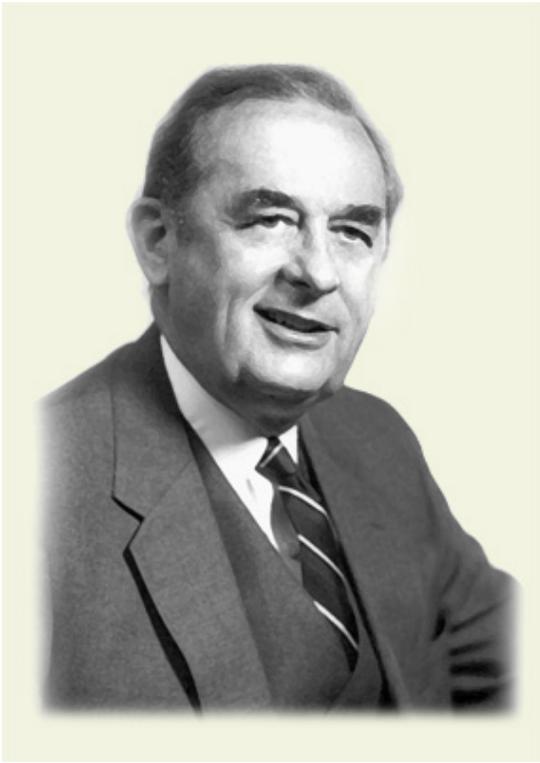


Dr. Albert Edwards



Dr. Albert Edwards has been a minister, a conscience, a source of inspiration, and a joy to many North Carolinians. Born in Canada in 1916, he was raised by grandparents in Scotland. As a young boy growing up in that country, he experienced a simple lifestyle that would later influence all the years of his ministry.

Edwards made his way to Raleigh in 1958, bringing with him the beginning of a new era in the ministry of First Presbyterian Church where he served as Senior Minister for nearly three decades. Church attendance grew to standing room only and membership doubled during his tenure, a result of his amazing ability to motivate.

At First Presbyterian, Dr. Edwards is credited with the expansion and development of new and lasting church programs. Most notable are the Early Birds, a men only program that spawned an interdenominational camaraderie among those who came for worship and fellowship before going to work, and the popular Wednesday noon service and luncheon reaching out in worship and fellowship to those working in the city's downtown. Under his leadership, First Presbyterian organized several new churches, and supported the legal action against the Synod of North Carolina to keep Peace College in downtown Raleigh.

Edwards is respected for his outreach and compassion, especially in the 1960's when integration was a divisive issue. In a May 1963 sermon, Edwards reminded his congregation that integration was not only for elected officials — everyone needed to

become advocates. The following Sunday, Edwards asked for a show of hands from those who had accepted his challenge. The lack of response from the congregation so disturbed him that he pronounced the benediction and left the sanctuary. The following week the Session gave Edwards a vote of confidence. Next Sunday the congregation stood up as he entered the Chancel, and later that week the church voted to open the Wednesday fellowship luncheon and service to all.

His commitment to social concerns also led to the establishment of the Friendship Fund, the Clothes Closet, and the Bicycle Fund that ministered to those in need. Starting in the fall of 1974, Edwards became widely known for his Sunday morning services broadcast on WRAL-TV.

Edwards served as Chaplain to the North Carolina House of Representatives for many years. He was a member of the Peace College Board of Trustees, a commissioned member of the Raleigh Housing Authority and Redevelopment Commission and served on the Salvation Army Board of Directors. His thought-provoking messages, Scottish brogue and unique style also made Dr. Edwards a sought after speaker for civic groups and college campuses.

Dr. Albert Edwards is a religious leader respected by members of all denominations. The hearts and minds of Raleigh residents have been fortified by his wisdom, charmed by his twinkling eyes, and blessed by his kindness and love for others.

Albert G. Edwards dies; led Raleigh's First Presbyterian

By HELEN CHAPPELL

Staff Writer August 10, 2011

RALEIGH — The Rev. Albert G. Edwards, the charismatic former leader of First Presbyterian Church in Raleigh, died Sunday at his home. He was 94.

Edwards is remembered for his active involvement in the community, beyond his congregation. "He really was the minister to the city," said the Rev. Bob Inskeep, associate pastor at First Presbyterian.

When Edwards retired from First Presbyterian in 1986, he estimated he had delivered almost 8,000 sermons in his career, three a week. At the same time, he had served as chaplain to the state House of Representatives and had spoken more than a thousand times to civic groups and clubs.

Those who knew him also credited him as being instrumental in saving Peace College from consolidation with two other schools in 1962. He served on the college's board of trustees for many years.

Even as busy as he was, he found time to answer the call of those in need. He was well known for his work with the poor and would drop everything to spend time at an ailing person's bedside, Inskip said.

"How in the world did he do it all?" he said.

Inskip met Edwards when Inskip was working as a broadcaster at WRAL radio in the 1970s. At the time, WRAL-TV aired First Presbyterian's service every Sunday. The TV station bought its first remote truck to broadcast the service, he said.

"Dr. Al was good TV," he said.

Edwards was raised in Scotland before moving to the U.S. to go to college, and he kept his thick brogue the rest of his life.

"He had just an incredible sense of humor," said Jan Anderson, who helped Edwards with the Wednesday midday services. Anderson always introduced each week's singer and recalled one time when Edwards jokingly complained that she had never asked him to sing.

She called him on his bluff and announced that they'd be singing a duet. "I made him get together with me and practice," she said, and in the end they were able to harmonize.

"He's not known for his singing," she added, "but he is known for his enthusiastic singing." At services when the congregation wasn't singing to his liking, she said, he would stop the music and pick out a new song for everyone to sing with more gusto.

'Enormous energy'

"He was a man who had an enormous energy," said former UNC system President Bill Friday. The two met through Friday's work at N.C. State University and crossed paths at many civic undertakings over the years.

"He was easy to develop an affection for because he was so genuine, so thorough, and just so compassionate," Friday said. "You enjoyed being his friend."

When he learned Edwards had passed away, Friday said, "I had a moment of great sadness because I knew I had lost a very dear friend."

The funeral will be at 2 p.m. Thursday at First Presbyterian Church. Edwards will be buried next to his wife, Margaret Early Edwards, on Friday in a private service in her hometown of Bealeton, Va.

