



## Michael Beckett

September 26, 1942 - February 10, 2021

Michael Lewis Beckett, 78, Lawrence, Kansas, passed away peacefully Wednesday, February 10, 2021.

Michael was born September 26, 1942, in Garden City, Kansas, to Vincent and Lelia Scheer Beckett. He was a proud Garden City High School Buffalo, graduating in 1960. Vincent died when Michael was 14, and soon, Raymond Brown entered his life as a beloved step-father. As a boy, Michael delivered newspapers on his bicycle, and then became a budding Disc Jockey at the local radio station. He attended Garden City Community College and Washburn University for a couple of semesters, active in band and choir, and then left to serve our country for a short time in the US Navy.

Before leaving for the Navy, on July 1, 1962, Michael attended a Box Social hosted by the Wesleyan Foundation at Washburn University. While there, he set eyes upon the most beautiful girl, at 5'2" with eyes of blue, named Helen Griffith. He was 19 and she was 18. He bought her box dinner for \$6.25 and their relationship grew quickly. In August, Michael joined the Navy but injured his knee and was given a medical discharge just as his unit was being sent to Vietnam. He returned to Kansas. Immediately, he sought out Helen, who was now a freshman living in Sellards Scholarship Hall at the University of Kansas. He proposed in late September and they were married just a few months later, on February 10, 1963, at the Topeka Wesleyan Foundation. It was the start of

58 years of a lifetime together! They honeymooned and worked briefly in Scott City, KS, and then moved to Dumas, Texas, where he began a career as a radio announcer. After a year, they moved back to the state of Kansas, adding to their family at each small-town stop. Their homes were first in Dumas, Texas, (Tandy) followed by Ottawa (Sean), Lawrence (Amy), Independence (Peter), and Oberlin, Kansas (Rachel), with short stints in upstate New York, Sublette, KS, and Garden City, KS. Throughout all these moves, he and Helen introduced Jesus Christ to each of their five children. With home church services, they nurtured the children's young faith and set them each upon their own life path of following Christ – a legacy that continues today.

In Oberlin, he was hired as the program director for KOMC-TV. He reported the evening news and the local weather and produced commercials. The family remained in Oberlin for six years. In 1976, the family of seven moved to Topeka, Kansas, where the children grew and became active at First Baptist Church. With his knowledge of sound equipment, Michael launched Sonship Productions and began recording sermons on cassette tapes for home-bound congregants. He also taught his sons to run the audio equipment for the worship services. His children all sang in the choirs, played in the bell choirs, and provided occasional special quintets and other music, and this is where he became the champion of spectators! Throughout his life, he faithfully attended countless concerts, plays, programs, graduations, and sporting events in which his children and grandchildren participated, beaming and telling everyone seated around him just who they were there to see and how proud he was of them! After each event, that person was always greeted with, "Did you see me grinnin'?" And we could!

When the family first moved to Topeka, Helen began nursing school and Michael launched the next phase of his life as the director of ambulance services at up Stormont-Vail. His duties included development of local EMS educational programs. During that time, he was involved in helping start the

911 service. He also got his certification to be an EMT instructor coordinator.

At the same time, Michael became ordained as a pastor and marriage and grief counselor, launching anew venture, Beckett Ministries, International. As Beckett Ministries evolved, he moved into another phase of his life as a disaster relief worker with first the Red Cross and then with Christian Disaster Relief Services, which he co-founded. When disasters hit anywhere in the world, Michael traveled wherever he was needed, throughout the USA, as well as to Nicaragua, Honduras, Guam, and Moscow. His work required extended periods of time from home, but he never failed to assure his family that he loved each one of them. They were proud that his service to others was comforting countless and was sowing seeds of love and grace to those deeply suffering. His last disaster reliefs were when he assisted in the wake of 9/11 in New York City and helped the families of American Airlines Flight 587, which went down on November 12th that same year with no survivors. Those disasters took a toll on him, and he opted to retire and focus more on his ministry at home.

Helen and Mike then took over “Rose’s House of Flowers” a flower, gift, and coffee shop in Garden City, KS. He was gifted at conversing with others and he loved ministering to anyone who came in. He also picked up a new skill of running an espresso machine! After 4-5 years, they sold the flower shop and went to work on developing a quiet refuge and place of worship in rural Douglas County, KS, called The Fountains. As a function of Beckett Ministries, they held weekly non-denominational church services, and provided respite for many.

For a short stint, he worked for car lots, driving vehicles down to other locations throughout the region. Then, giving up driving, Michael began volunteering for Audio Reader of Kansas in Lawrence, a service that provides

access to information for the visually-impaired. His daughter, Tandy, drove him to his scheduled readings, and this became a weekly adventure as they tried out a new lunch spot after the readings were completed. Michael's assignment was to record the Reader Digest once a week. He loved being in the recording booth once again, and he made a point of speaking with each staff member as he entered the building and as he left.

Michael was a man of many talents. For one, he was a consummate musician. Receiving permission to play his brother Ron's drum set at the age of 4, he quickly learned how to play a complicated riff and twirl a crashing cymbal. He loved to tell the story of marching down the street with the band during a parade, playing the crash cymbals which were larger than his head. At a most inopportune time, the leather strap broke and the cymbal went flying through the air! (We aren't sure if it was a tall tale he was telling or the truth, but it sure was entertaining – as were all his stories!) When he had kids of his own, each one was taught to tap complicated rhythms, and each were taught to sing the “doobiedoobies!” Michael loved to sit at the piano and improvise. A student director of his high school band, he loved all types of music, and kept a large collection of LPs, CDs, and cassette tapes, ranging from classical, to jazz, to Gospel music, to the occasional Carole King and the Carpenters, and to his favorite – the orchestral works of Jackie Gleason. He sang his first solo as an 8-year old boy soprano for church. When he attended Washburn University, he was a member of Phi Mu Alpha Sinfonia, and was in the Band, Choir, Singers, and Symphonette. He loved to sing with a family member accompanying him on the piano, and his tenor voice lent a beautiful harmony during family hymn-sings and church services, with carols at Christmas and at our extended family's sung Table Grace. “O, Danny Boy” was a favorite. When he was in his early 20s, he met and sang for Tennessee Ernie Ford who told him that he had the talent to make it, but that it would come at a cost of being away from his family. He chose to stay with his family.

Michael was also a prolific and skilled writer. He wrote books of poetry, short stories, and Biblical plays. And he was a composer of many tunes. He would often say that he had a tune in his head, and would not rest until he had written it out in manuscript and made sure one or more of his children had a copy, with the statements of either 1. "See what you can do with this," or 2. "I'd like this to be sung at my funeral." For many years, the Beckett family Christmas letter would include a new melody written by him. Dad also taught his daughters to dance, and he loved any opportunity to dance with Helen.

As a radio and TV announcer, Michael wanted to know some meteorology in order to report on it, so he became a storm-chaser and a sky watcher. Each of his children can remember him waking them up in the middle of the night or early morning to go out and look at the sky with him, whether it was at a beautiful sunrise, a sunspot, storm clouds building, a rare viewing of the Northern Lights in Nebraska, or at a lunar or solar eclipse. He was also an amateur ham radio operator. In the days of the CB radio, he chose the handle, "Empty Ice Bucket," which stood for EMT-IC (Emergency Medical Technician Instructor Coordinator), followed by his nickname, "Bucket."

As a grandfather, Michael was gentle and tender and funny. His grandchildren adored him, calling him Be-paw, or Grandpa B or Grandpa Beckett, or Grandpa Mike. As a father, he made sure his children knew his family's heritage and history, (some of which he was proud of and some of which he wanted them to learn how not to be). He encouraged them to read their Bible, and his handwritten notes in all capital letters were treasures. He never hesitated to offer to drive friends and family across Kansas or other long distances, including friends visiting from Germany. His children's friends adopted him as their father, too. Many still think of him as Dad Beckett. He loved a good joke and a good comic strip, and he loved animals (especially Sambo, his childhood dog). He volunteered at a granddaughter's grade school, reading for the 3rd graders. He made sure his children – and his

grandchildren – knew how to improvise with their voices or on the keyboard, how to sing parts to hymns, and how to make good life choices, laugh at themselves, and know directions. He taught them by example the importance of using their God-given authority to hold back the forces of evil.

Michael loved the Lord! He said that his life purpose was to show the love of God to all people. He made sure that each of his family members knew how much he loved them and how blessed he was to be their husband/father/grandfather/father-in-law. This he reiterated each and every time he saw them – and even several times in the same conversation. He never thought he would live past the age of 40, because his father and his grandfather had both died at that age, and to almost double that expectation was a blessing for all of us. Michael was a cancer survivor, and a multiple-cardiac arrest survivor; he struggled with cardiac-induced dementia and the effects of a stroke, and had painful knees for many decades. But despite these ailments, he never became embittered. We are grateful he no longer is in pain.

Grateful to have shared his life are his wife, Helen; children, Tandy Beckett Reussner (Lee), Sean Beckett (Diane), Amy Beckett, Peter Beckett (friend Kelly Dunklee) and Rachel Beckett Braga (Steve); grandchildren, Katelyn (Jimmy Alderson), Liesel (Sean Callahan), McKenzie (Russell Brandt), Megan, Hannah, Tiarra, Michael (Alison Watts), Kelsie, Clare, and Stephanie; great-grandchildren, Mia and Eisley; many cousins, nieces, nephews; many, many people who loved him, and many who called him “Dad”.

Michael’s Memorial Service is Saturday, February 20, 10 a.m., at First Baptist Church, 3033 SW MacVicar Avenue, Topeka KS 66611. Inurnment, with military honors, will follow in Prairie Home Cemetery, Topeka. Both services

will be live-streamed on the funeral home Facebook page. A Celebration of Michael's life will be scheduled at a later date. Memorial contributions are suggested to Family Promise of Douglas County, sent in care of Kevin Brennan Family Funeral Home, 2801 SW Urish Road, Topeka KS 66614.

Whenever Michael said goodbye to someone, whether they were leaving his house or hanging up the phone after a conversation, he would always say this benediction over them: "Jesus be with you, angels protect you, keep you safe, go before you and prosper your way." And occasionally he would throw out with a grin, "Oh, and write if you get work!"

Michael Beckett's legacies of his faith and trust in Christ, of a love for family and a talent for music, of a gentleness born out of suffering, and of his ability to generously share the light of Christ with every person he met will live on through his wife, children, grandchildren, great-grandchildren, and more.

Michael Beckett was truly a great man, and will be sorely missed.

# Cemetery Details

## Prairie Home Cemetery

35th and Menoken Road  
Topeka, KS

# Previous Events

## Memorial Service

FEB **20**. 10:00 AM (CT)

First Baptist Church  
3033 SW MacVicar Ave  
Topeka, KS

# Tribute Wall



“ Kevin Brennan Family Funeral Home created a Webcast in memory of Michael Beckett



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**Kevin Brennan Family Funeral Home** - February 12, 2021 at 03:42 PM



“ I think of him often and remember him very fondly. I loved him.

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**Kelly Dunklee** - November 27, 2025 at 01:27 PM



“ *Michael Beckett*

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January 28, 2023 at 12:08 PM



“ *Such a sweet man. He always treated me like one of the family every time I came over to hang out with Rachel. He would always sincerely ask about my family and even in recent years if I saw him he always would say hello. He's sweet presence will be missed. All my love and prayers to Helen, Rachel and all the family. (Erin Toland Wilkinson)*

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**Erin Wilkinson** - February 22, 2021 at 01:45 PM

TA

“ One of my oldest memories of extended family gatherings was in the backyard at grandma Griffith’s house. The yard felt so big as there were so many people, most of which, I know now, were Beckett’s! I remember uncle Mike and the other uncles and grandpa are playing croquet. They were laughing and joking because Uncle Mike kept hitting his his head on the clothesline. Rather than get annoyed uncle Mike just kept laughing and joking. That was in fact the state that I found uncle Mike in and almost every memory of him. Smiling, always ready with a joke, and a want to connect. He was a man of many talents, and an endless supply of love and feel-goods to share and I will miss him dearly.

*My beautiful cousins, and Aunt Helen, I wish I could be with you today. I have no doubt that you’ll share many memories, and then several tears. Then, in typical Beckett fashion, you will all start the giggles. Rachel will most likely start it, but it will quickly grow until it embraces everybody in the room . I can hear it now the whole clan of you giggling, I can feel how contagious it is . You’ll find some memory of him that warms your heart, and leaves with you his true blessing to others... his good nature, his gratefulness to God, his love...and then finally his humor.*

*I love you all very much. Blessings and peace,  
Tina*

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**Tina Azar** - February 20, 2021 at 10:17 AM

AA

“ To Aunt Helen and my beloved Beckett cousins,  
I am sending you all my love, respect, and blessings in honor of Uncle Mike. When talking to him at family events he always made me feel very special and that he would not rather be any where else in than world besides visiting with me. What a gift that is to share with others, especially in these very busy, multi-tasking times! Being present with someone and giving them your attention no matter the moments that pass is such a beautiful thing, and Uncle Mike has that in spades.

When I graduated from high school, Uncle Mike and Aunt Helena gave me a book of prayers to sustain me through difficulties. I did not think much of it at the time, but throughout the years I have turned to it frequently. Uncle Mike told me it would always hold the prayer I needed if I could not come up with my own words.

Tonight I asked for those words and this is its response:  
“ Father, You will perfect that which concerns me. I commit and cast the care of my children once and for all over to You, Father. They are in Your hands, and I am positively persuaded that You are able to guard and keep that which I have committed to You. You are more than enough!”

These words are for my cousins, in whom I find home and humor at every visit. I know you must be hurting, and I send my deep love to you. Meeting The Beckett grandchildren over the last few years has especially been a great joy and I know that Uncle Mike must be so proud and that he is well at rest knowing that he has raised up such a wonderful family and can rest in power, knowing that you are in God's hands.

Aunt Helen I am holding you up in prayer and peace. We love you a great deal. Val expressed her shock and sadness in his passing, and she said she was so glad that we got to spend time with you all over the summer. As am I.

*Please accept my deep regret that we could not be there with you all this weekend. I always look forward to time with you all.*

*Love,  
Abby and Valentine*



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**Abigail Allen** - February 19, 2021 at 08:39 PM

TA

*Very sweet and true Abby*

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**Tina Azar** - February 20, 2021 at 10:18 AM



“ *Basket of Memories was purchased for the family of Michael Beckett.*



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February 19, 2021 at 03:09 PM

VT

“ *Victoria Thomas purchased the Lovely One Spat hiphillum Plant for the family of Michael Beckett.*



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**Victoria Thomas** - February 19, 2021 at 09:02 AM

AM

“ To Helen & his beloved family, may the joy & love that he gave to so many that he knew & met, return to you, so your hearts can be greatly comforted, & mended a new, so your hearts once again can be filled to overflowing with the LORD'S LOVE that Michael knew & you do too! Take Great Joy in always remembering Michael's great love for you all! Michael was more than a cousin, a Great Friend & Brother, too in our LORD. A mighty prayer warrior at all times when need be! Those times will be missed for sure but not for long, for someday we will have all of eternity to fellowship in heavenly bliss with JESUS & Michael!  
Much Love & prayers to you all!  
Archie Moody  
Garden City, Ks.



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**Archie Moody** - February 18, 2021 at 09:59 PM

JB

“ Janell, Tom, Robert, Brad Gomez & Terry Bebermeyer purchased the Emerald Garden Basket for the family of Michael Beckett.



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**Janell, Tom, Robert, Brad Gomez & Terry Bebermeyer** -  
February 18, 2021 at 08:02 AM

EG

“ Very sad to hear this news. Mr. Michael Beckett was our neighbor for over 8 years on Kent Place in Topeka. He was so kind and generous to our family. He was always giving of his time and compassion. He was very good to our son, Daniel and we will always remember him fondly. I still have the book he gave me by Natan Sharansky, Fear No Evil. We will miss him and we send our condolences to his family. A truly kind, good and generous soul who will missed by all.

*Ezra, Barbara and Daniel Ginzburg*

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**Ezra Ginzburg** - February 17, 2021 at 01:03 PM

BG

“ So sorry to hear about Mr. Beckett. We were neighbors for several years. He was such a kind, positive man. He always had such wonderful stories.

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**Barbara and Ezra Ginzburg** - February 17, 2021 at 10:37 AM

ER

“ When ever we met with Mike he greeted us with a warm smile. Always friendly with a twinkle in his eyes. He is meeting his new companions now with a smile and a twinkle. Our love to Helen and all of Mike's family, Elaine and Ron Reussner

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**Elaine and Ron Reussner** - February 16, 2021 at 12:16 PM



“ Medium Dish Garden was purchased for the family of Michael Beckett.



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February 15, 2021 at 03:31 PM

DK

“ *Rest easy, Daddy Beckett.*

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**Donna Kirk-Swaffar** - February 15, 2021 at 08:01 AM

GW

“ *Gary and I are remembering Mike fondly. We wish his family peace and comfort...Darlene and Gary Whitlock*

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**Gary and Darlene Stauffer Whitlock** - February 14, 2021 at 08:47 PM

CB

“ *I am sorry for your loss, Helen. Mike was always smiling and teasing each time I saw him. He was a good guy. I know he will be sorely missed by you and the family. God bless you and keep you in His grace. Love to you, Carol and Ron Bradford*

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**carol bradford** - February 14, 2021 at 11:39 AM

CW

“ *So many memories...sleepovers, hide and seek, board games, The Muppets, a bell choir road trip to Canada, the best silly faces, but mostly, unconditional love. Rest well, Daddy Mike.*

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**Carol Spring Watgen** - February 14, 2021 at 10:30 AM



“ *Full Of Love Bouquet was purchased for the family of Michael Beckett.*



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February 14, 2021 at 10:26 AM

EF

“Helen I am so sorry for your loss. I am thinking about you and your family. I have you all in my thoughts and prayer!!

Love and Hugs,  
Earlina

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Earlina Faurot - February 13, 2021 at 01:03 AM

CB

“I will forever be grateful to have finally met you. I am so sad we missed out on so many years 😞 I love you Cousin❤️ I will see you on the other side ❤️ You will be forever missed here on earth. You had a smile that could light up the world. That I will carry with me always ❤️



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Carrie - Bennett - February 12, 2021 at 05:53 PM

JG

“Dear Helen and family, It was with deep sadness that I heard of Mike's passing. May you feel God's presence as you go through this difficult time. Please accept my deepest sympathy sent with caring love.

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Judy Scheer Ginther - February 12, 2021 at 11:38 AM

KB

“I'm so sorry to hear the passing of Mr. Beckett, he was one of my mentors and pastors for over 40 years. I adored him and his family. My brothers and I grew up with his kids and enjoyed many years of family and church gatherings. I always prayed for you all and I will continue doing so. Much love to you all❤️”

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Kimberly Burbank - February 11, 2021 at 07:20 PM