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Member Tribute

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Gail McCormick

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Member Tribute

Bob Jones and Gail McCormick

Gail: It has been my privilege to know Paul and Kay Watson through many of their years of service to the Cole Mill Road Church of Christ in Durham, North Carolina. When Paul came to us in 1983 from the Institute for Christian Studies (now Austin Graduate School of Theology) in Austin, Texas, I doubt that any of us fully appreciated his reputation for academic prowess or for pastoral care. He said he wanted to serve a local congregation, and we took him at his word. As former colleagues and students came to Durham to seek his counsel, and as our members went to conferences and saw the enthusiastic attendance at his sessions, we started to understand. And then, as he served among us day by day, we came to know firsthand the care and concern he had for all. He made meaningful connections, regardless of income or education or background. He recognized and recruited talent—often talent that the gifted themselves had not yet claimed. He taught us what it means to pay attention!

Bob: When Paul accepted the senior minister position at Cole Mill Road, he recognized that our congregation had experienced many growing pains related to our diversity—of age, of education, of vision for the church. Rather than adopting a strategy of teaching focused on purifying the correctness of our theology and practice, Paul simply preached expository sermons Sunday after Sunday, bringing to life biblical texts that were consistently applicable to our daily walk.

Gail: Paul made the wisdom and stories of the Old Testament speak to our lives as Jesus’s disciples. This has meant so much to me; my early religious training was part Presbyterian (my parents) and part Jewish (classmates and friends). So when I call him my favorite rabbi, I know whereof I speak! As a friend, teacher, preacher, and elder, Paul has blessed us with instruction and counsel that echo with Talmud and Mishnah and abound in wisdom, humor (ask him about shepherd’s pie), challenge, and grace.

I would venture that Paul’s toughest sermon was the first that he preached after his wife Ann was killed in a car wreck in 1986. But even in his profound grief, he ministered to us. He chose as his text these words from Job: “The LORD gave, and the LORD has taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD.” We loved Ann and the way she partnered with Paul in ministry and in raising four great kids.

Bob: Among the frequent visitors to our church in the years after Ann’s death was a striking woman named Kay Roberts, who also had lost her spouse to death. Paul and Kay developed a mutual attraction and eventually joined their lives in marriage—a union that proved a tremendous blessing, both to them and to the entire congregation.

Gail: Few are the women with enough courage to marry a man knowing that he comes with 200-plus family members at a church. However, God gave Kay to Paul—and to us! Kay’s ministry of visitation has brought comfort and connection to our congregation, as well as to the broader community, where for many years she

organized a monthly Sunday worship service at a local assisted-living center. She and Paul have opened their home for countless occasions, especially during the holidays for those without families nearby. They both have stayed young at heart as frequent participants in our “young adult” gatherings (for which we refuse to set an age limit!), exploring with our college, graduate, and young professional members contemporary issues from a biblical perspective.

Bob: Paul and Kay have long shared an interest in foreign missions, and both have contributed greatly to that work by direct involvement in teaching and ministry abroad, particularly in Russia.

Gail: They have made an outstanding contribution to God’s global church—traveling for weeks at a time, for example, to teach at the Institute of Theology and Christian Ministry in St. Petersburg, Russia, and then sharing with us back at Cole Mill the joys and challenges of ministry in other cultures. I am privileged to celebrate their sacrificial service to God’s people here in Durham, across the country, and around the world.

Bob: Paul and Kay Watson are role models among our congregation for how husbands and wives serving together bring glory to God.

ROBERT (“BOB”) H. JONES IS THE MARY AND DERYL HART EMERITUS PROFESSOR OF SURGERY AT DUKE UNIVERSITY MEDICAL CENTER IN DURHAM, NORTH CAROLINA. BOB SERVED AS AN ELDER OF THE COLE MILL ROAD CHURCH OF CHRIST ALONGSIDE PAUL WATSON UNTIL THEY RETIRED FROM THE ELDEERSHIP TOGETHER IN 2012. BOB AND HIS WIFE, CATHY, HAVE THREE CHILDREN AND SEVEN GRANDCHILDREN. THEY CONTINUE TO SERVE AS FAITHFUL LEADERS IN THE CONGREGATION ALONG WITH PAUL AND HIS BELOVED WIFE, KAY.

GAIL MCCORMICK RETIRED IN 2012 FROM TWENTY YEARS IN COMMERCIAL LENDING WITH SELF-HELP CREDIT UNION, A COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT FINANCIAL INSTITUTION. SHE AND HER LATE HUSBAND, ROD, WHO ALSO ADMIRERD AND LOVED PAUL AND KAY, LIVED ALL OVER THE UNITED STATES IN THE COURSE OF ROD’S ARMY CAREER, RETURNING TO DURHAM WHEN HE RETIRED FROM THE ARMY IN 1988. GAIL HOLDS A BS FROM DUKE AND AN MBA FROM THE UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA AT CHAPEL HILL.

