

Bob Abernethy, founder of popular PBS religion program, dies at 93

by [Adelle M. Banks](#) in the [June 3, 2021](#) issue



(Video screengrab)

Veteran broadcast journalist Bob Abernethy, who founded the PBS program *Religion and Ethics NewsWeekly*, has died at the age of 93.

He died on May 2 in Brunswick, Maine, his daughter Jane Montgomery Abernethy announced in a Facebook post. She said her father died of natural causes.

Abernethy was a correspondent for NBC News for more than four decades. Working in Washington, Los Angeles, London, and Moscow, he covered the fledgling US space program, Congress, and the Soviet Union's collapse.

In 1997, he turned his broadcast expertise to the world of religion, launching his award-winning PBS news program that would go on to run for almost 20 years.

"There's an enormous amount of interest in this part of life," Abernethy said when plans were unveiled for *Religion and Ethics NewsWeekly*. "There's not enough being

done to cover this part of life, given the interest, and we hope to fill that niche.”

Abernethy was both the host and executive editor of the show, which featured national and international stories and analyses about religion. It included interviews of news makers such as former president Jimmy Carter and the Dalai Lama, profiles of religious leaders like Jonathan Sacks and Billy Graham, and surveys about nones, or the religiously unaffiliated.

Abernethy was honored with the James Parks Morton Interfaith Award from the Interfaith Center of New York in 2015 and the Wilbur Award from the Religion Communicators Council in 2010.

When *Religion and Ethics NewsWeekly* ended its run in 2017, Abernethy thanked the viewers who had grown accustomed to watching a show that had won more than 200 industry awards.

“It has been a great privilege to report the many ways people of faith worship and serve others,” he said in a statement. “We are deeply grateful to our thoughtful staff and also to our viewers, many of whom have told us the program consistently affirms the values they most respect.” —Religion News Service