



John Overton Alston

February 23, 1931 ~ August 27, 2021

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Do all the good you can,
in all the ways you can,
to all the souls you can,
in every place you can,
at all the times you can,
with all the zeal you can,
as long as ever you can.

John Wesley

Preach the Gospel at all times;
Use words if necessary.
-St. Francis of Assisi

He has told you, O mortal, what is good;
And what does the LORD require of you
but to do justice, and to love kindness,
and to walk humbly with your God?

Micah 6:8

John Overton Alston, a United Methodist minister, died peacefully Friday, August 27, 2021, with family at his side. He was born February 23, 1931, in Mena, Arkansas, to the late Overton Bettis Alston and Alice Pearl Williams Alston. He was preceded in death by his brother Maurice Edward Alston of Shreveport, Louisiana, and his sister Helen Marie Wallace of Lebanon, New Hampshire.

John grew up appreciating what little he had. Food came from the family's meager farm. A horse was extravagant transportation, but it sure beat walking in his one pair of shoes. The television wasn't in the living room - it was in the window of the local general goods store; the house lacked electricity, and the closest radio was far down the dirt road. After his father became an amputee, John, being the youngest, was the only one left at home to help his mother around the farm once his brother joined the Air Force and his sister married. His humble beginnings and commitment to a Christ-centered life meant he never yearned for material things. He appreciated people more than things, he was always willing to help those in need, and he had a special place in his heart for those who lived life to the fullest with little in the way of worldly possessions.

He met the love of his life, Mildred Chapman from Louisiana, while they were both students at Perkins School of Theology; their first date was to an SMU basketball game, and they married in Cox Chapel at Highland Park Methodist Church in 1959. John is survived by his wife of 62½ years Mildred "Milli" Alston.

Together John and Milli lived and loved as he served pastoral appointments in Arkadelphia (Wesley Foundation); Malvern (Keith Memorial); Benton (Parkview Methodist); Lonoke; Smackover; DeQueen; DeWitt; Dumas; Pine Bluff (Wesley); Hamburg; Little Rock (Pulaski Heights, Associate Pastor); North Little Rock (Gardner Memorial); Hampstead and Upperco, Maryland (Shiloh and Mt. Zion); Lanham, Maryland; Shreveport, Louisiana (St. Luke's, Interim Pastor); and North Little Rock (Gardner Memorial, Pastor Emeritus).

John was frugal with everything but his generosity, time, and love. John drove countless miles over the years to support his children through piano, dance, scouting, and sports. Ellen, Gayle and John all followed in his footsteps to Hendrix, and his daughters have both been called to church leadership and ministry. He beamed with pride when speaking of his son and his commitment to public service as a police officer and detective. John adored his grandchildren, was eager to share in their games, concerts, or other activities, and was glad when they visited to share time, stories, a meal, or premium chocolate bought at a discount after the most recent holiday.

By far, John's favorite activity was keeping up with family and friends. He cherished gatherings like the Alston Family Reunion on Rich Mountain. He appreciated the outdoors, especially state and national parks, and he loved sharing the places he loved with people he loved. He had worked one summer as a student minister at Glacier National Park, and forty years later took a trip with extended family to revisit breathtaking landscapes, as well as the site of his once getting "stuck" overnight across the Canadian border.

Surviving to carry on his legacy; children Ellen Alston, Gayle (and son-in-law Tad) Bohannon, and John M. Alston; grandchildren Nathaniel Dauphin, Spencer Bohannon, Caleb Alston, Carson Alston, Claire Alston, and Corbin Alston; in-laws, and a host of nieces and nephews.

The family would like to extend deepest gratitude to the committed and capable staffs of UAMS Hospital, St. Vincent Rehab Hospital, Lakewood Health and Rehab, and Hospice Home Care for the attentive care and genuine concern shown to John and his family throughout these last few weeks.