



John "Jack" Allan Watson

June 26, 1938 - July 27, 2020

John "Jack" Allan Watson, 82 of Columbus, Ohio passed from this life on July 27th due to complications from pneumonia.

Jack was born June 26, 1938, in Detroit, Michigan. As a young boy, he was to discover his life-long hobby as an amateur magician after seeing Harry Blackstone perform on stage. He delighted in mystifying his friends, family, and later for his children's classrooms and grandchildren. He never divulged his magic secrets.

It was 1956 as a freshman at Wheaton College that Jack met Mary Strawbridge, a sophomore; they were thrown together to teach Sunday school for an inner-city church on the South Side of Chicago. Jack was smitten with Mary, her smile, her earnest Christian faith, and those beautiful brown eyes, "I'll never love blue eyes again." They married in June 1960.

After the wedding, Jack attended Wheaton Graduate School while Mary taught school, then the pair headed to Princeton Theological Seminary where Jack earned his Master of Divinity. Next, Jack and Mary moved to Kentland, Indiana, where Jack was pastor at First Presbyterian Church. The first three Watson boys were born in quick succession in the tiny county hospital in Brook, Indiana- Paul, Stephen, and Mark.

From Indiana, the Watson family embarked on a grand adventure to Aberdeen, Scotland where Jack earned his Masters of Theology degree, and Mary actively adjusted to life as a Scottish mum with three small boys.

In 1970 they began a fruitful thirty-year call at Bethel Presbyterian Church in

Columbus, Ohio. In 1975 they welcomed the fourth and final Watson boy, Philip. During his time of leadership at Bethel, Jack instituted the Bethel Bible Study Series that led more than 150 people in serious Bible study and saw Bethel receive more than 700 members. The family traveled on mission trips that included Guatemala, Morocco, Haiti, and Greece.

In June 2003 the congregation they held so dear, Bethel Presbyterian Church, grandly celebrated Jack's retirement after thirty years of service and named him Pastor Emeritus. Over the years Paul, Mark, and Phil married and another generation of Watson children arrived, showing Jack, "Our boys are all so different, with their lovely wives and our grandchildren, I can truly say that God loves variety."

Jack was a devoted scholar; his most treasured subject was the life and works of Christian author C.S. Lewis. A proud Scot he was often sporting his Watson tartan tie and a wistful smile always appeared when bagpipes played. His faithfulness to serving God continued in retirement, serving as dean of Ohio Central Bible College.

Jack is survived by his wife Mary, sister Margaret Ann Dewit, sons Stephen, Mark, and Philip, daughter in laws Leah and Kaitlin, and grandchildren Abigail, Matthew, Benjamin, Clara, Mara, Vivian, and Nathanael. He was preceded in death by his son Paul and granddaughter Grace.

"I believe in Christianity as I believe that the sun has risen: not only because I see it, but because by it I see everything else." C.S. Lewis Of all the memories and legacies Jack leaves behind, he will be most remembered for his steadfast faith and love for it was the foundation for his every breath.

A small family-only service will be held on Saturday, August 1st at Bethel Presbyterian with a large celebration of life planned when it is safe to do so. In lieu of flowers, the family asks that you make a donation in Jack's honor to Bethel Presbyterian Church, 1735 Bethel Rd., Columbus, OH 43220.

Tribute Wall



“ *John "Jack" Allan Watson*

January 28, 2023 at 10:24 AM



“ *Condolences to the family. Reverend John Watson, M.Th. served as our first faculty member and first academic dean at Ohio Central Bible College in Morrow County. We appreciate his hard work, enthusiasm, and dedication to Christian higher education in the Columbus region.*

Mark W. Phillips - August 11, 2020 at 02:10 PM



“ *Jack was involved in many phases of my life, from teaching me in Youth Club, to baptizing me, to officiating at my wedding, to speaking at my mother's funeral. His presence had a big impact on my life, and I know my father, mother, and grandmother also respected him immensely.*
I send condolences to the Watson family. I know it is hard to lose someone you love so much. May your happy memories give you peace in this sad time.

Ann (Livingston) Schenk

Ann Livingston Schenk - August 10, 2020 at 09:28 AM

KW

“ I am so thankful for my father-in-law. I always appreciated our conversations on faith. He spoke with enough conviction to compel my belief onward, yet allowed for enough mystery to leave room for my doubts. His voice was strong and tender - a trait that he definitely passed on to his son. I loved how he sang loud and unapologetically. He was gracious in his affirming words toward me as wife and mom, and delighted in his grandchildren. I am most grateful for my husband and how he reflects his Dad in so many ways. Thank you, Jack, for the many gifts of faith and family you passed on by living well a life in Christ. -Kaitlin Watson

Kaitlin Watson - August 02, 2020 at 10:33 PM

VW

“ I liked that he had a Christmas tree all year-round. I also liked his birthday cards. They were special because they were handmade and always late but filled with joy. I love my grandpa. - Vivian Watson, age 8

Vivian Watson - August 02, 2020 at 09:48 PM

NW

“ I liked playing marbles with him. - Nathanael Watson, age 5

Nathanael Watson - August 02, 2020 at 09:40 PM

MW

“ *My grandpa was a loving, energetic, man who dedicated his life to teaching and learning about Jesus. I am sad that he has passed but I know that he is now happier than he has ever been, and he has been pretty happy. That was one of his personalities. He was always pretty happy. My grandpa would fly paper airplanes with us until he had to sit down, he would make us homemade birthday cards with his computer, and show his magic tricks. Some that I still don't know how he did, (a magician never tells his secrets) and some that he goofed up, but that just made him more enchanting. I wish that he could have showed me one more magic trick, or give me one more hug, but I'll see him again, in a new life. -Mara Watson*

Mara Watson - August 02, 2020 at 09:37 PM

DH

“ Jack was such a wonderful and amazing man, husband, father, grandfather & broother to everyone.. But, most of all he was a true disciple for his Lord and Savior Jesus Christ We were so fortunate to have him as our Minister at Bethel! He was a gifted preacher and teacher of God's word.

We remember the trip to Windy Gap with such fond memories. At that time Jack was on a liquid diet, and perserved as all of us chowed down. And, he jumped righat into all the craziness of Young Life, and went horseback riding on "Big Red"!

I remember driving home from the Bethel Series Teacher Training Classes so excited to share with Terry the wealth of things I had learned. Although I did not like reading Erdman's Handbook of the Bible, and then writng a term paper! However I did enjoy reading The Kingdom of God.

We also remember the Presbyterian Blue Gremlin car, with the bumper sticker which stated: "i'd Rather Be In Narnia"

Well done good and faithful servant. You were a blessing to so many.

Terry & Donna Hoover

DONNA HOOVER - August 02, 2020 at 01:17 PM

CW

“ I would be remiss if I did not recall the "Dynamic Duo" of Scioto Valley Presbytery: the 2 "Gentle Giants" who hung out in the back of our Presbytery's meetings....yes! "Fearless Wayne Weiss" & "Gregarious Jack Watson" were the "Rear Guard" for all us Presbyters! What great memories of the two who kept up a running commentary on local church business. They represented divergent theological views on many of our more thorny issues; yet they affectionately greeted each other as: "Brother Jack" & "Brother Wayne!" No doubt God is enjoying their banter! For them both, I say: "Well done! Good & faithful servants!" --- the Rev. Mrs. Carol R Weiss

Carol R Weiss - August 01, 2020 at 09:53 AM

PJ

“ I remember Jack from many years ago as a productive member of the Clinton Elementary school PTA. He was always cheerful, dependable and helpful. He was kind and inspirational. Heaven has gained a happy soul. Deepest sympathy to Mary and the family

Pat Jenkins - July 31, 2020 at 12:23 PM

MF

“ Our friendship with Jack and Mary is a highlight of our many years in Columbus. From his sermons, from the Bethel Series, from many conversations, Jack was an instrument God used to deepen our faith. He opened the Scriptures to us in a way we had never known before or since, giving us the Biblical framework on which to build our understanding of God's ways in the world--to see the world through Biblical glasses. He was steeped in the Scriptures. We remember his insistence that the whole of the Bible is God's word, not an isolated verse. He was compassionate and principled, open to the diversity of Christ's work in the world, but uncompromising about the unchanged basics of our faith. He imparted his love of the writings of C.S. Lewis to our whole family. We can't read Narnia or the space trilogy or some of Lewis' many essays without thinking of his namesake--Jack. Jack deeply loved his family; he was always bursting with pride about them any time we saw them or talked to he and Mary after we moved away. We had wonderful times touring New England with both of them. We remember the warmth of his laugh, his messy office, his loud enthusiastic singing, and his insistence that "books should be the Christian's only vice." Jack has now passed "further up and further in", in Aslan's words--to a place where Grace and Paul have already arrived, but most of all, to sit at the feet of the Lord he served so faithfully all the days of his life on earth. Thank you, God, for the privilege of knowing and being pastored by Jack Watson!

Mike and Jeanne Foster - July 30, 2020 at 09:17 PM

JH

“ I grew up with Jack. We attended Knox Presbyterian Sunday School in Detroit together and were part of Knox's Boy Scout Troop 457. In high school we served in the ROTC together where Jack achieved the rank of colonel and was the highest ranking student / cadet in the entire city of Detroit. I think my favorite memory, though, was on Boy Scout Sunday (ca. 1952 +/-) when the morning service was turned over to the Scouts. I was privileged to read the Scripture that morning. But Jack preached his first ever sermon. I was proud to have known him and called him my friend for many years. My deepest sympathy to Mary and the Boys. We'll see Jack before long when we all cross over.

Jim Hoover - July 30, 2020 at 06:47 PM

FG

“ To the Watson family --
My condolences on Jack's passing. He is now with the Savior he loved and served -- well done, good and faithful servant -- in the joy of his Lord.
Pastor Jack was a fellow pastor during my years at Covenant Baptist, and he was a wonderful friend and coach. I always appreciated his love for the Word of God and his commitment to Presbyterian "order and ardor."
May Jack rest in peace, and may God give you all the comfort that can come only from Him.
Sincerely,
Rev. Frederick Glasser
Westerville

Frederick Glasser - July 30, 2020 at 05:35 PM



“ *Pastor Jack had a gift for children's sermons, some of which incorporated his magic tricks. I will always remember his Christian convictions and love for Jesus.*

Hasso Pape - July 30, 2020 at 09:57 AM

MD

“ *I cherish growing-up memories along side my patient, calming, smart , forgiving brother. Also a fun secret pejorative we shared , "PSHB , "when we wanted to say somerhing "bad" to one another without letting mother and dad know what was transpiring . I don't think they ever knew what it meant, nor did they ask. It was only after Jack went away to college and began to read everything he could get his hands on about C.S. Lewis, that he discovered that Lewis and his brother Warren had a similar coded , not so nice communication with each other! That raised our secret to a new level!*

We often snuck our code in birthday cards and had a good laugh everytime it appeared .

Margaret Ann Dewit - July 29, 2020 at 09:57 PM

SR

Can you share the secret yet?

Sally Robinson - July 30, 2020 at 12:00 PM

MD

No, sorry. Guess it's something like knowing how a magic trick is done. It would dispel the magic of it.

Margaret Ann Dewit - July 30, 2020 at 05:33 PM

IC

I was stunned to hear of Jack's death but hen realized he was singing and entering the place that had been prepared for him, and he wa joyful and eager. He was a great teacher; I learned a great deal about the Bible and living as a Christian at his feet. He will be sorely missed —his enthusiastic singing, his optimism, his ready smile and laughter, his thoughtful responses and desire to be true to God's word, his enthusiastic loud amens after the organ prelude or other music or in the midst of the sermon...

Mary, Steve, Mark and Phil, you and your families are in my prayers.

Islay Cowie

islay cowie - August 01, 2020 at 05:08 PM

CM

“ 1 file added to the tribute wall



Cully Musick - July 29, 2020 at 03:42 PM

HP

“ *Grandpa Watson was such a kind & gentle person! I always enjoyed his company when visiting My Uncle Paul & Aunt Cullys house. He had a great way of telling us kids the stories in the Bible. Uncle Paul was the same way and we loved it. I love them both and I'm so happy for them to be able to be with God in this moment. I can't wait to see them again!*

Haley Powell - July 29, 2020 at 03:04 PM

PF

“ Oh my goodness! Pastor "Jack" was my pastor from the time I was about 4 until I got married. I owe him so much. Much of my approach to studying the Bible comes from him. He was the most gifted Bible teacher I have ever known. He taught me not what to think about scripture, but how to approach scripture and Bible study. He told me once (I think I was in high school) that I would make a great pastor. I didn't end up following that path, but to have Pastor Jack tell me that was high praise. Jack and I shared a love for C.S. Lewis, especially the Chronicles of Narnia. If you have read those books (and if you haven't, why not?) Jack was Dr. Cornelius (from Prince Caspian). He was a teacher who taught God's truth much as Dr. Cornelius taught Prince Caspian. Now as we remain in the Shadowlands, Jack has begun Chapter 1 of the story which no one on earth has read. All of Jack's life in this world (and all of his adventures in Narnia) were only the cover and title page. Now he begins chapter 1 of the great story in which every chapter is better than the one before.

I miss him so much. Love you Jack. I know the great Lion Aslan welcomed you with a "well done son of Adam"!

Philip Foster - July 29, 2020 at 02:27 PM

MD

I must reread "Prince Caspian" to see Jack in Dr Cornelius

Margaret Ann Dewit - August 03, 2020 at 02:07 PM