



Alexander Mapes Alvord

June 28, 1933 - August 11, 2021

Striding down a crowded market street of late 1930's Shanghai, China, four year old Alec Alvord, looks like he can take on the world. With his two big sisters and two big brothers, Alec's parents, Berenice and Emory were on a globe-trotting adventure which included a hearse from NYC converted to a station wagon to fit the whole family. His Dad spent time at Tuskegee Institute working with George Washington Carver on rotation of crops and the replenishing of spent soil with the soybean. Alec's Dad, Emory, would take this knowledge back to Southern Rhodesia, expanding his work as an agricultural missionary, founding an agricultural institute there. Known as "adventurers for God," that is what Alec would do with his life-take on the world. He took on systemic issues of poverty and lack of education. He took on minority rule in Zimbabwe, Africa (formerly Rhodesia) and misogyny in the United Methodist Clergy appointment system. He took on evil, injustice and oppression in whatever forms they present themselves, fulfilling his baptismal vow.

Alec and his bride of 63 years, Dot, fell in love through "The Threes" program which recruited young adults in the United Methodist Church for three years of overseas mission service. They weren't supposed to fall in love. But a late arrival in a dashiki, wearing black socks and sandals stole Dot's heart. Alec's accent didn't hurt either! Their three year commitment turned into 18 years as full-term missionaries. A brief six month engagement turned into three children-Karen (Jimmy Stevens, deceased) of Weaverville, Lex (Tanya) of

Pittsboro and Veranita Alvord (Joe Tarpley) of Reidsville; four grandchildren- Megan, Josh, Olivia and Ivan; and a bonus family, Kwabena (Kay) and Cecilia Apau-Kese of Gastonia and their children- AJ, Alvord and Adriel.

Sensitive to the ways the Church has often exploited and misused indigenous peoples with missionary zeal, Alec saw his work in education as a professor of Old Testament at Epworth Theological School; his time as a pastor of four churches preaching in the Shona language; his time as a high school principal of mission schools; his time as Rhodesian Conference Education Secretary as well as Conference Building Inspector; his time on Bishop Muzorewa's Cabinet, as an opportunity to work himself out of a job, mentoring future leaders. Every position that Alec vacated to move to another position in Zimbabwe from 1959-1977 was filled with a qualified national. Upon return to the US in 1977 due to the Civil War in Rhodesia, Alec and Dot started all over again. Alec served as pastor of Advance-Mocks and Wilkesboro UMCs, renewing connections in WNC which began when Alec did graduate work and served as pastor of the Surry Circuit and Pinnacle Charge while studying at The Divinity School at Duke University. Dot got recertified to teach in US public elementary school through Winston Salem State University. The rural church was always where Alec's heart resided. He aligned with Hinton Rural Life Center in Hayesville, NC, Yokefellows Prison Ministries and United Methodist Rural Fellowship (UM Rural Advocates) as well with Native American Ministries, having the passion of Jesus for local ministries with the least, lost and last. Alec then served as District Superintendent of the former Marion District (now Blue Ridge) where he advocated for the district camping ministry expansion at Camp McCall in Bostic. He then served as the WNC Conference Director for Mission/Outreach and Disaster Response from 1992-2000. Through that position, Dot and Alec developed deep connections with United Methodist Women in WNC and all over the SE USA. So many local units of United Methodist Women across the SE supported Dot and Alec through their missionary service in Zimbabwe and their continued ministry in

WNC. Alec's tenure in this position began with Category 5 hurricane Andrew in 1992 which devastated the southeast and expanded into the Mission Response Center in Terrell, NC and the development of the NC-WNC Conference joint mission to Armenia through Project AGAPE. Alec's theological background served him well as the teacher for UMW Annual Meeting Bible Study for 25 years in a row. In retirement, Alec served Homestead UMC and preached interim gigs for clergy colleagues all over WNC.

Alec was an excellent puzzler, preferring 1000 piece puzzles to challenge his brain and skills. He never let the grand kids win at chess and when game boys were a thing, he was a champion Tetris player. For the last 40 years, Alec has made English fruitcakes every Christmas. Through their time at Sharon Church (South Park Church, Charlotte), they creatively disguised one of his fruitcakes for the annual gift exchange. The family always received homemade marzipan at Christmas each year, even if Baba threatened that "this year will be the I-ahst year!" (read that in a Zimbabwean accent). Alec is a timeless classic, full of action, purpose, forward momentum-like the Mozart he loved so well. He will be remembered for his intellect and spiritual depth, his larger-than-life laugh, his kindness, his dedication to service in the name of Christ, his integrity and his sparkling eyes through which he said and did so much, though used very few words.

The full, adventurous life of Alexander Mapes Alvord will be celebrated on Sunday, August 15, 2021 at 1 o'clock in the afternoon at The Norma F. Pulliam Chapel at Givens Estates with Rev. Ed Hillman officiating. Dot asks that Memorials, in lieu of flowers, be sent to The United Methodist Women Legacy Fund (unitedmethodistwomen.org).

Previous Events

Celebration of Life

AUG 15. 1:00 PM (ET)

Norma F. Pulliam Chapel in Asbury Commons of Givens Estate

2360 Sweeten Creek Road

Asheville, NC 28803

<http://www.givensestates.org/>

Tribute Wall



“ *Alexander Mapes Alvord*

October 07, 2023 at 11:15 AM



“ *Dot dear,*

We were so distressed to learn of your loss - Paul read Alec's obit, and was most appreciative of his life - after you were "short term" missionaries. Paul passed on August 23rd from Mission Hospital to Life Care, near us, at Lake Pointe Landing. Holding you and yours in our hearts and prayers.

Fondly,

Jean Yount

Jean Yount - September 25, 2021 at 05:26 PM

MB

“ I can't begin to put into words the impact Alec had upon my life as a colleague, mentor and friend. I was honored to follow him when he retired as Director of Mission/Outreach for the Western NC Conference. He went above and beyond to make for a smooth transition and always on stand-by when I needed him. I was fortunate to work with him when he served as interim Director of Disaster Response. From our daily conversations to our trips together abroad, I found in Alec a true disciple of Jesus Christ filled with compassion, which he freely shared with others wherever he went. His commitment to missions and the rural church inspired me, along with countless others to take seriously Jesus' command to reach out to the "least, last and lost." The United Methodist Church has lost a true legend whose work and impact will last far beyond his earthly years. i think all will agree with the words of Jesus from one of his parables in the Gospel of Matthew: "Well done, my good and faithful servant." Though we will miss Alec dearly, he will always remain alive in our hearts. I am blessed our paths crossed and the contributions he made in my life to become a better disciple of Jesus Christ.

May God comfort you, Dot and the rest of the Alvord family. I love and appreciate you all.

*Blessings,
Mark Barden*

Mark Barden - August 21, 2021 at 04:18 PM

DG

“ *Dot .. Although I left N.C. a few years ago, our friendship is forever. I just learned from Nara of Alex's passing into the hands of God and my tears join yours and so many others. He was such a special person and model of our Christian faith and even as I grieve over his physical departure, I already find joy in knowing that his spirit will live in the hearts and souls of countless others through eternity.*

Our mutual respect for mission work brought us together, but for Jeannine and I, Alex was responsible for our life changing mission in and for Armenia. I'm just one of the few that join in unending thanks for his constant support and encouragement as well as to you, his partner in ministry and service ..

Darwyn Van Gorp - August 21, 2021 at 03:08 PM

EG

“ *To Veranita and Family,
Your father lived a life of doing good for others. He truly left the world a better place! I remember you being in my class at Shady Grove in Advance. You were a sweet, caring intelligent girl. I can see that your parents were wonderful role models.*

Blessings and good memories to you.

Elnora Gore

Elnora W. Gore - August 16, 2021 at 09:14 PM

VA

Mrs. Gore!!

I just began looking at this Tribute Wall due to the ocean of grief and greetings we've experienced and received since Dad died.

I loved your class and feel as if you helped me pursue my own interests through the creative, independent structure of our class. You instilled in me a curiosity for learning and growing all my life. Thank you for your influence and for your kind note related to my Dad. Good Memories and Blessings to You!

Veranita Alvord

Veranita Alvord - October 06, 2021 at 10:54 AM

CH

“ I am so grateful to have called Alec a mentor, colleague, and friend. His passion for missions and insights into ministry, especially for the rural church strengthened the WNC conference, and his presence will be greatly missed. To Dot and all of Alec's family I offer my deepest condolences; I pray that the Spirit will comfort you in your sorrow even while we rejoice that Alec has entered the Church Triumphant.

On a more personal note one of my best days was riding with Alec to a meeting and back (in the snow!). It was a long drive and we passed the time by discussing many things both serious and lighthearted. I remember asking Alec if he could explain the game of cricket to me, and it is still the closest I've ever come to understanding it.

Claudia Harrelson - August 15, 2021 at 04:11 PM

NM

“ *Dearest Dot and Family,*

We are deeply saddened by the news of your loss. This is such sad news for us... We will never forget Alec... We will pray that God give him eternal rest... May he rest in peace...

We can't imagine what you must be feeling right now... Please know that thousands of miles away, on the other side of the globe, in the small country called Armenia there are people remembering and grieving his wonderful and gentle soul that will forever remain in our hearts. Praying that God will grant you and your extended family the strength.

Please accept the most sincere condolences from Project AGAPE Family and may our prayers help comfort you.

Nara & AGAPE Family

Nara Melkonyan - August 15, 2021 at 03:17 PM



“ It was a joy and pleasure to serve with Alec on several Charlotte District committees. Whenever Alec spoke, everyone’s attention was on him to hear his words of wisdom. He spoke the truth in love. My fondest memory was in Stuart Auditorium during a United Methodist Women’s Annual Celebration. Alec was to be the celebrant for communion. It was early Sunday morning. I had gone to Stuart to prepare the elements. Alec was sitting on stage. No one else was around. I asked him why he was there so early. He said that in the quiet of the large auditorium, he liked to think about and pray for the people whom he would serve communion. I shared that as I wrapped the loaves of bread, I, too, prayed for those receiving it. It was a holy joy to be with Alec and serve with him. Alec was a loving, caring, inspiring model of all a Christian servant should be.

May God comfort Dot and the family and provide strength in the days ahead. With much love and prayers,

Sandy Hieronymus

Sandy Hieronymus - August 12, 2021 at 04:50 PM



Maggie
Tilley

“ Alec was one of the kindest people I've ever met. His Bible studies were excellent. More importantly, both Alec and Dot have lived their faith, sharing light and love with many. It's difficult to talk about Alec without talking about Dot, as their bond goes beyond words. Both, especially Alec, were so kind and supportive to my husband and I as we fought to keep a young one in a safe, protected and loving home. No one was more faithful in their prayers than Alec. While I will miss him on earth, there's no doubt he will be front and center on the other side of the veil, for we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses.

Our love, prayers and thoughts go out to each and every family member. You are part of a very special legacy, and God will be and is with each of you.

Maggie Tilley - August 12, 2021 at 01:29 PM

AB

When Alec took his first breath in Rhodesia, it was the beginning of a life journey that was extraordinary. In their dedicated, gifted partnership, Alec and Dot had an illustrious ministry on the mission field, in churches, as a district superintendent and on the conference staff. When mission studies are added, their impact extended around the globe.

As the hymn writer ended: Alec will never die but live with Thee the perfect life of Thine eternity. So, in addition to expressing condolences, we want to add thanksgiving for his life and appreciation that our lives were enriched by our interactions.

Andy and Alice Brown

Andrew and Alice Brown - August 23, 2021 at 12:22 AM