

## Karen Mains Biography



For decades, Karen Mains, a prolific writer and gifted communicator, has offered her talents, as well as her joys and sorrows, to the building of God's Kingdom. Whether as an author, speaker, or radio and television producer and co-host, Karen has addressed the deep spiritual needs and longings that surface in our current society. Karen's voice is always substantive and practical.

Many of her creative works have been birthed out of personal experience. Her first best-selling book, *Open Heart, Open Home*, is considered a classic and deals with the theology of Christian hospitality. It has sold more than 600,000 copies and captured experiences out of 12 years serving in an inner-city pastorate in a church founded by her husband, David R. Mains. The book challenges believers to use hospitality as a means of bringing redemption to a broken society. Circle Church was noted for its ground-breaking role in integrating the congregation and the staff in its concern about the civil-rights movement of the time.

In 1977, Mains' communication gifts expanded when her husband became director of **The Chapel of the Air Ministries**. This nationally known outreach featured a syndicated radio broadcast, aired on almost 500 outlets each Monday through Saturday across the U.S. and Canada. Karen often served as co-host on the 15-minute program, lending her unique perspective to issues that impact the spiritual vitality of individual Christians and local churches. Her broadcast research generated the widely accepted book *Child Sexual Abuse: A Hope for Healing*, co-authored with Maxine Hancock. The Mainses' media ministry continued with the daily half-hour national TV show *You Need to Know*, for which David won the 1995 *TV Program Producer of the Year* award from the National Religious Broadcasters organization.

In 1980, Karen traveled through the barrios and refugee camps in Central America, Southeast Asia, the Middle East and Africa. As a result of these journeys, she wrote *The Fragile Curtain*, which won the 1982 Christopher Award, given to writers, producers and

directors whose works “affirm the highest values of the human spirit” and are representative of the best achievements in their fields.

Karen’s children’s-book series *The Kingdom Tales Trilogy* was given the Evangelical Press Association’s Gold Medallion Award. These stories are frequently used by pastors as sermon material, have been endlessly adapted in dramatic form for churches and Christian schools, and are regularly employed by Christian counselors for the purposes of deep therapy. The number of books authored by Karen totals 5 volumes, in addition to countless broadcasts, and have gained her recognition and additional national awards.

Karen served on the board of **InterVarsity Christian Fellowship** for eight years and was elected its first woman chairperson. She headed the taskforce to “brown” the board so the organization would be in sync with the projection at the time indicating that secular universities would no longer have a majority by the year 2012. She is the co-founder of the Chrysostom Society, a group of well-known Christian writers committed to excellence in their work. She also serves on the **Medical Ambassadors International** board, an organization that brings an integrated approach to spiritual, physical and social health to communities worldwide. The Maineses have completed three short documentaries showing the impact of this organization’s development methodology. Karen directed the field shoot in El Ejido, a slum outside Santiago in the Dominican Republic.

Karen now works with her husband as co-director of **Mainstay Ministries**, where she is responsible for **Hungry Souls**, a spiritual-mentoring outreach that seeks to help people who are hungry for God to find Him in deeper ways. An annual *Advent Retreat of Silence* and regularly scheduled *3-Day Retreats of Silence* are offered. She delights in leading hungry souls in listening growth groups where spiritual growth is accelerated by the profound process of being fully heard. With a team of volunteers, Karen has developed the Listening Group outreach, conducting in some way over 250 small groups that use listening prayer as a means of creating deep understanding of individual’s relationship with God. In March 2008, Karen traveled to Africa with the idea of setting up cottage industries of bag-makers among the poor. That cross-cultural collaborative effort has now become the **Global Bag Project**, which seeks to establish sewing cooperatives to make reusable shopping bags that provide sustainable income. The first model is being developed in Nairobi, Kenya.

Although she has authored more than 27 books in the religious fields (her most recent is *The God Hunt* with IVP Press), Karen feels called to write about spiritual meaning into the secular culture, and is now spending much of her time discovering markets that are open to her work.

The Maineses have been married for 55 years and live in the western suburbs of Chicago. As the parents of four adult offspring, Karen and David are highly committed to creating healthy families and are eagerly sharing their invaluable spiritual journeys with the next generation, their own nine grandchildren.