



Joan Beede Beebe

April 8, 1932 - March 3, 2021

Joan (Jo) Beedee Beebe (4/8/1932 - 3/3/2021) lived the way she died. There was no vanity in her. If it is true without exception that there is no room for pretense in a memory care center, its absence is rare among those more able to remember. Jo's professional accomplishments are singularly impressive, yet no barrier-breaking achievement is as timeless or eternal as her gifts of self-forgetfulness kindness.

Born and raised in Minneapolis, where Westminster Presbyterian Church shaped her faith and enduring commitment to social justice, Joan Beedee graduated from Macalester College magna cum laude in 1953. As a student faculty assistant, she prepared and submitted for publication the manuscripts of Professor Robert McAfee Brown, one of the most impactful activist theologians of the Twentieth Century. Her quiet comfort away from the limelight, love of learning, and call for justice continued throughout her life.

Following graduation from San Francisco Theological Seminary, Jo Beedee broke new ground for women in the Presbyterian Church - the first woman to serve as Director of Christian Education or Pastor of churches in New York, California, Missouri, and Minnesota - and the first woman appointed to the Faculty of Eden Theological Seminary in St. Louis, Missouri.

Her faculty colleague at Eden, Walter Brueggemann, recalls pondering the

best location for Eden's first woman faculty member. The decision seemed obvious. Her office would be directly across from the Men's Room, a daily reminder that Eden's faculty was no longer an old boy's club!

The seminary's dean and president chose Professor Beebe to lead the daily worship for Eden's Forty-Second Annual Convocation featuring renowned theologian Jürgen Moltmann, Professor of Systematic Theology at the University of Tübingen. Commending Jo for her leadership, Eden President Robert Fauth ended his letter of thanks, "If it appears to you that some of us are excessive in our expressions of appreciation for your presence among us, please be assured that these expressions are not mere formalities, but are genuine and sincere."

The list of Jo's achievements is long and far-reaching: National President of the United Presbyterian Church Educators; member of the Board of Christian Education of the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A., the Special Committee of the General Assembly to study the theology and practice of baptism, and the Board of the Vocation Agency of the United Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. She also served as Chairperson of the Personnel Committee of the United Presbyterian Church's General Assembly. At every milestone, Jo brushed aside public praise with modesty and quiet humor in conscious recognition that the tides of time wash away every achievement.

In 1972 Jo Beedee and Frederick (Fred) Beebe, found a joy in one another that was no less rare than the unlikely combination of their surnames. They joined hands in marriage in 1972. Their joy and hand-holding never stopped. During the years of their retirement at Presbyterian Homes of Minnesota in Bloomington, MN, Jo and Fred might have been mistaken for star-struck teenagers, holding hands on the walking trails. Fred Beebe was the great love of her life. In her personal life with family and friends, as in her professional life, Jo was a joyous, loving, giving, and guiding spirit, embracing people

where they were, ready to serve without accolades. She brought compassion, comfort, and a quiet sense of peace and meaningful connection. Jo walked within the guard rails of love and kindness.

Preceded in death by her parents Ross and Marcia Beedee, and sister Elizabeth (Elly) (Ostland), she is survived by her husband Fred and their beloved children Jonathan (Jon) in Vermont and Gwendolyn (Gwen), granddaughter Elizabeth Lee Perkins and great grandchildren Nathan Allen Perkins and Ahmari Lee Richmond in North Carolina. The family will celebrate her life at a time yet to be determined in consultation with Lakewood Cemetery.

Any memorial gifts may be designated for Westminster Presbyterian Church, Minneapolis, Minnesota; Ghost Ranch, Abiquiu, New Mexico; and Presbyterian Homes and Services, Bloomington, Minnesota.