

Deaths

News in the [August 10, 2010](#) issue

Don S. Browning, a founding figure in “practical theology” and a catalyst in studies of religion, family and marriage, died of cancer June 3 at his home near the University of Chicago Divinity School where he earned his degrees and taught for decades. He was 76. His 1991 book *A Fundamental Practical Theology* is widely cited for its integration of religious theory and religious practice. A Christian Church (Disciples) minister and a frequent contributor to the *Century*, Browning started the Religion, Culture and Family Project that, among other things, examined the social implications of the decline in marriage. “It’s going to be impossible to find someone else to do what he did,” said Jean Bethke Elshtain, a faculty colleague at the divinity school.

George W. “Bill” Webber, 90, a minister and educator who was among leading Protestant advocates of social justice, died July 10 in Maplewood, New Jersey, of complications from Alzheimer’s disease. President of New York Theological Seminary from 1969 to 1983, Webber was hailed by religious and human rights leaders as a model of Christian activism. “He was not only a great leader in theological education,” said Michael Kinnamon, general secretary of the National Council of Churches. “Bill Webber was a social activist whose ministry helped renew the church in this country through encouraging (and modeling) its engagement with social issues.” When many white social activists lived in the suburbs, Webber and his family lived out their commitment to the poor in a housing project in Harlem, and in 1948 he cofounded the East Harlem Protestant Parish. A U.S. Navy gunnery officer during World War II when he decided to become a minister, Webber would later become a vehement opponent of the Vietnam War. He was arrested several times at antiwar protests. Yale gave him an honorary doctorate in 1981, citing him as a “prophet for the cause of justice.” While heading New York Theological Seminary Webber introduced innovations to attract minorities, including admitting students without a college degree.

Indonesian musician **Christina Mandang**, 38, who died after a road accident while attending an international church gathering in the United States, has been praised for helping Christians in her country develop their own style of hymns and worship.

She died on June 27 after a car struck her the previous evening in Grand Rapids, Michigan, during the founding meeting of the World Communion of Reformed Churches. "Echoes of what a talented musician she is and . . . how much she has contributed to helping Indonesian churches bring their own [style] into the development of hymns and worship have been ringing all round," WCRC general secretary Setri Nyomi said from Jakarta.