Charlotte Weaver-Gelzer

711 Ashbourne Avenue

Lancaster, PA 17601

USA

Via e-mail to: Charlotte Weaver-Gelzer < [weavgelz@gmail.com](mailto:weavgelz@gmail.com) >