



Rev. Merritt Bongard

September 8, 1943 - January 19, 2016

Merritt Franklin Bongard was born on September 8, 1943, in Alma, Michigan to LeRoy and Eleanor (Root) Bongard. He attended Alma Public Schools, graduating with the class of 1961. He loved the West and became an outfitter and a guide for his uncle in the Jackson Hole, Wyoming area for several years

After attending and playing football at Northern Michigan College, Merritt joined the Army National Guard. He worked at Alma Plastics and returned to college after receiving a call into Pastoral Ministry. He served many local United Methodist Churches as a lay speaker during this time. He graduated from Central Michigan University in 1980 with a Bachelor's Degree in Psychology. He also attended Asbury Theological Seminary in Wilmore, Kentucky and graduated in 1984 with a Master's Degree in Divinity . He married Lois Schleder in 1980 in Ithaca, Michigan.

From then until his death, Merritt actively served as a pastor in the United Methodist and Church of the Brethren churches in St. John's, Williamsburg, Scottville, Mt. Pleasant, and Brethren. His passion for sharing the Gospel of Jesus Christ was his life's purpose.

He was a voracious reader, outspoken preacher, and constant encourager. He loved writing sermons on his Holy Yellow pad and mentored many young pastors, often encouraging them to seek out spouses so they could be "fruitful

and multiply!" During his ministry he performed 122 Baptisms, 119 Weddings, 167 Funerals, and preached 1,270 Sermons.

He loved coffee and doughnuts..and deeply missed his friend, Rick, who often joined in this favorite past time with him. He was a sports enthusiast and enjoyed CMU home football games for over thirty years. He learned to love Tiger's baseball to indulge his wife's love of the game. He was a member of Michigan Battery D Light Artillery and very much enjoyed Civil War re-enactment activities along with his son and grandson.

Above all except his devotion to Christ, Merritt loved his wife and his family and was immensely proud of his children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren. He was looking forward to the birth of his eighth grandchild this summer.

Merritt is survived by his wife of 35 years, Lois, of Ludington, Michigan; four children, Troy (Debra) of Clare, Michigan; Shannon (Kristen) of Detroit, Michigan; Mark of Ludington , Michigan; and Rebekah (Rich) of Olympia, Washington.

He is also survived by his sister, Harlean Rebecca Skidmore (Douglas) of Portage; a sister-in-law, Elisa Schleder of Mt. Pleasant, and sister-in-law, Muriel Derby of Ithaca.

Merritt is also survived by his grandchildren Jenn (Glen) Dana, Jessica Kroll, Julie Kroll, AshLynn (Dustin), Kelsey Bongard, Heather Bongard, Lucas Bongard, and Baby Lane to be born this summer. He is survived by his great-grandchildren, Evan and Haley, and numerous nieces and nephews and great-nephews and great-nieces.

Merritt was pre-deceased by his older sister, Charlene, his parents, LeRoy

and Eleanor Bongard; his mother- and father-in-law, Marian and George Schleder; two brothers-in-law, Martin and Phillip; one nephew, David; and one great-nephew, Randyle.

A Celebration of Merritt's Life and Ministry will be held at 3:00 pm on Sunday, January 24th at the Mason County Reformed Church in Scottville with his friends Pastor Norm Letsinger, Pastor Nate Polzin, and Pastor Brian Mackie officiating. Burial will take place at Brookside Cemetery in the spring. Friends may meet with his family for a time of visitation on Saturday from 3:00 - 6:00 pm at the Stephens Funeral Home in Scottville, and on Sunday from 2:00 pm until time of services at the church.

Those who wish to remember Merritt with a donation are asked to consider Covenant Christian School, or Lakeview Church of the Brethren in his memory.

Please visit Merritt's personal memory page at www.wymanfuneralservice.com to leave a tribute of Merritt for his family or to light a candle in his memory.

Cemetery Details

Brookside Cemetery

950 W. State Street
Scottville, MI 49454

Previous Events

Visitation

JAN **23**. 3:00 PM - 6:00 PM (ET)

Wyman Funeral & Cremation Services - Stephens Funeral Home
305 E. State St.
Scottville, MI 49454
(231) 757-3333
wyman-stephens@sbcglobal.net
<https://www.wymanfuneralservice.com>

Visitation

JAN **24**. 2:00 PM - 3:00 PM (ET)

Mason County Reformed Church
45 South Amber
Scottville, MI 49454

Celebration of Life Service

JAN **24**. 3:00 PM (ET)

Mason County Reformed Church
45 South Amber
Scottville, MI 49454

Tribute Wall

RL

“ Dear Lois and family,
I was so surprised to read of Merritt's death in the Asbury Seminary news letter. We had a lot of fun speculating about our first churches when we were sharing a class in our last semester in Wilmore. I remember him as a constant encourager who was only hard on himself. He was always ready to listen and never failed to help me see what God might be doing in the midst of my struggle. Though I've lost track of the two of you, you have often been in my thoughts and prayers.
In the Master's Service,
Mike Long

Rev. Michael Long - February 01, 2016 at 07:09 PM

ML

“ Dear Lois, We were so sorry to hear this news. My mother, Lois Hillsamer, loves you both and we thank you for ministering to her. Thank you also for the many sacrifices you both made to lead the Lakeview congregation. We look forward to the day when we can all be together with our Lord and Savior. Praying for your family,
Marlene Hillsamer Lord

Marlene Lord - January 25, 2016 at 07:18 PM

JC

“ After initially meeting Merritt over 30 plus years ago, little did I know that he would become a colleague in ministry as I served at the Epworth Church in Brethren. He was so gracious, collegial, supportive and kind to me. I loved to watch him work the "crowd" with his gracious hospitality. He was a person in love with his God and Savior, his family, his congregation and his many friends. I am glad his life washed over mine. Love to you Lois and your dear family at this time of loss. God's blessings, Judy Coffey.

Judy Coffey - January 25, 2016 at 10:14 AM

FS

“ The Bongards, Maurine and I were shocked and saddened to hear of Merritt's sudden passing. We had just been so touched by his tribute to Connie a couple weeks before. Our hearts go out to you all and we will keep you in our prayers.

*Frank and Maurine Slaughter
Battery D*

Frank Slaughter - January 24, 2016 at 10:02 PM

LB

“ Dear Lois and family,
We were surprised and saddened by the news of Merrit's passing. What a vibrant man of God. He always followed his passions and lived life fully. May you all take time to share good memories together and rejoice in the blessings God has given you. We are sorry we couldn't be with you this weekend.
Sincerely,
Larry and Bev Brown

Larry and Bev Brown - January 23, 2016 at 07:25 PM

PA

“ We love you...I do not have adequate words..
pat and jim in TN.

pat ashley - January 23, 2016 at 04:57 PM

ML

“ Lois and family.....we were saddened to hear the news of Merritt's passing. I always enjoyed my conversations with him regarding family, marriage and being a father. I particularly enjoyed his hunting stories as a young guide in Wyoming. I will always remember the story of him facing a grizzly while on horseback! Our condolences to your family in this time of sorrow. Mike and Asha Laraway and family.

mike laraway - January 23, 2016 at 04:52 PM

DB

“ Lois,

Sorry to hear about the sudden loss of Merritt. Even though it's been many years Lisa and I remember the positive impact both you and Merritt had in our Williamsburg church community.

God Bless

Doug Bowerman

Doug Bowerman - January 23, 2016 at 08:41 AM

DS

“ Dear Lois and Family,

My thoughts and prayers are with your family at this time. Merritt had a real gift of presenting his messages drawing from ancient texts, languages, archeology, poetry, music, dramatic presentations, and being very mobile on the pulpit and not just standing still which really got my attention. He presented his messages in an educational way which made it easy to follow and take notes, and most importantly to understand. Watching his enthusiasm during a chalk talk with a chalkboard really kept those attending really involved in the points his was making. I enjoyed conversations with him regarding books and history.

I apologize for not being at the services this weekend, but my thoughts and prayers will continue with you.

God Bless & Be With You!

Dan Shedd

Daniel Shedd - January 23, 2016 at 06:48 AM



“ *Divine Peace Bouquet was purchased for the family of Rev. Merritt Bongard.*



January 22, 2016 at 09:50 PM



“ *Lois, My prayers have been with you and your family. I treasured so much our time together every month planning worship services with our Music and Worship Committee for our Lakeview Church of the Brethren. And always he was glad to hear of prayer concerns which it was my privilege to pass on to him. He always ended our conversation with a , "Thank you, Kid." which was interesting since he was 5 years younger than me.*

He passed away 4 months to the day from the day my Love left this earth to be with his Maker. Merritt and Don deeply respected each other, and now they are together again, and though we miss them, I'm glad for them. Merritt will be greatly missed by our family at Lakeview which he affectionately addressed from the pulpit as "gang". Our hearts weep with you, and we will always hold you, as we did Merritt, with deep affection.

Janet Stroup

Janet S. Stroup - January 22, 2016 at 07:13 PM



“ *Lois, was so sorry to hear of Merritts passing. Our thoughts and prayers are with you through this difficult time. Dave and Becky Adams, Gayla Foster and David and Sue Smith.*

Becky Adams - January 22, 2016 at 05:53 PM

JD

“ Jenn, Glen, and Evan Dana purchased the Full O f Love Bouquet for the family of Rev. Merritt Bongard.



Jenn, Glen, and Evan Dana - January 22, 2016 at 04:14 PM



“ Sweetest Sunrise Bouquet was purchased for the family of Rev. Merritt Bongard.



January 22, 2016 at 01:40 PM



“ Sandi Williams lit a candle in memory of Rev. Merritt Bongard



Sandi Williams - January 22, 2016 at 12:25 PM



“ Simply Elegant Spathiphyllum was purchased for the family of Rev. Merritt Bongard.



January 22, 2016 at 11:56 AM

JH

“ We moved out of the Brethren area a year ago due to Lorren's job, but we appreciated Pastor Merritt and Lois very much. They were always very friendly and loving. We were so sorry to hear of his passing, but he is with his Lord and Savior and we will see him again in Heaven. Our prayers are with Lois and family.

Jackie Hannahs - January 22, 2016 at 11:14 AM

JM

“ Lois so sorry to hear the news. You and your family are in my prayers. Jessie

Jessie Morton - January 21, 2016 at 11:34 PM

TF

“ The Root Family purchased the Sentiments of Serenity Spray for the family of Rev. Merritt Bongard.



The Root Family - January 21, 2016 at 08:44 PM

AM

“ Angie Mickevich lit a candle in memory of Rev. Merritt Bongard



Angie Mickevich - January 21, 2016 at 07:52 PM

AM

“ Dear, Dear, Merritt, I will miss you immensely. Even though our paths have ventured away from each other in recent years, I will never forget the years at Sugar Ridge Church where you and your family became such an important part in our families' lives. I was a young mother, who you encouraged to become more involved in the church and to grow spiritually. You and your family set such a great example for me and my two boys, and I will never forget what a great man and pastor you were. You made me want to go to church again and to learn. I am so sorry, Lois, Becca, and Mark, my prayers are with you all.

Love,
Angie Mickevich

Angie Mickevich - January 21, 2016 at 07:51 PM

TL

“ Mr. Bongrad, although I only had the pleasure of meeting you once, you and your lovely family left quite the impression. Your hospitality and kindness can not be explained. I am deeply saddened to hear about your passing and the life you left behind. You have touched so many people in your years and people will be stronger and wiser, thanks to you. I hope you are in total comfort, sitting next to the man you so dearly devoted so much to. Much love and respect, Tabitha Lane

Tabitha Lane - January 21, 2016 at 07:47 PM

LQ

“ Merritt has always meant so much to our family and will be severely missed- we have been blessed to have him do the wedding for Jason and Kendra and have the greatest pictures to hang on to from that wonderful event- I know he truly is in a better place with a lot of friends that have gone before him and they are having the time of their lives welcoming him home !!!

Laura Quick - January 21, 2016 at 05:27 PM

BH

“ Bob and I moved downstate this past summer and are now visiting our 6th church. We can't seem to find a pastor as great as Merritt or a church as loving as Lakeview. Merritt was a great teacher and always was able to answer our questions. When I called after Christmas he said he would retire when the Lord decided. Lord, we weren't ready but we know he is happy. Lois, you are in our prayers. Bob and Judy Hamilton

Bob Hamilton - January 21, 2016 at 04:56 PM



“ Simply Elegant Spathiphyllum was purchased for the family of Rev. Merritt Bongard.



January 21, 2016 at 04:30 PM

DH

“ I always enjoyed my time with Merritt ref. high school football games. We was a great friend. I will miss him.

Dan Hathaway - January 21, 2016 at 12:22 PM

DS

“ *Lois - what a shock to read of Merritt's passing. I have many memories of his time as Pastor of Sugar Ridge and will miss him greatly. He always was on top of Chippewa football, for sure! I am currently in Arizona with my Mom and will not be at his services, but I will be praying for you and your family. Loss is hard, but I believe he is where he has always wanted to be - with God. Debby Saxton*

Debby Saxton - January 21, 2016 at 11:09 AM

MW

“ *Pastor Merritt will forever be in our hearts and minds. He was a Pastor like no other. His passion for bringing others to Christ was one of his greatest gifts. His sermons were words and thoughts that you took with you on Sunday morning and remembered all through the week. We know the words he heard when he entered heaven were "Well done thy good and faithful servant." There will always be a void in our hearts that no one can fill. Our deepest sympathy to Lois and family.*

*In Christian love,
Arlene, Lucinda, Ken and Melissa*

melissa wilson - January 21, 2016 at 10:56 AM

MS

“ Last June I was in attendance at the Brethren High School Senior Breakfast held at the Epworth UMC in Brethren. At that breakfast Rev. Bongard gave a very meaningful talk to the graduating class in regards of keeping Jesus Christ in their lives. I'm sure his message was taken to heart by those there - students as well as their family members. It was one of many inspirational messages that I have heard from Merritt. He will be missed in Brethren by more than those of the Lakeview Church. He participated in many joint ventures to bring the Word to it' citizens.

We are so glad that we have known him.

*Mary & Don Stewart
Brethren MI.*

Mary Stewart - January 21, 2016 at 09:39 AM

CW

*Dear Lois and family,
Pastor Merritt was my first unofficial mentor. As a brand new pastor he was always there with a word of encouragement. He had a true gift of speaker and it was amazing to listen to him preach with absolutely no notes. I will miss him.*

Colleen Wierman - January 24, 2016 at 05:27 AM

BB

“ Lois, Mark and Rebecca,
I want you to know that the world is a lonelier place with out Merritt. He always made me feel loved and cared for. Everytime we would meet, if it was at the store or on the street, he had a smile and a hug and I walked away carrying the love he shared. God bless you all and know that you are lifted up in prayer as you go through this time of loss.

Sincerely, Barb Burwell

Barb Burwell - January 21, 2016 at 09:03 AM

JH

“ Troy and Deb, our thoughts and prayers are with you in this time of your loss.

Rich and Janella

Janella Hicks - January 20, 2016 at 07:23 PM

MM

“ I REMEMBER MERRITT BEFORE HE BECAME A MINISTER. HE WAS A FRIEND OF MY BROTHER PAUL HULL AND THEY USED TO GET TOGETHER ON SATURDAY TO WATCH CARTOONS TOGETHER. THAT WAS THE EARLY YEARS. MY PRAYERS ARE WITH THE FAMILY.

MARY HULL MURRAY - January 20, 2016 at 05:50 PM

YS

“ Your Older sister and Family Skidmores purchased the Garden of Serenity Bouquet for the family of Rev. Merritt Bongard.



Your Older sister and Family Skidmores - January 20, 2016 at 04:25 PM

EM

“ The Bongard family is in our prayers at The Church in Drive, we are so sorry for your loss.

Emily - January 20, 2016 at 04:14 PM