

Statement from Grace Cathedral on the life of Dean Emeritus, The Very Reverend Alan William Jones

With heavy hearts and thanks for a life well lived, we share the news that The Very Reverend Alan William Jones, 83, beloved Dean Emeritus of Grace Cathedral, has died after a long illness. He is survived by his wife, Virginia 'Cricket' Price Jones, and his three children, Lena Roy, Charlotte Voiklis, and Edward Jones.

Dean Jones served as Grace Cathedral's seventh dean for 24 years, from 1985 to 2009. He was made Dean Emeritus upon his retirement.

A formidable, bearded figure when he first appeared at Grace Cathedral, Rev. Jones was one of the leading experts on Christian Spirituality in the Episcopal Church and the Anglican Communion. His clear, never dull, and penetrating sermons were appreciated. The Dean was also known for his blend of Anglican tradition, progressive theology, and English wit. He loved to travel and especially enjoyed swimming.

During his long tenure as Dean, Doctor Jones led major transformations to San Francisco's iconic cathedral with its staff and congregation that further cemented Grace's position as the "Cathedral for All" in the city. These include:

- Construction of the Interfaith AIDS Chapel, one of a handful of places in the world dedicated to the people impacted by AIDS;
- The beginning of the modern labyrinth movement in 1991 and the creation of two Chartres-style labyrinths, one indoor and the other outdoors. These are visited by thousands of people from around the world all year long.
- The inauguration of the Chapel of St. Francis and Columbarium;
- Following the 1989 earthquake, Dean Jones presided over the building campaign and the completion of the cathedral close, with a new Chapter House, front stairway courtyard, garage, and Diocesan House extension.

A highlight of his term was the 1995 United Nations Fiftieth Anniversary Service at Grace Cathedral, which featured United Nations leaders and international heads of state, including Secretary General Boutros-Ghali, Archbishop Tutu, Polish leader Lech Walesa, and Princess Margaret of Britain.

In 1995, Dean Jones also launched The Forum, which brought a long list of great minds and social activists into dialogue at the cathedral. Guests at the popular Sunday seminar included Sandra Day O'Connor, Pico Iyer, Katherine Jefferts Schori, Robert Reich, Anne Lamott, Peter Sellars, Jane Goodall, and many of the elected officials that represented the state of California, and the district and City of San Francisco including Nancy Pelosi, Kamala Harris, Gavin Newsom, Jackie Speier, Willie Brown, and Mark Leno, among many others.

An accomplished and prolific author, Dean Jones wrote many books, notably "Passion for Pilgrimage," "Soul Making," and "Reimagining Christianity," among others (see below for full bibliography).

He was made Dean Emeritus upon his retirement in 2009. His 80th birthday was celebrated at Grace Cathedral in the first days of the Pandemic. Dean Jones and his wife **Cricket** attended cathedral Sunday services until recently.

A cathedral memorial to Dean Jones is the icon of John Donne (Robert Lentz, 1990) an English cathedral dean and poet, and a favorite of Dean Jones. It was installed in 1995 at his tenth anniversary as dean. One of his favorite sayings, developed over years of experience and fundamental to his thought, was, "God loves everyone, without exception."

Earlier Life

Born March 5, 1940, and raised in Wimbledon, a suburb of London, England, Alan W. Jones's first memories were of ruined buildings after German bombers raided the British capital during the Blitz. As a chorister of St. Paul's Cathedral, London, he sang at the Coronation of Queen Elizabeth II in 1953. He attended the University of Nottingham (GB BA 63), the College of the Resurrection at Mirfield, and the General Theological Seminary, New York (STB 65). He was ordained by Bishop Arthur M. Stockwood of Southwark, England, in 1965. Serving in England in 1965-66, he came to America and married Josephine M. Franklin in 1966. They had three children: Lena, Charlotte, and Edward. Rev. Jones was received into the Episcopal Church as a priest in 1967 by Bishop Donegan of New York. Dr. Jones served at St. Hilda & St. Hugh School, New York, assisted at St. Ignatius Church, New York (67-68), and as tutor at Lincoln Theological College, England. In New York, he earned his STM (68) at General, and received his PhD from the University of Nottingham in 1971. He was then associate director of Trinity Institute, New York (71-73). Dr. Jones was made Professor of Ascetical Theology and was the founding Director of the Center for Christian Spirituality at the General Theological Seminary, New York in 1973. He became an American citizen in 1975. Having divorced, Dean Jones married Virginia 'Cricket' Price in 1999 at Chartres Cathedral. Dean Jones was made a Member of the Order of the British Empire in 2002.

Credentials

BA, PhD, STB, STM, Fellow GTS, Hon Canon Chartres Cathedral, OBE, Hon LHD University of San Francisco

Bibliography

Journey into Christ- Seabury Press, 1977
Living in the Spirit- (with Rachel Hosmer)- Seabury Press, 1979
Exploring Spiritual Direction- Seabury Press, 1982
Soul Making- Harper and Row, 1985
Passion for Pilgrimage- Harper and Row, 1989
Sacrifice and Delight- Harper Collins, 1992
The Soul's Journey- Harper San Francisco, 1995
Living the Truth- Cowley Publications, 2000
Seasons of Grace- (and John O'Neil. With Diana Landau)- John Wiley, 2003
Reimagining Christianity- John Wiley, 2005
Common Prayer on Common Ground- 2006

Comments For Attribution

The Right Reverend Doctor Marc H. Andrus, Bishop of California 2006 – Present

“Alan Jones loomed large in my consciousness long before I came to be bishop of the Diocese of California in 2006. His writing in spirituality and theology has been enormously influential, to me and many thousands of others. When I served as a representative of the Episcopal Church to the Anglican Church in Brazil, I found that all of their bishops had Portuguese language copies of a book Alan had written on sacrifice.

Alan was justly famous as a preacher. His preaching was inviting, expansive, and generously - people found their way to Christian faith, often from past negative experiences in other denominations; Alan gave them a new, safe, and exciting opening to faith.

And finally, Alan was a quiet and very helpful pastor. He was one of the two clergy people from the diocese to come visit me after surgery. One dear friend in the diocese, who lost his last parent when he himself was an elder, said that Alan came to visit him pastorally, and said, ‘It doesn’t matter how old you are when your last parent dies, you then learn what it is to be an orphan.’ This insightful comment was just what my friend needed to hear.”

The Right Reverend Doctor William E. Swing, Bishop of California, 1980-2006

“After an unsuccessful 18-month search for the ‘just right’ Dean of Grace Cathedral, we came upon the Rev. Alan Jones in New York. Immediately we sensed that he was the person whom we had been looking for. By the time he retired decades later, he far outdistanced our highest hopes. Beginning with substantial inward strengths, he made himself into a community leader, a courageous spiritual entrepreneur, and a provocative, inspiring speaker. He was a gift of Grace to us all.”

The Very Reverend Doctor Malcolm C. Young, Dean of Grace Cathedral 2015 – Present

“As a writer on religion and psychology and one of the prominent preachers of his generation Alan Jones explored the barriers to and possibility of human connection – to each other and to God. He taught us that God loves everyone without exception and that Grace Cathedral exists precisely for those who wonder if they belong here.

Alan was instrumental in bringing into being the modern Cathedral as we know it. He was an essential figure in creating the new spiritual practice of walking the labyrinth.

For the last thirty years Alan served as a mentor and teacher to me. Years after his retirement, nearly every week visitors talk to me about the profound way that he helped to open a door for them so that they could have faith again. For years I have consulted with him about large matters and simple ones. He has been there as a pastor when I most needed him. I love Alan very much and shall miss him terribly.”

The Honorable Patrick S. Thompson

Judge, San Francisco Superior Court

Former Board Chair, Grace Cathedral Board of Trustees

“Alan Jones was a devoted traditionalist who was also a preeminent religious thinker for the modern era. In a culture gravitating towards absolutes — good/evil, right/wrong, black/white — Alan deftly navigated us into the shades of gray, recognizing that in those nuanced spaces we can see more clearly the intrinsic value of every person and recognize the centering power of loving kindness.

Championing Anglicanism, Alan maintained the relevance of a mainline Christian church in the secularized, progressive city of San Francisco, recognizing that the Cathedral should be a dynamic place for worship, civil engagement and celebration of music and art. Not only did he spread his message from the perch atop Nob Hill, but he also marched down the hill to support a theater that challenged moments of hypocrisy in Christian history. Alan was a visible leader not only in San Francisco, but he spread the message the world over.

As Dean and Dean Emeritus, Alan built a congregation (something cathedrals generally do not do), created a safe space for contemplative reflection on ancient labyrinths, invited leaders and innovators in business, politics, the arts and in thought for engaging civil conversation at the Forum, supported community outreach and commanded the pulpit with intellectual eloquence. Alan has helped us see a joyful, ecumenical, thoughtful Christianity rooted in the love of all creation.

I have seen it first-hand as a seeker, a congregant, a Grace Cathedral board member, a colleague on the board of a performing arts organization, and a lunch companion. Alan is kind, thoughtful, deftly witty and always on point. In every encounter with him, he fostered a sense for what a life well-lived might truly be.”

About Grace Cathedral:

Grace Cathedral has been a house of prayer for all people for one hundred seventy-five years. It serves the community and its congregation with a deep commitment to social justice, community outreach, expansive musical performances, the arts, and wellness programs. Its *GraceArts* membership program is designed for the broader community to engage more deeply with the cathedral’s artistic and cultural offerings. As the cathedral church of the Episcopal Diocese of California and the seat of its bishop, Grace’s mission is to reimagine church through courage, joy, and wonder. For more information, visit gracecathedral.org.

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