

Donald A. Nickerson, Former Executive Officer of the General Convention of the Episcopal Church, Dead at 80

(Brunswick, ME) The Episcopal Diocese of Maine is saddened to report the death of the Rev. Canon Donald A. Nickerson after a 33-year struggle with Parkinson's Disease. After his diagnosis at age 47, Don and his wife Susan Martin worked with many neurologists to successfully manage the illness while he developed his ministry in the Episcopal Church and their beloved Camp O-AT-KA until his short hospice care at the end.

"Don's commitment to the Episcopal Church is rooted in his strong faith in the God of all creation, and of God's son Jesus Christ. He was a pastor's pastor, and mentored hundreds of people to be leaders of the gospel, both within and beyond the church. It is not too much to say, 'we've lost a giant'", said the Rt. Rev. Thomas J. Brown, Bishop of Maine, upon learning of Rev. Nickerson's death.

Don's family remembers him for his fighting spirit, generosity, fierce loyalty and friendships and a wicked sense of humor. He cared deeply for the less fortunate and did his best to mentor others to service. No matter where he lived, Don remained an avid Red Sox, Bruins and Patriots fan all of his life. One of his proudest moments was his selection as an honorary member of the Red Sox Hall of Fame in 2000.

As a young boy growing up on the North Shore of Boston, Don had an opportunity to attend summer camp on Lake Sebago in Maine which developed into a lifelong relationship with Camp O-AT-KA. On the shore of the lake, Don met Susan and they were married there in 1962 in St. Andrew's Chapel. As a counselor, Don explored the ministry and followed the path of his mentors into the Episcopal Church. Every summer, even in failing health, Don and Susan would return to the camp for fellowship and renewal.

Don served churches at Newton Centre, MA, North Conway, NH, and twelve years as Rector of St. Paul's Church, Brunswick, ME. In Maine and New Hampshire, he was elected as Deputy to six consecutive General Conventions and for four years as a member of the Executive Council of the Episcopal Church.

"A deeply spiritual person, Don served the Church faithfully and in many capacities," said The Most Rev. Michael B. Curry, Presiding Bishop of The Episcopal Church. "He was generous in forming leaders and devoted to his family. He lived the way of Jesus through a life shaped by faith, hope and, above all, love."

Don's ability to work so well with people, his intelligence and understanding of the mission of the Church, and his trustworthiness and attention led to his selection as the Executive Officer of the General Convention (87, 90, 93, 96) and, concurrently, the Secretary of the House of Deputies, Secretary of the Executive Council and Registrar of the Episcopal Church.

As Registrar, Don participated in over one hundred ordinations of bishops. The then Presiding Bishop, Edmond Browning, described his ministry with gratitude "as insightful, compassionate, and always showing a concern for the whole Church."

With appreciation for his extraordinary record of service, with all of its accomplishments and the many friendships in Christ he formed during his ministry, Don's alma mater, Berkeley Divinity School, conferred upon him the degree of Doctor of Divinity, honoris causa.

Bishop Brown mentioned this past summer, sitting outside on a little deck overlooking Sebago Lake, Don said, "the church has been good for me and my family." The bishop imagines the Risen Christ greeting Don and saying, "it is you, Donald, who has been good to my church." The Diocese of Maine joins the Episcopal Church in the chorus that sings, "Well done thou good and faithful servant."

The funeral for the Rev. Nickerson will be held at St. Paul's Episcopal Church in Brunswick on Saturday, December 28th at 11:00 AM. A private burial service will be held in the spring at Kearsarge Cemetery in Kearsarge, NH. Gifts in his honor may be made to the Dennen Scholarship Fund, Camp O-AT-KA, 593 Sebago Road, Sebago, ME 04029; the Episcopal Relief and Development Fund; St. Paul's Episcopal Church, or your favorite charity.