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Hillsdale College to Award Honorary Degrees to Charlie and Erika Kirk
Hillsdale College President Larry P. Arnn gave remarks at Kirk's memorial service.

HILLSDALE, Mich. — Hillsdale College President Larry P. Arnn [gave remarks](#) during the memorial service for Charlie Kirk on Sept. 21 in Glendale, Arizona.

Good morning.

We had the pastor. I'm the schoolteacher.

I have one short story to tell you about Charlie Kirk — my friend.

He became a friend of mine because I interrogated him one time. Nineteen-year-olds are my specialty. I asked him some questions he couldn't answer. And he was already becoming famous. And I noticed his reaction: he said, "What should I do?"

And I said, "Well, you have to suffer. If you want to grow, you have to suffer. It's hard to learn — into the night, crack of dawn in the morning. Start with the Bible. Read the classics. Study the founding of America. In those places you will find that there's a ladder that reaches up toward God. And at the bottom of it are the ordinary good things that are around us everywhere. If we can call them by their names — they have being, and the beings of the good things are figments of God. You will find that article in Aristotle. You will find it in the Bible. You will find it in Madison and Jefferson."

"How do I learn that?" he said, and I said, "You have to suffer. You have to study. You have to think."

I thought I'd never hear from him again.

Within a month, he got ahold of my cell phone number, and he texted me a copy of a certificate of completion of a Hillsdale College online course. He would go on to do that 31 times.

I keep a list in my head of the six or eight young people — and I'm very privileged, I get to know many inspiring young people — who are the best I ever saw. Charlie is the only one who was never a full-time student at Hillsdale College who was on that list. We will miss him dearly. He can't be replaced.

Do you know — a good thing is a thing that has being. An assassin is not a thing that has being. The assassin must give up his humanity to destroy something that has being. Charlie lives on. The assassin will die.

My wife, who's here with me today, and I have set up a scholarship in the hope that Charlie's children will go to a good college. I have one in mind. And this May the ninth — Erika doesn't know this yet — we are going to give Charlie and Erika the greatest respect a college can give: an honorary degree. Charlie, you see, has suffered enough. He's gone to the Lord. He deserves his reward.

Thank you.

Hillsdale College will confer honorary doctorates on Charlie and Erika Kirk in May. Previous honorary degree recipients include Justice Clarence Thomas, Edwin J. Feulner, Bishop Robert Barron, Patrick L. and Lesly Sajak, and Victor Davis Hanson.

For a recording of Dr. Arnn's remarks, click [here](#). For Dr. Arnn's video tribute to Kirk, click [here](#). For Dr. Arnn's tribute to Kirk in National Review, click [here](#). For a headshot of Dr. Arnn, click [here](#). For photos of Hillsdale College, click [here](#). For a high-resolution copy of the Hillsdale College clocktower logo, click [here](#).

About Dr. Larry P. Arnn

Larry P. Arnn is the twelfth president of Hillsdale College.

He received his B.A. from Arkansas State University and his M.A. and Ph.D. in Government from the Claremont Graduate School. He served as director of research for Sir Martin Gilbert, the official biographer of Winston Churchill. He served as president of the Claremont Institute for the Study of Statesmanship and Political Philosophy from 1985 to 2000. In 1996, he was the founding chairman of the California Civil Rights Initiative, which was passed by California voters and prohibited racial preferences in state hiring, contracting, and admissions.

Dr. Arnn is on the board of directors of The Heritage Foundation, the Intercollegiate Studies Institute, and the Claremont Institute. He served on the U.S. Army War College Board of Visitors for two years for which he earned the Department of the Army's "Outstanding Civilian Service Medal." He was appointed in late 2020 as chairman of President Donald Trump's 1776 Commission, which was established to restore in American education an understanding of the history and principles of the founding of the United States. The 1776 Commission Report was

published in early 2021. He received the Bradley Prize from the Lynde and Harry Bradley Foundation in 2015, the Edmund Burke Award for Service to Culture and Society from The New Criterion in 2022, the Heartland Liberty Prize from The Heartland Institute in 2024, and most recently the Great American Award from The Heritage Foundation in 2025.

He is a member of the American Political Science Association, the Philadelphia Society, Churchill Centre, the Council for National Policy, the Federalist Society, the Mont Pelerin Society, and the Philanthropy Roundtable. Published widely in national newspapers, magazines and periodicals on issues of public policy, history and political theory, he is the author of three books: “Liberty and Learning: The Evolution of American Education;” “The Founders’ Key: The Divine and Natural Connection between the Declaration and the Constitution and What We Risk by Losing It;” and “Churchill’s Trial: Winston Churchill and the Salvation of Free Government.”

Dr. Arnn is a professor of politics and history at Hillsdale. He teaches courses on Aristotle, Winston Churchill, 20th Century Totalitarian Novels, and the American Constitution.

He and his wife, Penelope, have four children, Henry, Katy, Alice, and Tony, and two grandchildren, Charlotte and William.

About Hillsdale College

Hillsdale College is an independent, nonsectarian, Christian liberal arts college located in southern Michigan. Founded in 1844, the College has built a national reputation through its classical liberal arts core curriculum and its principled refusal to accept federal or state taxpayer subsidies, even indirectly in the form of student grants or loans. It also conducts an outreach effort promoting civil and religious liberty, including a free monthly speech digest, *Imprimis*, with a circulation of more than 6.9 million. For more information, visit hillsdale.edu.

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