

The Rev. Dr. Frank Joseph ("Joe") Mitchell, 90, of Croasdaile Village United Methodist Retirement Home in Durham, NC, died in the company of his family on July 25, 2017 from pneumonia complicated by congestive heart failure. The family is grateful for his courageous and inquisitive spirit, his commitment to truth and justice, and the intellectual acuity he retained till the end. A vivid person with strong views on many subjects, he was also unfailingly devoted to his family. Those who knew and loved him will never forget him.

Joe was born on February 12, 1927, in Fairfield, Alabama to Seth Hamilton Mitchell and Effie Schmitz Mitchell. The youngest of three sons, he grew up in a working-class family, as his father and several uncles were employed by United States Steel in the Birmingham area.

Joe graduated at the top of his class from Fairfield High School in 1944. In 1945, he enlisted as a U. S. Navy hospital corpsman. After discharge in 1946, he went to the Alabama Polytechnic Institute (now Auburn University), graduating in history education in 1950. He earned an M.Div. from Duke Divinity School in 1953 and was ordained in the Virginia Methodist Conference. Between 1953-1958, he served as pastor at Chamberlayne Heights Methodist Church in Richmond and Tabernacle Methodist Church in Pungo. He earned his Ph.D. in Religion at Duke in 1962.

Joe spent most of his career in the teaching ministry as a religion and philosophy professor at Carleton College in Northfield, MN (1961-62); Union College in Barbourville, KY (1962-65); Central Methodist College in Fayette, MO (1965-70); and Troy State University in Troy, AL (1970-1989). In Troy, Joe and wife Dr. Norma Taylor Mitchell were faithful members of First United Methodist Church, where Joe taught the Covenant and New Covenant Sunday School classes. There they reared their daughter Anne Virginia.

In 1989, Joe retired from Troy and re-entered the pastoral ministry at the Covenant United Methodist Church in

Chesapeake, VA. From 1990-92, he pastored the Ensley First United Methodist Church in Birmingham, AL.

In 2001, Joe and Norma returned to Durham to be near their daughter and her family. There they were active in community groups including Epworth United Methodist Church, where he taught the Fellowship Class for fifteen years.

Till the last, Joe was a dogged researcher and writer of family and community histories, a lover of computers and his iPad, a liberal Democrat, and an insatiable reader.

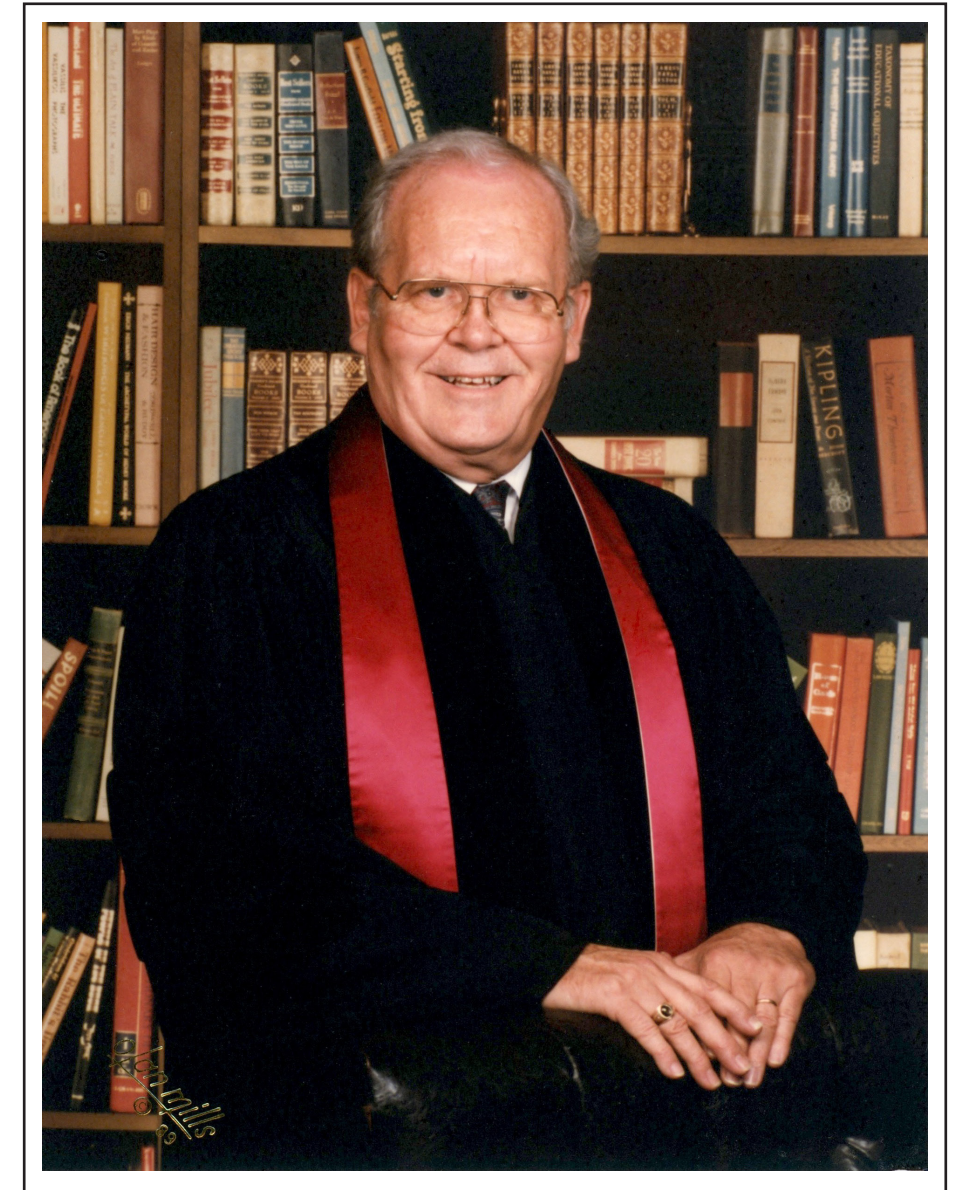
In addition to his parents, Joe was preceded in death by his brothers Jesse L. Mitchell, Asheville, NC, and Seth H. Mitchell, Jr. and wife Kathleen, Corpus Christi, TX; and his brother-in-law Orville C. Taylor and wife Marie Taylor, Virginia Beach, VA. He is survived by his wife of almost fifty-eight years Dr. Norma Anne Taylor Mitchell; daughter Dr. Anne Virginia Mitchell Whisnant (Dr. David Whisnant), and grandsons Evan David Whisnant and Derek Taylor Whisnant, Chapel Hill, NC; sisters-in-law Faye Mitchell, Asheville, NC and Wanda Mitchell, Portland, TX; brother- and sister-in-law Randall H. and Joyce Taylor, Bluffton, SC; cousin Carolyn and Donald Lantz, Mechanicsville, VA; and cousins-in-law Jo Rhea and David Ford, Oxford, Alabama, and Dillie Culberson, Hueytown, AL. He is also survived by many beloved nieces, nephews, great-nieces and -nephews, and cousins.

The family suggests memorial gifts to the following: Epworth United Methodist Church, 3002 Hope Valley Road, Durham, NC 27707 (<http://www.epworth-umc.org>); Birmingham-Southern College, 900 Arkadelphia Road, Box 549003, Birmingham, AL 35254 (<http://www.bsc.edu>); People In Need "PIN" Ministry, 503 15th Street, Virginia Beach, VA 23451 (<https://www.pinministry.org/home>); or Bread for the World, 425 3rd Street SW, Suite 1200 Washington, DC 20024 (<http://www.bread.org>).

A full obituary is available at <http://bit.ly/2wpWof8>.

A Service of Death and Resurrection

Rev. Dr. Frank Joseph Mitchell
February 12, 1927 - July 25, 2017



October 7, 2017, 2:00 p.m.
Epworth United Methodist Church
3002 Hope Valley Road
Durham, North Carolina 27707

Service of Death and Resurrection
The Rev. Dr. Frank Joseph Mitchell

**Please stand as you are able.*

Proclamation and Response

Commendation

Gathering and Prelude

Old Testament Lesson: Isaiah 40:28-31

Prayer

Entrance of Family

Congregational Response: Hymn 143:
"On Eagle's Wings" (*Sing twice*)

*Prayer of Thanksgiving

The Word of Grace

*The Lord's Prayer

Greeting

A Reading: Excerpt from Rainer Maria Rilke,
Letters to a Young Poet

*Dismissal with Blessing

*Hymn 92: "For the Beauty of the Earth"

*Hymn 577: "God of Grace and God of Glory"

Participants

Prayer

The Lord be with you.

Witness

Robert Warren (Read by Amanda Wagner)
Evan Whisnant
Derek Whisnant
David Whisnant
Anne Mitchell Whisnant

Rev. Karen Whitaker, Epworth UMC
Rev. Laurie Hays Coffman, Croasdaile Village
Rev. Dr. Sangwoo Kim, Epworth UMC
Dr. Fred Ibberson, Organist
Ushers: Kenneth Roberts, Emily and Rick Dike,
Bob Hodgins

And also with you.

Let us pray.

*Hymn 2191 (*The Faith We Sing*): "Eternal Father
Strong to Save" (The Navy Hymn)

*All present are invited to join us immediately after
the service for a reception in the Fellowship Hall.*

*Gospel Lesson

John 20: 19-29
Luke 24: 13-35

*Members of the extended family are asked to remain
briefly in the sanctuary for group photographs by
Evan David Whisnant.*

Reflections

The Rev. Laurie Hays Coffman

*Affirmation of Faith: World Methodist Social
Affirmation (Hymnal, p. #886)

*Hymn (*See insert*): "Once to Every Soul and
Nation"

*Friends and family from out of town are invited to
drop by to visit with Norma and the family in Nor-
ma's apartment at Croasdaile Village from 7:30-9:00
pm this evening. Address: 2600 Croasdaile Farm
Parkway, Apt. 181A, Durham, NC, 27705. Phone
919-384-2850.*

O God, who gave us birth, you are ever more ready to hear than we are to pray. You know our needs before we ask, and our ignorance in asking. Give to us now your grace, that as we shrink before the mystery of death, we may see the light of eternity. Speak to us once more your solemn message of life and of death. Help us to live as those who are prepared to die. And when our days here are accomplished, enable us to die as those who go forth to live, so that living or dying, our life may be in you, and that nothing in life or in death will be able to separate us from your great love in Christ Jesus our Lord. Amen.