

Memorial Resolution
Presbytery of St. Augustine
The Rev. Dr. Herbert Meza

Whereas the Rev. Dr. Herbert (“Herb”) Meza was born on October 26, 1922, and on February 9, 2017, entered the eternal kingdom, we the Presbytery of St. Augustine do resolve to give thanks to Almighty God for Herb’s life and ministry and honor Herb with the following memorial:

Herbert Meza grew up in Ybor City outside of Tampa as a child of Cuban and Spanish immigrants. He knew from an early age what it was like to be an outsider, and he was always after the champion of the underdog.

As a young man Herb fought with the Marines in the South Pacific during World War II, and received two Purple Hearts. After experiencing first hand the tragedy and atrocities of war, Herb resolved to be a life long activist for peace. In fact, many years later, in 1983, Herb won the Presbyterian Peace Seeker Award, which resulted in an audience with Pope John Paul II.

Herb was a graduate of Davidson College and Union Theological Seminary. After seminary, he served for five years as a missionary in Portugal. Herb then served churches in Texas, Washington DC, and Jacksonville, Florida. He also served a one year term as the Vice-Moderator of the Presbyterian Church in the United States. In his retirement, he continued on in interim ministry for many years.

As a young pastor in the deep south, Herb was on the front edge of the civil rights moment, risking not only angry parishioners, but threats on his life. He believed very deeply that the church must speak truth to power and take a stand against prejudice and discrimination. He led the way and was fearless.

In 2016, Herb was featured in a special CNN documentary which lifted up his role in the presidential elections of 1960. At that time, there were considerable fears in our country about the possibility of a Roman Catholic president. Herb chaired a meeting in which John F. Kennedy was invited, and in fact attended, between the press and the Houston Ministerial Association. That meeting ultimately helped to allay many of the country’s fears and was consequential in the subsequent election.

Much like Jesus, Herb’s heart was always, always with those on the margins of society: the poor, the oppressed, the hurting, the exploited. He often spoke after the manner of the

biblical prophets; confronting and challenging injustice at all levels. At the same time, Herb very much had a pastor's heart. His congregations knew that even though he challenged them, he loved them. He touched a lot of lives over more than 50 years of ministry.

Herb's deep faith gave him not only courage and conviction in life, it also gave him great comfort and peace at the end of life. He was excited about his last great journey, going on to be with the Lord he knew and loved.

Wherefore, the Presbytery of St. Augustine does adopt this memorial resolution, giving thanks for the life and ministry of Herb Meza, and it resolves that this resolution shall be spread upon the minutes of the May 2, 2017, meeting of the presbytery.