

A Well-Lived Life

Dr. Ria Ehteld Baker passed away on December 2nd, 2019 in Houston, Texas at the age of 58. She is survived by her husband, Monzell Baker; children, Thuli Baker-King, Micah Baker, and Gabriel Baker; granddaughter, Layla King; parents, Leo and Grace Ehteld; and sisters, Shireen Linger, Lynn Ehteld, and Donnalee Ehteld. Born in Aruba on April 21st, 1961, Ria's childhood was one filled with love, music, travel, and countless adventures around the island with her family.

Ria was devoted to serving others. After earning a bachelor's degree in journalism and public relations from the University of Central Florida in 1983, a master's degree in counseling in 2004, and doctorate degree in counselor education and supervision in 2007 from the University of Texas at San Antonio, she went on to devote over 10 years working in clinical community, ministry, and university settings with diverse populations addressing various mental health and social service needs. She served as a counselor educator at the 2012 NBCC Counseling Institute in Bhutan focused on the needs of victims of domestic violence and as a university counselor at the King Abdullah University of Science and Technology in Saudi Arabia. Her dissertation work focused on the resettlement experiences of Somali Bantu Refugee women propelled her effort to found The Center of Refugee Services, a non-profit organization in San Antonio, Texas in 2010. The center serves over 1,000 refugees resettling to San Antonio annually. She taught at the University of Texas at San Antonio, Texas A&M University San Antonio, Walden University, the University of St. Thomas, and Houston Graduate School of Theology. She was published 14 times and conducted over 30 presentations on a variety of counseling education and social service topics.

She was baptized into Christ on February 18th, 1980, and found new purpose putting God first in her life. Along with her husband, Monzell Baker, they planted and led multi-racial churches across apartheid stricken South Africa but focused in Johannesburg from 1985 to 1990. Their ministry work also led them to Mumbai, India and back to the U.S. in Dallas and San Antonio, Texas. They devoted over 20 years in the full-time Christian ministry where they served, pastored, and led countless number of lives to Christ.

Ria and Monzell recently celebrated their 34th wedding anniversary. In Monzell's words, their many years of love can be described as "a labor of unconditional love to our children, our family, and anyone she met along the way." Her powerful life's legacy will live on and she will be missed dearly. The family requests that donations be made to the Center for Refugee Services in San Antonio, TX through the link: www.sarefugees.org