



Dr. Donald A. Nunnelly

November 30, 1928 - May 12, 2023

After an amazing life of family, service to community, and social action, the Reverend Doctor Donald A. Nunnelly of Lexington, Kentucky died peacefully on May 12, 2023 with his family by his side.

Don was married to Lillian Ethel Black of Hagerstown, Maryland for sixty-seven wonderful and rewarding years before her passing in 2019. They were both ordained ministers and served in numerous capacities in the Christian Church, Disciples of Christ denominational community.

He is survived by his three children, Martha Royster (Maurice) of Johnson City, Tennessee, Dr. David Nunnelly (Jane) of Ojai, California, and Mark Nunnelly (Denise) of Dover, Massachusetts; his dear friend and partner, JoAnn Nisbet; eleven grandchildren: Chris, Katie, Colin, Andrew, Alex, Cam, Luke, Nicholas, Casey, Noah, Tess; eleven great-grandchildren: Dylan, Sutton, Lila, Jon Warren, Grady, Kessler, Paul, Annie, Frazier, Aidan, and Adeline. He is predeceased by his siblings Mary Elizabeth, Martha, and Joe.

Don was born in Anniston, Alabama and graduated from Anniston High School in 1947. From a modest yet loving home, he always dreamed of exploring the world, as a means of changing it for the better and helping others. He was active in his home church and was an accomplished student while playing football and learning to fly. In these years, his loving and

dedicated sister, Martha, played an incredibly important role in his evolution and development for which he remained eternally grateful throughout his life.

Attuned to the complexities of the changing South and striving to make a difference, he matriculated at Hiram College in Ohio. There he played football, majored in history and theology, and served as a student pastor to several nearby churches. This experience in ministry inspired his enrollment in the Lexington Theological Seminary where he met his beloved Lillian and began a lifelong partnership focused upon family and service.

The thousands of Kentucky parishioners he served in long ministries in Florence, Henderson, and Frankfort remember him for his empathetic pastoral care — always available and on duty to help in life's difficult moments. His provocative sermons always spoke to topics that were relevant in contemporary lives and demonstrated his sense of social purpose and mission. He didn't preach as much as he let his actions serve as a role model to all in his community. And he never ceased in his pursuit of growth in his field and love for education — earning his Doctorate of Ministry from Vanderbilt University later in his career and publishing a detailed history of the Disciples of Christ.

His family remembers him for his gentle spirit, his tenacious commitment to cause and purpose, his faith in God and in the goodness of the human spirit, his sense of humor, his stubbornness, and his resolve to always do the right thing with humility, with no need for recognition nor praise. He loved to explore the world around him, whether that meant camping across 45 states with his young family in the 1970s or venturing to the far corners of the earth in the decades since with his beloved Lillian and then later in life with JoAnn. His grandchildren remember him for always being there — for sports, studies, or lazy summer afternoons. Always there, in their lives, with nothing but love.

Don wouldn't want you to take sorrow in his passing, but instead think about how you could make the world around you a better place. Right now, today.

A Celebration of Life will be held at 2 pm Sunday, June 25, 2023, at First Christian Church, Frankfort, with a reception to follow.

The family would appreciate that memorial gifts be directed to the Lexington Theological Seminary, the First Christian Church of Frankfort, or Central Christian Church in Lexington.

Arrangements are under the direction of Harrod Brothers Funeral Home & Crematory. Condolences may be shared via the online guestbook at www.harrodbrothers.com

Previous Events

Celebration of Life

JUN **25**. 2:00 PM (ET)

First Christian Church
316 Ann Street
Frankfort, KY 40601

Tribute Wall



“ *Dr. Donald A. Nunnelly*

October 06, 2023 at 03:15 PM



“ *We are so sorry that we could not be at the Celebration of Life for Don and see the family personally. Both Don & Lillian were such a treasured part of our lives, and we shared so many good times together. That certainly continued with JoAnn, and made his last years so much better. He lived his life to the fullest right to the end, which was the way he wanted it.
Love & hugs to the whole family,
Peg & Randy Harmon*

Peg Harmon - June 25, 2023 at 02:33 PM