**BESSEY, Stanley Ross**

**February 5, 1926 – February 4, 2022**

Friday, February 4, 2022, was a sad yet very special day for the Bessey family, relations, friends, and community. Stanley Ross Bessey, a husband, a father, a minister & a friend passed away peacefully and comfortably that morning at the age of 95, one day short of his 96th birthday. His transition from this life celebrates a life well lived filled with immense breadth of experience and adventure. Founded in his earliest years growing up in a family of 8 brothers and sisters (the younger of two sets of twins) in a small rural community that borders Alberta and Saskatchewan during the Great Depression years, his strength of character was forged early on into a life of service to others.

Soon after his graduation, he enlisted with the Canadian Army and received the Canadian Volunteer Service Medal upon honourable discharge at the end of the Second World War. Returning to civilian life, his adventures took him across Canada, serving first on the C.P.R., then for a brief time with the McColl-Frontenac Oil Company, and later as a civilian contractor with the RCMP, K Division, in Aklavik, N.W.T. Together, with his brothers and sisters, in 1948 he helped to build a home from the ground up at 3310 Centre Street North that “love for family had built”, still standing to this day, which together enabled their parents to move and retire to Calgary.

Returning to his education, first at the University of Saskatchewan, where he met his loving wife, Shirley MacFarlane (Saskatoon), and then culminating at the University of Alberta, where together in attendance with the largest ministerial group at that time to have graduated from St. Stephen’s College, he was ordained into the Christian ministry of the United Church of Canada in June of 1959.

Prior to his retirement in 1991, he served as a minister in the United Church for over 30 years at a number of community pastorates across Alberta: Oyen, Crossfield, Calgary (Montgomery), Tofield (Ryley and Holden), Bashaw (Mirror), and Acme (Beiseker). At each pastoral charge he also served as chaplain at the local Royal Canadian Legion branch. It was at Crossfield that he and his wife were blessed by the birth of two children, Heather and Spencer. During this time, Stanley found life fulfillment through his spiritual journey in the church, at the legion, and in scouting, reading, travel and community volunteering.  He enjoyed many hobbies – woodwork, photography, stamp & coin collecting, painting, gardening, and participating in sports – hockey, curling, skiing, hiking & swimming. He enjoyed music & the arts. He held a deep appreciation of life with its challenges & opportunities.

He enjoyed meeting people & was grateful for his many friends & acquaintances he was privileged to meet. The years he dedicated to raising a family with his wife were reflected in his passion to expose their children to nature and the beauty of God’s creation; camping and hiking, cross-country skiing, travel and exploration together of various places within the vast geography of Western Canada. For him life was a divine gift enhanced by the devotion of his wife Shirley, the love of his children, and family overall.

In a similar way, his retirement years also reflected his love for people and his enjoyment of learning from a variety of cultures and ethnicities.  He was an active participant in his local church community and also enjoyed travel with his wife Shirley to foreign lands. Those who knew him appreciated his genuine warmth and caring of others, his ready smile; as a neighbour shared - "He was such a kind and gentle soul and the epitome of a good human being."

Stanley throughout his life’s journey was a humble, faithful and dedicated servant in Christ. Years into his retirement, in October of 2009, he graciously accepted the honour of Minister Emeritus from the United Church of Canada in deep appreciation for faithful service at his home congregation of Forest Lawn United Church.

He will be lovingly remembered by Shirley, his wife of 63 years; his children, Heather Bessey, Edmonton, AB and Spencer Bessey (Leanne), Calgary, AB; his twin sister, Ruth Wilkins of St. Catharines, ON; and by numerous nieces and nephews. Stanley was predeceased by his parents, Joseph & Frances Bessey; and by his siblings, Cliff Bessey, Orville Bessey, Dalton Bessey, Lloyd Bessey, Dorothy Gusella, and Laura Snyder.

A Celebration of Life Service will be held at Forest Lawn United Church on Saturday, April 2, 2022 at 2:00 pm.  For those unable to attend in person, an online live stream broadcast, at the date and time, will be available here: [https://tinyurl.com/StanleyBessey-Service](https://tinyurl.com/StanleyBessey)  In keeping with the times, there will be no reception; however, shortly before and after the service a picture slide show will be presented. All expressions of sympathy are welcome; however, respecting Stanley's wishes, in lieu of flowers, anyone wishing to make a tribute may also consider making a donation, for the purpose of a needed upgrade to the sound system, by way of the Forest Lawn United Church Memorial Fund,  2236 35 Street SE, Calgary, AB T2G 0X1.