

ALAN PRESTON NEELY DIED MAY 14, 2003, at home after an extended respiratory illness.

Alan was born November 3, 1928 in Little Rock, Arkansas and was reared in Fort Worth, Texas. After graduating from Baylor University in Waco, Texas with a degree in English, he earned a PhD in Philosophy of Religion from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas and a PhD in Latin American studies from The American University in Washington, D.C.

Alan's life as a young Baptist pastor took him to churches in Texas, Virginia, and Colorado. In 1963, the Foreign Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention appointed Alan and his wife Virginia, as missionary teachers in the International Baptist Theological Seminary in Cali, Colombia, South America, where they served from 1963-1976. Their work in church planting and development became the basis for a genuine respect for people of different religious backgrounds and a lifelong commitment to building relationships with people of different cultures.

When the Neelys returned to North Carolina from Colombia in 1976, Alan became a member of the faculty at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary in Wake Forest where he was Professor of Missions. In 1988 he was named to the faculty of the Princeton Theological Seminary where he taught Ecumenics and Mission until his retirement in 1996, when he and Virginia returned to Raleigh.

Alan devoted his retirement years to continued learning, writing, teaching, and building a community of love and understanding among people of different faiths. His commitment to his Baptist heritage made Alan instrumental in the founding of the Alliance of Baptists, a national organization of progressive Baptists, and his passion for creating a community among different faiths led him to become active in the Interfaith Alliance of Wake County. After years of service on the Boards of the Interfaith Alliance and the Martin Luther King, Jr. Resource Center in Raleigh, he was named President Emeritus of the IFA and Member Emeritus of the MLK, Jr. Resource Center. At the time of his death, Alan was the beloved teacher of the Discoverers class at Pullen Memorial Baptist Church.

Alan is survived by his wife of 52 years, Virginia Garrett Neely; their daughter, Jennifer Neely Wilkins of Durham, her husband Malcolm, and their children Brian and Kelly; their daughter Elizabeth Neely Forsythe of Creedmoor, her husband David, and their son Benjamin; their son Roger Alan Neely of Creedmoor, his wife Susan, and their daughter Lydia.

The family will receive friends at Pullen Memorial Baptist Church, 1801 Hillsborough Street, Raleigh, NC 27605 on Saturday, May 17 from 7:00-8:30 p.m. A memorial service will be held at Pullen Memorial Baptist Church on Sunday, May 18 at 3:00 p.m.

In lieu of flowers, the family requests that contributions be made to the Interfaith Alliance of Wake County, the Martin Luther King, Jr. Resource Center of Raleigh, or Pullen Memorial Baptist Church in Raleigh.

Arrangements have been made by Lightner Funeral Home.