



Mrs. Aimee Joanna Wallis-Buchanan

April 12, 1968 - February 4, 2013

One of the people Aimee Wallis Buchanan touched in her time on Earth described the experience this way: “You’re lucky if you meet a person like Aimee once in your life.”

While some of those whose days are spent doing good for others tend to take on saintly qualities after their deaths, those who knew and loved Aimee felt that sort of presence radiating from her every day, both as a Presbyterian minister and more recently as the co-founder, with her husband, Bill, of the Asheville Youth Mission.

Kids, teens, parents, nonprofit leaders, the homeless, hungry and downtrodden saw an actual glow about her, a twinkly-eyed essence that seemed to elongate her arms so that she could embrace an entire community with a huge, smiling hug. She radiated compassion and a spirit of giving, always searching for another way to encourage the weary or heal a hurting heart.

Aimee’s unexpected death early Monday morning at age 44 from flu-related complications has left countless hearts hurting, not only among the teens she and Bill have nurtured and guided through AYM, but the many adults who have been on the receiving end of the nonprofit’s volunteer and service projects beginning in 2010.

It was Aimee and Bill's dream, as youth ministers and pastors, to create a youth-focused ministry that would involve both artistic expression and service to the poor, homeless and disadvantaged. Drawing legions of teens to Asheville from across the country for summer service sessions, as well as the local core group and its theatrical offshoot, Many Voices, AYM has fulfilled that dream.

At the center of it all was Aimee, the quintessential mom not just to her own kids — 12-year-old son Taylor and 15-year-old daughter Elli — but to scores of other young people drawn to her wise and loving counsel.

"She was like a second mother to thousands of kids, including my own. If anybody had personal problems or issues, they would always go to Aimee," said Ed Parker, a youth adviser at Grace Covenant Presbyterian Church, where the Buchanans were associate pastors before leaving to start AYM.

"Kids would just pile up on her doorstep, and she'd say, 'Come on in,'" Parker said. "Aimee was always happy and upbeat, the very definition of an extrovert, and she got her energy from other people."

Lisa Cantrell, senior operations manager at MANNA FoodBank — where the AYM youths have contributed more than 5,000 volunteer hours — said Aimee believed there was "always a place for everyone and always a service one could give to another human being.

"She lived that — exemplified that in her life — and she taught it to her kids, her interns and the countless volunteers she brought from across the country," Cantrell said. "That was her thing — service to her fellow man."

Aimee's "kids" have contributed many hundreds of hours working with the

homeless, including at the Haywood Street Congregation downtown, and the Buchanans have been “invaluable partners in our work to end homelessness,” said Emily Ball, director of community engagement for Homeward Bound of Asheville.

“We’ve lost not only a colleague and friend, but also a passionate advocate for people living in poverty in our community. Aimee’s was a loud voice for social justice, and her heart for our homeless neighbors inspired and activated the people around her,” Ball said. “We already miss her, as both a champion of our cause and a person we loved.”

The kids in the Asheville Youth Mission said it’s almost impossible to imagine life without Aimee, but they have vowed to continue their work in her memory.

“The thing with AYM is, it’s never been Aimee or Bill, it’s always been Aimee and Bill — they were a team, and never did (one do) anything without the other,” said Porter Dowd, who also performs with the Many Voices troupe. “It’s insane to think about Aimee not being there.”

Wiley Withers, another Many Voices member, said he believes that “Aimee wants us to continue, to be the best we can. And even though she’s not going to be there to direct us, she’ll be there in our hearts and thoughts.”

“I think our next performances are going to be better than all the rest, because we know we’re doing this for her,” he said. “We’re just going to keep going, and finish it out for Aimee.”

Barbara Norton, learning centers coordinator with Children First/CIS, said it’s impossible to count the hundreds of hours AYM youth have contributed to the nonprofit — or the lives Aimee touched with her radiance and huge heart.

“If you met her once, you remembered her, and you looked forward to seeing her again,” Norton said. “Her impact to this community will continue on, simply because of who she was and the messages she brought.”

Bill Buchanan said that in addition to being an “incredible wife” and his best friend, Aimee was a “fantastic mom.” She rarely missed one of Taylor’s football games or performances with his rock band, or Elli’s performances as a drum major with the Asheville High Marching Band.

The whole family went to Washington, D.C., just days before Aimee fell ill, to watch the band members win in concert competition and to see them march in the inaugural parade.

“When we finally got to see the band march past the presidential viewing stand, Aimee was cheering for the band and for Elli,” Bill said. “And then Aimee takes off, following them down the last part of the route, waving and cheering. She got that much joy from seeing her children doing what they love.”

A memorial service for Aimee Wallis Buchanan will be held at 4 p.m. Feb. 16 in Anderson Auditorium at the Montreat Conference Center.

In lieu of flowers, donations can be made to Asheville Youth Mission.

Find a mailing address at www.ashevilleyouthmission.org.

Tribute Wall



“ *Mrs. Aimee Joanna Wallis-Buchanan*

October 07, 2023 at 11:15 AM



“ *I am so sorry for your loss. The Bible provides comfort during these difficult times. Revelation 21:3,4... states: "And he will wipe out every tear from their eyes, and death will be no more neither will mourning nor outcry nor pain be anymore. The former things have passed away". Very soon, we will never experience losing our loved ones in death.*

Ana - February 21, 2013 at 02:28 PM



“ *My children have very nice memories of Aimee from Bedford Presbyterian Church and her leadership of the youth there. Thank you, Aimee, for giving and helping to grow the children into the wonderful adults they are and will be. To your family, I have great memories of your mom and wife and how much she loved you. Sincerely, Alison Brianna, Todd, Jacob, and Tori Grace Horning. Daughter and grandchildren of Dean and Jean Travis*

alison horning - February 13, 2013 at 10:10 AM



“ *Gone too soon. Heartbroken in Texas.*

MEG - February 11, 2013 at 11:11 PM

MM

“ I am so terribly sorry for your loss. Aimee was a wonderful lovely person full of life and joy. I am blessed to have known her and Bill in my past years at Bedford Presbyterian Church. May she rest in peace and my prayers and thoughts are with the Buchanan family always!
Love you all! Meredith Morris

meredith morris - February 10, 2013 at 06:33 PM

AL

“ We are so sorry for your loss. We will be praying for you! The Leonard's - Robin, Ann, Cameron, Catherine

Ann Leonard - February 07, 2013 at 09:47 AM