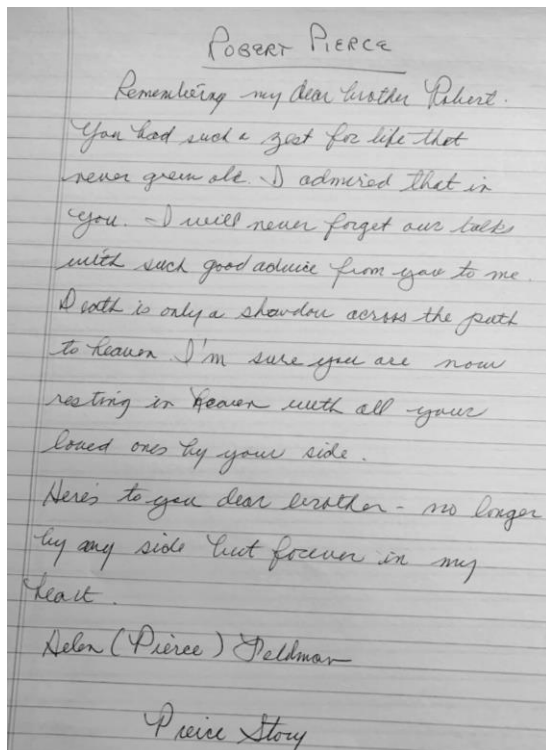




Remembering Robert with Shared Stories...



Helen (Pierce) Feldman

"Remembering my dear brother Robert"

You had such a great zest for life that never grew old. I admired that in you. I will never forget our talks with such good advice from you to me. Death is only a shadow across the path to heaven. I'm sure you are now resting in heaven with all your loved ones by your side.

Here's to you dear brother – no longer by my side but forever in my heart.

My dear ol' Uncle Bob is gone - but he is certainly not forgotten. Aka UB, my Uncle Bob was a force to be reckoned with. He certainly left his impact on this world.

I could mention a hundred stories about UB. One in particular comes to mind: Back in the late 90's I moved to Manhattan. UB and I were able to meet up on occasion. He would show me around the Big City. I remember one spring morning we were in Central Park sitting on a park bench. I distinctly remember drinking coffee planning how we were going to "seize the day". At one point UB looked over at me and, in his humorous chiding tone said "you know nephew...(pausing for effect) I never want to be known as a nice guy..."

At first I didn't know where he was going with that statement. I thought, who wouldn't want to be known or accepted as a nice person? He said he wanted to live his life as "bold, engaging and at times controversial", but not a nice guy. I get it. He wasn't put on this earth to go along with the flow, be ignored or God forbid, to be quieted down. Nope. He was meant to engage, learn and sometimes take the helm and a whole lot more. For his sake, I will now say it. He wasn't a nice guy - he was much more! His influence and our time together certainly was a valuable part of my life.

I am grateful for the time he and I shared. I certainly miss my dear 'ol UB. But I know his influence lives on in me to pass along to my three children. UB will be loved, missed and always remembered

Side story: One summer weekend, Bob, Carol, Nathan and Danny came from NY to visit us, Ron, Helen, Dean (me) and Craig in PA. During our time together that weekend, I remember Danny randomly singing "Jeremiah was a Bullfrog...". Eventually we all started singing that song together in unison. While we would never have won any awards for our harmonic talents, we had a great time being together. To this day I still sing the song (in my mind) when thinking of us all getting together. I think it's a great song. So, if you get a chance, give it a listen.

Marcie Agee

In 1987 I had 2 children in elementary school and a 2 year old. The LICC ran an ad stating they were looking for someone to coordinate community blood drives in local churches. I had limited time, but was anxious to do something other than childcare, sports practice, homework and car pool so I responded. Imagine my surprise when Reverend Pierce called. "Could I come to the office now for an interview? Well, I don't have anyone to watch the 2 year old. Just bring her along". Only time I ever took one of my children to a job interview.

I spent 2 years coordinating church blood drives in Nassau County. Bob was a strong believer in the need for blood donations.

Bob helped me find my voice. He believed I could do this job and encouraged me mightily. I discovered my untapped skills. He had a gift for helping people believe in themselves. And a smile that lit up a room.

*Reverend Freeman L. Palmer, Conference Minister
Central Atlantic Conference United Church of Christ*

I am deeply sorry to hear of the passing of Rev. Robert Pierce, who I knew as "Bob". Whether it was during one of my visits at Sayville or in clergy meetings of the Suffolk Association, Bob was always there with a good word for all and with a love for the Church and the United Church of Christ that was clearly evident and passionate. I send my sympathies and prayers to all who were fortunate to know Bob, to be served by his ministry, and especially to those who loved him as a family member and friend.

Ray Bagnuolo

I always introduced Robert as "my pastor". He was, along with being a dear friend and mentor. His words to me, "Stay open, open, open" guide me today, along with his quoting of Mary Oliver and her *Instructions for life*: "Pay attention. Be astonished. Tell about it."

Will do. Robert. Will do.

Robert and Martha met while they were both in high school and attending the First Baptist church in Erie, Pa. Robert was attracted to my family as well as to Martha because we were a small quiet nuclear family whereas Robert was one of ten in his family, so things were fairly chaotic. My folks were also pillars of our church. Robert once described them as the glue that held the place together.

Robert loved my folks and was the son my father never had. My folks actually let Bob take their car and go visit my sister at college for the prom which was a couple of hours away.

He loved to walk on the beach.

My daughters and I tried to get to Long Island every summer for a long weekend family reunion, and he always greeted us with an easel and newsprint to plan the weekend's activities.

Bob was named a Patroon in Schenectady (the highest honor a private citizen could be awarded). Later his friend and Mayor, Al Jurczynski, gave him a key to the city. While living in Schenectady, he ran the Inner-City Ministry. He subsequently was executive director of the Long Island Council of Churches when he and Martha moved to Bay Shore.

In his retirement, Bob had a consulting business in which he mentored individuals wanting to live more fully and especially ministers wanting to lead more effectively.

Robert and Martha were a very close couple. She adored him and devoted her life to him. He visited her frequently during the eight years she lived at Bellhaven. Robert and I became close during those years as we called each other often with reports of her situation. I live in California and we continued our annual reunions during that time. I visited her as often as I could when our families were together.

*Judy Harris and Family
Robert Pierce's Niece*

Memories of My Uncle Bob Pierce Thank you for allowing me to share some of my fondest memories of my Uncle Bob with you all. Thanks also for living life with him and loving him so well. He will be missed by many both in our family and in his church family there on Long Island.

Uncle Bob was born into the Pierce tribe of 10 children. My mother was the oldest child, and I was the first of many grandchildren. He was just 10 years older than me. My earliest memories of him were of watching my tall handsome uncle climb the steep narrow staircase to his second-floor bedroom with his huge bass fiddle, which was larger than he was. The rest of the second story was filled with his many sisters who were still living at home at the time. I would later sew my wedding dress and bridesmaids' dresses in that tiny room with my Gramma Pierce's help. With Uncle Bob now grown and gone, there were still the banners and flags left hanging on the walls of his private domain. He was the one who officiated at that outdoor wedding on a sunny day more than 55 years ago. Who could forget that deep bass voice as he pronounced us man and wife? We were honored to have Aunt Carol, Nathan and Daniel there on that day as well as many other family members.

Another fond memory was when my uncle decided to teach my mom, Elizabeth, his oldest sister how to drive as a surprise for my dad. He must have been in college and was home for that summer. I can still smell the smoke as it billowed out of the car. Inadvertently, the emergency brake had been left on. It was more of a surprise to my dad than we thought! Later on, he told my mom he was going to have to drop out of college for a while since he did not have enough money for the tuition. She told him he would do no such thing and somehow rounded up the remaining funds needed from her secret stash somewhere. He tearfully accepted the money and explained he could not repay it anytime soon. She replied, "Just send us an invitation to your graduation!" Which he did, twice! Once to Franklin College in Indiana and then later to Newton Theological Seminary in Boston. Our family was proudly in attendance at both graduations and then treated to Boston Baked Beans and a tour of the city afterwards.

Through the years I would try to keep in touch through letters and eventually emails. As my mom and dad grew older, he would call them with words of encouragement for them and always ask, "And how are you doing?" As he listened intently and gently responded with words of love and understanding. He would call me "Dear Heart" and "Beloved" and almost always end with "Love you to the moon and back!"

He kept us all going as we cared for my mom and dad into their nineties with his sound advice as we navigated the new Obama Care laws and end of life decisions. My mom lived until she was almost 95 and my dad was almost 100 so we imagined UB would live on to a ripe old age as well.

I know he went through so much with his own love, Martha, enduring her years of illness with such faithfulness while suffering his own pain as his body bore 87 years of living and giving. We will still bake his favorite banana birthday cake each year and celebrate a life well lived.

In the last email I received from him he wrote, Keep hope alive! "We must believe in love" and spring!

And I might add the promise that we will meet again one sweet day.

Blessings and love to all who remember a very special man,
Judy Harris (Niece of Rev. Robert L. Pierce)

Steven Greenfield

Never "How are you?"

Over the course of our 52-year friendship, Bob rarely asked me how I was, the typical question when seeing or talking to someone on the phone. Rather, "How is your soul?" That was a question that always required some reflection. Robert was a spiritual mentor to me, always honoring my Jewish background and commitment as well as sharing poets and theologians who he thought were worth reading. Henri Nouwen was one of his favorites. Mary Oliver's poetry was always present on his living room table. We shared Martin Buber's tales and thinking.

But mostly, Robert posed questions and pursued my answers to clarify my thinking and beliefs. He did this in a persistent but gentle manner. I will always be grateful for the thoughtful way that he pursued his ministry and our friendship. Hopefully, I learned to return the favor by pursuing his thoughts and feelings at a deep level too. I will greatly miss those encounters of the spirit.

Barbara McLaughlin
Gardendale, AL

When someone like Bob Pierce dies, a light goes out. Every Christian reflects something of the light of Christ and shares that with everyone around them. Bob shared that light in Erie, Schenectady, Nassau and Suffolk counties, and with people from other countries and faith groups in the Multifaith Forum.

He was my supervisor at the Long Island Council of Churches. He mentored the staff, and asked what we needed from him to do our job. He supported us, tutored us, provided retreats for growth led by colleagues. It was an honor to be a part of that staff. After he retired, I was able to stay in touch, maintaining the joy of connection and friendship. And he also continued as teacher and mentor. I accept the task of reflecting his light.

Jane Ann Groom

I knew Bob from the time I was interim Regional Conference Minister for the SE Region of the NY Conference of the UCC. I met him during the time of search and call before Pastor Val was called to Sayville when I came to the church in that judicatory capacity.

Years later, in 2008, when I became the interim pastor for Sayville Congregational United Church of Christ, I grew to know Bob and Martha quite well. Both of them were hospitable to me, helping me feel welcome and valued as part of the Sayville church family.

All the time I was there, through May 2011, Bob proved himself a friend, a mentor, and a much-appreciated companion in my work. This continued all the way past my time at Sayville as I served in several other contexts. I regularly called Bob to check in. He invariably answered the phone in great warmth, "Hello, Pastor!" I appreciated his wisdom and witness to my life through those years. I miss Bob.

Bob and I got to know each other through the work of the Public Affairs Committee of the Long Island Council of Churches. He asked me to chair it and we became frequent visitors to local, state and national agencies on behalf of one issue after another. That post also meant I was on his executive committee, where we both advocated for as much public ministry as possible.

We remained friends after that work time. Our last time together was when he came out to the Orient Church to celebrate communion with me. I had asked him what he missed about ministry. He said "Celebrating." He arrived early, was a little nervous -- and it was the first time I had seen or noticed that he was aging. He was always, as we joked, ten years older than me.

The second time I noticed it had to do with one of our regular lunches. We frequented great restaurants up and down the forks as well as in Suffolk and Nassau. It was a kind of game. Our favorite was one in Aquebogue, which we called the ghost house. Instead of competing for a good idea for a good place, that day he wanted me to bring him home made apple sauce and "eat in."

Our lunch conversations had a pattern and a ritual. First, I asked about Nathan and Daniel. Then he asked about Isaac, Katie and Jacob. Then we reviewed one professional problem each. We were mutual advisors. Then we went out for a long walk or hike or drive. We saw each other about every month for all those years of lobbying, then friendship, then apple sauce.

He and his family had also been members of Judson, where I served later. The "boys" were baptized there and went to Sunday School there. Bob was working nationally at the time. When I went to Judson, he was, as always, a good advisor to me. He excelled at the topic of boundaries and "doing what you could when you could if you could."

Bob knew the name of just about every church secretary/admin in his member churches. He was especially close to the women who ran the migrants center in Riverhead where I was located. Those women and I also became good friends. Whenever we had a "Problem" with someone's immigration status, we would wait till the last minute to call "Busy Bob." Then we would call, he would berate us for not asking for help earlier, and then he would not fix but manage the matter in a more than effective way.

He had one of the most beautiful beach buggies on the Island. Four large tires, fully packed and ready to go at the drop of a hat. He and Martha's best moments were evenings when the buggy went out and the sunset was caught.

And this bit more...

In 1991 we were on a 90 person tour together to the country of Morocco to study a successful 'interfaith' people. 30 American Christians, 30 American Jews and 30 American Muslims rode two buses all over Morocco for one month, visiting with officials, religious leaders, local community leaders, NGOS and more. It was sponsored by the Henry Luce Foundation. My birthday occurred during the time of the visit. Much to my surprise, Bob not only ordered a cake for one of our evening group dinners but also a Mariachi-like band who surprised us by jumping on our tables and belting out American music. They concluded with Happy Birthday to Donna. Bob laughed so hard he cried. He never told any of us how much he paid for the 14 drumming performers. I'll never have a better birthday.

Gordon Fry

One of my fondest memories of Bob Pierce was in the mid-to-late 1970's when Nathan, Daniel and I were teenagers. Both Bob and Carol Pierce enjoyed good contemporary/ rock music and built an impressive vinyl record collection. Many afternoons in Schenectady when school let out, it was always most enjoyable to visit the Pierce home to listen to their Beatles, Neil Diamond, Elton John and Simon & Garfunkel collections with perhaps the music turned-up a bit. I truly believe access to the Pierce music library helped me to fully appreciate good music throughout my adult life. Godspeed Bob. - Gordon Fry, CAPT USN (Ret.), Charleston, SC

Another fond memory of Bob is when he reluctantly 'inherited' the full care and feeding of their Great Dane Fauna after Nathan and Daniel headed off to college. I'll let Nathan share the specific household memory(s) with you, but every cold winter day had Bob and/or Carol dutifully walking or being dragged through the ice and snow by this extremely large pet. It was truly something to watch while fully challenging any patience is a virtue aspiration.

Tamara Greenfield & Issam Benzaza



Here is an image from a treasured memory with Bob when he married me and my husband Issam. I grew up with Bob as part of a close family cluster.

When Issam and I decided to marry, we asked Bob to officiate. As he did with all married couples, he asked us to complete a questionnaire and meet with him to discuss the union.

What I never expected was how much closer this process would bring all of us, while establishing a beautiful connection between Bob and Issam. Despite differences in age, language, religion, and nationality, the two of them were kindred spirits - sharing stories, cracking each other up, and sharing deep mutual love and respect.

We got married guerilla style in Brooklyn Bridge Park on a Thursday morning in August when the park was relatively quiet. Bob was of course up for the challenge! There were just 7 of us clustered together on a small pedestrian bridge overlooking the park and East River. We brought elements from Christianity, Judaism, Islam, and our imaginations into the ceremony. It was a beautiful experience and Bob was at the heart of it.

Bob brought so much to our lives. We will miss his enormous hugs, huge laugh, puckish humor, frank opinions, and sincere interest in other humans. He will remain in our hearts forever.

I have known Bob my whole life starting in Schenectady, NY. He loved to tell the story of me as a toddler walking through a blueberry pie and tracking it all over their new white rug. He would howl with laughter every time he told that story, and though I didn't remember it, it has become part of my own lore.

Something that I remember and loved from my childhood was to come to the Pierces for Christmas. They had all these wooden and unique toys that they put under the tree. I would play for hours! After he moved to Long Island and his kids were all grown, he offered me the toys. I still have them out and entertain all of my adult guests with them. I always think of Bob when we play with the "Flipper Dinger" or wooden puzzle cubes and think about how playful and full of life he was.

My favorite "Bob thing", though, is the absolute full-body hugs he would give you. You felt the bear-hug of his love and then he'd look you in the eyes and say, "You know I love you, right?" There's nothing like it and no one can give a hug like Bob.

First photo is me and bob. Second is Mary and Bob. Third is Kirsten and Bob.



Kirsten Riley

This is Kirsten, a friend of Bob's, Sara Greenfield's wife, and someone who really adored Bob. Bob was a shining light that always brought life to a situation or encounter. Bob was such a kind, gentle soul who knew how to make someone feel extra special, loved, and thought of. Bob asked the questions you never considered and helped you grow based on his questioning, guidance, and thoughtfulness.

Bob was a pure gentleman, a kindhearted, personable, sweet individual who will always be in my heart and forever missed.

I am so fortunate to have shared many memories with him and will continue to share his name with those who may have met him and those less fortunate to have not.

Love to Bob and Martha, may they forever rest knowing their lives' impact on others.

My sincere condolences to their sons and the family they created with their time here on earth.

Mary Greenfield

My overall memory of Bob after 50 years together is his presence. He filled a room when he entered. People were aware he was there. Over the years he challenged me, listened deeply, cried with us, and filled me with his care and love. When Steve or I were sick, he would ask, "What is the payoff for that illness?", forcing me to think about my need to slow down and take better care of myself - (or think about what I wanted to avoid by being sick).

Over these last few years, I have baked many loaves of bread to bring to him when we got together monthly. Last year I made the mistake of asking him which type of bread he wanted between the 2 types I had baked. His answer was, "Both!", and of course, I gave him both loaves.

These last 2 years were difficult for him as he had more difficulty getting around and had fewer people he saw regularly. But he still challenged, cried, loved, and embraced his friends and family. My overall memory will be my gratitude for our being a part of each other's lives sharing the ups and downs honestly through so many years.

The Gift of Bob Pierce

It was fifty years ago when some people in my parish went to a meeting of SICM and came back and told me how very impressed they were with the director. I was taken by what they told me and thought I would go and check out this dude for myself. I did just that and it proved to be the beginning of a long and vital relationship that only grew richer and deeper over the years. There was nothing, absolutely nothing that we could not say to each other, knowing that what we said was held in deepest confidence.

I learned a lot from Bob about how to manage a system and how to keep your butt out of the fire while moving ahead in building a healthy community and system. These are skills that I now use in my work with young pastors as I pass on the gifts that I received. I am paying it forward. Bob's gifts are still at work.

On my desk are pictures of Bob when he officiated at the marriage of each of our three children, who now have children of their own.

Bob and I were together not only for the high and wonderful times in our lives, we were there for each other in the tough times as well. I know that the last few years were particularly difficult for Bob. We talked and nothing was hidden.

Sitting in my study with pictures of Bob on my desk I think how rich our time was together and I grieve deeply the loss. Also on my desk is a copy of a book by the world-renowned theologian, Jurgen Moltmann. The book is titled, "Resurrected to Eternal Life – On Dying and Rising". Moltmann writes: "It is not our corpse that is raised from the grave but the entirety of lived life that is resurrected in the hour of death to eternal life." He further writes, "Our hour of death is the hour of our resurrection. When we die, we wake to eternal life. The pains of death are birth pains into eternal life."

Bob and I both had strong control needs. We were not interested in being losers or victims. In Moltmann's writing I find solace in knowing that we are neither victims nor prisoners of death but rather the pains of death are birth pains into eternal life. I think given that we can say, "Praise Be to God for the Gift of Bob Pierce and for the gift of life over death." Amen.

Rev. Dwight Lee Wolter

At a clergy luncheon, we were taking turns speaking about what was going on in our church and community. I spoke about a tragic and divisive event that had recently happened in our community, not long after I had assumed the pastorate. A person I did not know was sitting across the table from me. He seemed to be familiar with the church I was serving. After the luncheon, he asked if I would stay and talk more about the tragic situation that was scaring and baffling me. When all others had left, he leaned in and asked what was really going on with me. I confessed that I was perplexed, and I didn't even know if I would lose my job over what was ripping up the church and community. He said, whimsically but also somewhat seriously, "Dwight, I hereby ordain you as the Pope of Patchogue. You were chosen and called by God and your church to lead in this situation. So quit fighting it. Go do what you feel called to do. You're the Pope, and a good one at that. So, stop the hand-wringing. You're the perfect person for this. And call me whenever you want." Then he left, kindly smiling.

That was Robert Pierce. I have a suspicion he was like that with many people. But five minutes with him was instrumental in my ministry and my life. Five minutes. He was, and still is, a powerful force of healing, guidance and love. May Robert Pierce rest in eternal peace.

Karen Maust

Bob and I arrived at Sayville UCC in the mid 1980's and we connected on several levels early on. He was a thinker and a doer and always a touchstone for me. I could count on his honest opinion and even if our opinions differed, I could count on his respect.

He was responsible for my getting involved in the denomination on a N.Y. State level, and lo and behold I ended up on the Executive Committee and chaired that body for the last year of my tenure.

Bob was a loving spouse, parent and a loyal friend and also a good listener. He could accept a different point of view with good humor and always love. My memory of Bob trying to help me to meditate before my first shoulder replacement surgery brings a smile to my face and tears to my eyes.

I will miss you in person, Bob and know you are always present for me on another plane.



Robert's Family thanks you for joining us today.
It is so good and comforting to be together.

The Family asks that any donations in Robert's name be made to
Sayville Congregational United Church of Christ.

Please join us following this morning's service in our Vestry
for a light hospitality hour, along with a time for
shared memories, conversations, and support of one another.

Today's service will be available online at www.sayvilleucc.org

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Peace. Shalom. Salaam. For the ways of peace are many. "Namaste"