

The Completed Life of Rev. William Raymond Bailey
1931 – 2017

William (Bill) Bailey completed his life peacefully on Thursday morning, January 12, 2017 in the darkness that comes just before dawn at Deerfield Retirement Community in Asheville, NC. His childhood sweetheart and wife of nearly 68 years, Marianna Hines Bailey, and his youngest daughter, Nan Parker Bailey sat watch by his side. Gazing out the window at a still bright and shining full moon, Marianna whispered to Bill that it was ok for him to go home and he gave her a slight smile. Marianna and Nan played 'Won't you come home Bill Bailey?' on his iPod, gently singing along. And it was then that he took his last breath.

Bill and Marianna described their small-town Mount Airy, NC childhood as carefree. Both his maternal and paternal grandparents, Will and Ella Mae Monday, and George and Eva Bailey raised Bill since his parents, George Raymond Bailey and Helen Monday Brown, divorced and his mother moved to New Jersey when he was quite young and eventually remarried. Bill has one younger half-brother, Van Brown. Bill grew up on North Main Street in Mount Airy only three blocks away from the home of Marianna Hines.

Growing up, Bill was well covered on religion. After he was six years old, Bill went with his grandpa Bailey to Catholic Church on Wednesday night, and then to Baptist Church with his grandpa Monday. With his grandma Bailey, he attended the Episcopal church on Sunday. He went to the Methodist church to meet girls; Marianna was a Methodist and at the Methodist church he met his love for life.

Bill and Marianna were high school sweethearts. They were married April 30, 1949. Memorable because Marianna was 16 and Bill was 17 – both underage to marry in North Carolina, so they eloped to Spartanburg, SC under the cover of attending a football game, with forged birth certificates. When a telegram came through post-nuptials questioning their birthdates, a loyal friend who received the telegram confirmed the forged dates and held the secret of their marriage. Bill and Marianna kept their secret for months.

During high school in 1949, Bill was an NC 1st All-State football star, won two MVP awards, and received a scholarship to Duke University. As a couple, they stayed in the family duplexes and Marianna cared for their first child, Thomas William Bailey born April 26, 1951. After a significant hip injury, a physician sidelined Bill, ending his college football career, forcing Bill to focus on being a full-time student. While at Duke, his second child and first daughter, Lynn Hines Bailey (now Brailsford) was born August 17, 1953. Bill decided to major in religion and it was here that he met Dr. Edmund Perry, Professor of Religion at Duke University and eventually Chair of the Religious Studies Department at Northwestern University in Evanston, IL. Dr. Perry became a very important mentor and guide, playing a pivotal role throughout the rest of Bill and Marianna's lives as they sought purpose and direction.

Bill left Duke in 1954 before graduating and returned to Mount Airy. There he worked for Marianna's father as CEO of the Hines Pallet and Reel Co. and along came the birth of their youngest daughter, Nan Parker Bailey on December 20, 1955. But they soon became restless in the confines of a small town, so Bill turned again to Dr. Perry for guidance. At Dr. Perry's encouragement, they packed up the children and in 1957 boldly moved to Evanston, IL for Bill to attend Garrett Biblical Institute. Dr. Perry also arranged for Bill to complete his credits to graduate with a B.A. from Duke University, June 2, 1958. For the first year of college, Bill took a job at the campus book store. But once again, Dr. Perry wisely intervened, knowing that the true measure of a local church pastor was developed in the local church,

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not in a book store. So Bill had a student pastorate in Minooka, IL at the Minooka United Methodist Church. During this time, he would commute to Evanston on Mondays for classes, leaving Marianna to tend to the three children, and return on Thursdays to pastor the congregation. This included hospital visits, marriages, counseling, and funerals. He also continued in the tradition of a circuit rider by going to Aux Sable Methodist Church once a month for services and to provide communion. Aux Sable was a community church on a gravel road in the prairie. While this was an arduous path for the family to take, the church community at Minooka embraced Bill and his family and this proved to be a foundational experience for him. Bill received his B.D. from Garrett Biblical Institute, September 1, 1961 and M.A. from Northwestern University June 16, 1962.

The push and pull of family and mission became a bit chaotic for this young family as both sides of the extended family were begging Bill and Marianna to return to the south. So, they moved back and Bill was ordained on June 8, 1962 as an Elder in the UMC Western North Carolina Annual Conference at Lake Junaluska. He took a pastorate at Brookstown UMC, a local church in Pfafftown, NC only to find again that the constraints of a small town were more than Bill and Marianna could handle. A move to the First United Methodist Church in Cortland, NY as Associate Pastor was also short lived when the Pastor retired. The move back to the Northern Illinois Conference proved to be fortuitous and altered the trajectory of the missional life of Bill and his family.

In 1965 Bill was appointed as pastor to the Community United Methodist Church in Fox River Grove. It was by chance that he found the truest expression of his calling after his son, Tom, went on a MYF (Methodist Youth Fellowship) group visit to a project in the inner city of Chicago run by the Ecumenical Institute. Tom encouraged his father to visit this project to see for himself what was going on. And as they say, the rest is history.

In 1967, Bill received a special appointment from the Northern Illinois Conference to work with the Ecumenical Institute AKA the Institute of Cultural Affairs, an organization established by the World Council of Churches. Two years were spent in training and working in the 5th City Community Reformulation project located on the West Side of Chicago's inner city. There he and Marianna trained local citizens in community leadership principles and techniques. Among other leadership projects, Bill was a liaison with a local gang, the Vice Lords, helping them to obtain their GEDs and Marianna was a Head Start pre-school teacher.

In 1968, they moved to Los Angeles as staff of the Ecumenical Institute to establish similar local church and community leadership education and practices. From 1971-1977 they lived and worked in Washington DC, Toronto Canada, and Oklahoma City, OK as local church educators. As director of two ecumenical parish programs in Oklahoma, Bill provided leadership in program planning, conducted seminars in theological studies, and facilitated local church committees in building consensus. As director of the Oklahoma Bicentennial Town Meeting '76, Bill facilitated a two-year project in cooperation with the Oklahoma Bicentennial Commission that involved more than 200 rural communities and urban neighborhoods in a citizenship participation program. This culminated in a statewide Town Meeting Assembly in Oklahoma City with most of the participating communities attending.

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From 1977 to 1981, Bill and Marianna lived in the South Pacific Islands designing and facilitating programs for churches, educational institutions and villages in self-help and development. They directed a Village Development project in cooperation with the Marshall Islands United Church of Christ in Majuro, Marshall Islands. He and Marianna worked with the Hawkes Bay Community College in Napier, New Zealand to develop curriculum and to train staff for a program in community service, and on Human Development Projects in the Philippines and Western Samoa.

In 1981, they returned to the United States as co-directors of the Institute of Cultural Affairs in Dallas, TX. During this time, Bill sought a position within the United Methodist Church that would allow him time to devote to the community building activities of the Institute. He became the Associate Director of Circulation for the United Methodist Reporter in 1983 and eventually the Director.

The nature and organizational framework of the Institute of Cultural Affairs was evolving and changing. By 1989, it was no longer the place where Bill and Marianna felt they were called to be, so Bill sought a permanent local church assignment with the Northern Illinois Conference. He became Pastor of Lanark, UMC in Lanark, IL where along with full pastoral duties, he assumed responsibilities for the overall county UMC cluster of 10 local churches. He applied the same passion and skill for community building to his local church assignment by participating in the conference committee for strategic planning and helping Lanark fund and send lay volunteers in mission to a project to the Philippines.

In 1993, Bill received an appointment to Crete UMC, in Crete, IL where he continued to bring his community building passion and was there when the congregation broke ground for a new sanctuary.

In 1997, Bill retired from the United Methodist Church in Crete, IL and Bill and Marianna moved to Asheville, NC. They worked as a missional team throughout their lives and continued to do so in Asheville. Through their words and actions, they inspired and taught people throughout the Western North Carolina region how to honor others, build consensus, and collaborate more effectively, even during disagreements. Most notable was their leadership in multiple community and neighborhood visioning, planning and organizing efforts that, despite early contention and conflicts, remain viable and sustainable many years later. A short list of examples of Bill and Marianna's leadership and facilitation includes:

- Visioning and organizing 'WECAN', a local neighborhood program
- Co-chairing the Coalition of Asheville Neighborhoods
- Founding of Westwood Co-housing Community in West Asheville
- Contributing participants in the Shiloh neighborhood planning process

Bill, along with Marianna, was involved in community and human development their entire adult lives. They have brought people together in community where ever they live. As a young man from Mt. Airy, NC, Bill was driven by a need to serve others and became ordained in the Methodist Church as a local church pastor. This desire to serve led him and Marianna to expand their missional work to community organizing and they traveled the world together for many years. Bill was a deep thinker who admired the writings of Nikos Kazantzakis. And through an encounter with one of Kazantzakis's characters, Zorba the Greek, Bill nurtured a zest for life which he expressed through his whistle, his laugh, and his smile which he would bestow on anyone deserving or not.

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On January 22, 2017, with Howard Hangar as Celebrant, his family, friends, and community celebrated the completed life of William Raymond Bailey at Jubilee! Community Church in Asheville, NC.

On June 10, 2017, his family gathered to inter his ashes at Oakdale Cemetery in Mount Airy, NC, in the Hines Plot, Lot 24, Plot 2.

We will remember him for his spirit of giving, helping and lifting others up. His bright and shining light will live on through our memories of him. We love you and will miss you. You are in our hearts forever.