



Rev. R. Leroy Moser

January 29, 1927 - May 11, 2025

Rev. R Leroy (“Tex”) Moser died unexpectedly on May 11th of heart failure. He was 98 years old. “Tex” was born January 29, 1927 near Hurnville, Texas (a tiny German-speaking community of immigrants from eastern Ukraine). His parents, Leon and Esther Moser, ran a family farm, and raised five children of which he was the oldest: Leroy, Alvin, Dorothy, Jeannette, and Jacob. His family moved briefly to New Mexico only to return to Texas after losing their new farm to the Dustbowl. Moser left home at age 16 to attend the German Baptist Seminary in Rochester New York. Luckily, when the school became ideologically divided during his first year there, he and other “liberal” students were allowed to transfer to the University of Rochester, where he majored in Philosophy. This sudden access to elite higher education changed his life. There, Leroy’s roommate dubbed him “Tex” as a practical joke when he introduced him to a fellow undergraduate, Jane Elizabeth Noble. She didn’t realize it was a joke, and called him Tex for the rest of her life. They were married in Amsterdam NY in 1948. Tex attended the Colgate Rochester Seminary where he was ordained in the American Baptist Denomination. Tex’s first pulpit was the non-denominational Community Church in Alfred, New York. There he began his “School for Skeptics” (a weekly freeform meeting of non-dogmatic inquiry, involving both religious and agnostic seekers, many of whom never attended church). He often claimed that this group was the most inspiring and enriching experience of his entire ministry, as their candid and open debates about universal religious questions changed

many lives and deepened his own faith. Moser then enrolled in the Union Theological Seminary to pursue further graduate studies. To support his growing family (4 young boys), he took on a “part-time” ministry at the historic Warburton Avenue Baptist Church in Yonkers, NY. Once again, His life was changed forever by witnessing the urban decay, poverty and brutal effects of racism in this predominantly African American community. In response, he co-founded the first NAACP chapter in Yonkers, and designed ambitious outreach programming.

In 1959, he became pastor of the Spring Green Memorial Baptist Church in Warwick RI, where he continued his Social Action ministry, becoming an officer of the state-wide NAACP, and organizing busloads of New Englanders to attend Martin Luther King’s March on Washington. In 1964, he became pastor of the prestigious Central Baptist Church on the east-side of Providence. There he was instrumental in lobbying for the state’s first Fair Housing legislation and became deeply involved in the city’s school racial desegregation program. This work inspired a growing commitment to ecumenical and inter-faith activity; so, in 1970, he switched denominations to become the minister of the (United) Methodist Church in Northampton MA. There he spear headed a merger with the Easthampton congregation and developed the architectural design of their new sanctuary.

In 1974, Tex switched denominations again to settle into a twenty+ year tenure as pastor of First Church Northampton (Congregational). During this time he became an active community leader, continuing in a range of activities from Anti-Vietnam War, to Gay Rights, and the National Alliance for the Mentally Ill. He also became active in the Arts, especially local community theater and historic preservation. For his many years of involvement in the repurposing of the old State Hospital grounds, there is now a “Moser Street” on hospital hill in his honor. Upon his retirement, he preached part-time at the UCC church in Chester MA.

Tex’s sons remember his inspirational sermons - both their informed, articulate content and his charismatic delivery. Also, away from his professional persona

in the Church, his awe and love of Nature - wonderful memories of family trips to National Parks across the country, Mexico and Europe. His love of the Arts, especially his enthusiasm and in-depth knowledge of church architecture, music and theater. His compassion for people in need and his willingness to roll up his sleeves to get down to work to change the world for the better. And, of course, for being a loving dad (and granddad) who often sacrificed for his family.

Tex's wife, Jane, preceded him in death in 2017. He is survived by his sister Jeannette, all four of his sons: David, Paul (his wife Karen, granddaughter Madeleine Manka, great-grand children Chloe, Charlie, and Henry Manka), Peter (wife Marjorie, grandchildren Kate, Jonathan and Laura) and Stephen (wife Darlene, grandchildren Ben, Emma, Mary, Eliza, Isabella and Anna – and great grandchildren, Bella, James and John).

Tex shared his final years with his cherished and devoted life partner, Jill Hartnett. Together, they embraced an active and joyful life, involved in the South Church community, traveling across the country, and making meaningful visits to places close to Tex's heart. Among their many adventures, they returned to the Texas farmhouse where Tex was raised, celebrated his sister Jeanette's 70th wedding anniversary—an especially poignant milestone, as Tex had officiated her wedding as a newly ordained minister—and spent treasured time with his brother Jacob. These years were filled with love, connection, and purpose, a reflection of the way Tex lived his entire life.

A Memorial Service honoring Tex will be held Thursday, July 10, 2025 at 2PM in South Congregational Church, 45 Maple Street in Springfield.

In lieu of flowers, Tex's sons kindly ask that you consider making a donation to the Samaritan Inn (<https://www.samaritaninnva.org/>), an organization that serves the homeless and those in need in Roanoke, Virginia. This mission is especially meaningful to the family, as it is a place their brother David often turns to for support.

New England Funeral & Cremation Center, 25 Mill Street, Springfield, MA has

been entrusted with the arrangements.

Previous Events

Memorial Service

JUL **10**. 2:00 PM (ET)

South Congregational Church
45 Maple Street
Springfield , MA 01105