

Dale VanGorden - Ministry by Linda and Marian VanGorden

With a passion for ministry and for children of all ages, God provided Dale with the opportunity to fulfill both in the field of Christian education. Whether starting and developing a winning wrestling team for Baptist Bible College or working with preschool age children, Dale served with joy and gladness wherever the Lord placed him.



Heather, Gretchen, Linda, Dale, Marian

After graduating from Broome Community College he got a job at Carrier Electric in Syracuse. This concerned his mother (Marian) and at one point during a phone call she gave Dale verses to read (Rev. 3:15, 16). He put them aside but wakened during the night and read them. He said it changed his direction in life. He quit his job and enrolled at Baptist Bible College in Clarks Summit. There he met and then married his wife Linda who was a student from Michigan.

After graduating from Baptist Bible College in Clarks Summit, PA during which time he had also worked at Keystone Junior College as a dorm supervisor and assistant coach, Dale lead or helped in various church youth groups until the Lord directed him to Capitol Christian Academy. There he coached several varsity and one JV team, taught the high school math and computer classes while fulfilling his main function of athletic director. In his spare time he drove bus, earned a Masters Degree in Supervision and Administration and with the help of his wife, Linda, his brother, Jeff, and his nephew, Scott built a house from the foundation up. However in 1982 just as the house was completely finished God moved him to Fairfax Christian School in Manassas, Virginia where he taught Physical Education and continued to teach math and drive bus.

It was during these years that a concern for better reading skills assailed him so that when the opportunity to start a preschool arose he was primed and ready to go even though it took him all the way to Naples, Florida. There Dale found that his greatest delight was in teaching preschool children to read and to learn about God and he stayed in this ministry for the remainder of the time the Lord gave him to serve on earth. When the door closed in Naples, God opened another one in Tennessee, a place where Dale had always wanted to live. So in 1992 Eagles Nest Preschool in Franklin, TN began

with only two students. Over the years the school grew in both size (to over 100 students) and grade level becoming a full-fledged classical elementary school, changed its name to Eagles Nest Academy but remained faithful to its original purpose of teaching children to read and to love the Lord and in so doing helped start three schools in Alabama and then later two additional schools in Tennessee.

Eight months after getting a new school off the ground in Centerville, TN, and in the midst of dealing with the trauma and details of having the school in Franklin destroyed by arson, God in His good providence brought major change to Dale's life. March 20 of 2002 Dale suffered his first stroke and spent several weeks in Vanderbilt Hospital in a coma. It took a couple years to regain any normalcy. And while the stroke that he suffered limited many of his remarkable gifts and rendered him unable to continue in his duties as administrator, he nevertheless still longed to serve the Lord. He did so by teaching the youngest ENA students their alphabet and helping out during the naptime so other teachers could go to lunch, and although he could no longer sing he continued to work in the church nursery as well.

June 28, 2010 brought Dale a totally different area of service resulting from a second stroke. Instead of a school it became a hospital and later a nursing/rehabilitation home. Instead of children it was doctors, nurses, therapists, and service people. Instead of teaching it was simply being the man of God had grown him into, a man who knew and loved God no matter what the circumstances glorifying God through the spirit of peace and contentment that reflected his love for God because of God's Love for him. A year to the day later on June 28, 2011, God freed Dale from a body that no longer worked and took him home. Dale's life ended with the same joy as in his years of service.