

Stuart Haskins
October 17, 1928 – March 19, 2025

Reverend Dr. Stuart Campbell Haskins, Jr., 96, of Centennial, Colorado, died March 19th after a short illness. He was born in North Adams, Massachusetts on October 17, 1928, to Rev. Stuart C. Haskins, Sr. and Margaret Pritchard Haskins.

He graduated from Quincy (Massachusetts) High School in 1946. After graduation, he enlisted in the U.S. Army and served in Japan following World War II, during the U.S. occupation led by General MacArthur. After returning from Japan, he attended Cornell University and received a Bachelor of Arts in Philosophy in 1952. At Cornell, he met and fell in love with Katherine (Kat) Woodbury, and they were married in her hometown of Moscow, Idaho on August 26, 1952. They remained together for over 72 years until his death. After the wedding, they moved to New Haven, Connecticut where he attended Yale Divinity School; he received his degree and was ordained in 1955.

Early in his career as a pastor, Stuart served two congregations in Connecticut: first as Associate Minister of Newtown Congregational Church from 1955-1958, and then as Senior Minister of North Haven Congregational Church from 1958 – 1967. During this time, he and Kat had four children: Jane (1954), George (1955), Stephen (1957) and John (1960).

In 1967 Stuart was offered his dream job as Senior Minister of First Plymouth Congregational Church UCC in Denver. He and the family moved to Colorado, and he remained as pastor at First Plymouth for over 25 years until his retirement in 1993. Stuart was known for his excellent preaching, for his teaching and administrative skills and for his compassionate pastoral care. His parishioners found him to be “an inspiring and thoughtful preacher, intelligent and theologically astute.” They regarded him as “positive, strong and enthusiastic about life, and dedicated to his mission and call as a Christian minister.” He expanded First Plymouth’s programs, staff, facilities, activities and worship services to address issues and concerns that were relevant to the times and to the lives of the parishioners. He and Kat formed many close and loving friendships at First Plymouth and viewed the members as their extended family.

A recounting of Stuart's time at First Plymouth must include the collaboration between Temple Sinai and First Plymouth. In 1966, Rabbi Ray Zwerin led a new Jewish congregation that did not yet have a building in which to hold services. First Plymouth shared their space with Temple Sinai, allowing them to use the church on Fridays and Saturdays until 1975 when the Temple completed construction of their own place of worship. Stuart and Rabbi Zwerin became very close friends and offered classes on Judaism and Christianity to both congregations. The highlight of the collaboration was the annual Thanksgiving service that both congregations attended together. This Thanksgiving tradition continues, with services held alternately at First Plymouth and Temple Sinai each year. Rabbi Zwerin has noted that this service, held for 55 years, is the longest continuous Thanksgiving service between two different faith communities in U.S. history.

While at First Plymouth, Stuart found time to serve the larger community, providing leadership to the United Church of Christ Rocky Mountain Conference throughout his career. He was active in the Colorado Council of Churches, serving as president in 1976. From 1990 to 1993 he was president of the Denver Area Interfaith Clergy Conference. During his ministry, he also served on the board of the UCC Metro Denver Association and the National UCC Board. In 1976, Stuart was awarded an honorary Doctor of Divinity from Doane University.

Stuart and Kat participated in Partners in Mission to the Dominican Republic, traveling there several times to provide hands-on practical assistance for those in need. Stuart was a faculty member and taught divinity students at the Iliff School of Theology for many years. He was active in the Rotary Club and the Lions Club, providing leadership – and piano playing – to those organizations.

Following his retirement, Stuart continued to serve the community. He remained active in the Rocky Mountain Conference, serving as assistant conference minister. He supported the Denver Inner City Parish where Kat was a staff member and volunteer. He served on the Board of Directors of Savio House, a non-profit organization that provides support to children and families in need. He and his son John delivered meals every week for years through Project Angel Heart, an organization that provides essential food for homebound people with severe illnesses. Even after moving into assisted living at Holly Creek, Stuart co-facilitated a support and discussion group for residents.

Stuart's unbridled enthusiasm for living led him to enjoy a personal life as fulfilling and rewarding as his professional life. With all his heart, he loved his adopted state of Colorado where he lived for 58 years. He spent as much time as possible in the mountains with family and friends going hiking, camping, backpacking, fly fishing, and cross-country skiing as well as driving on and off-road (not necessarily with an appropriate vehicle.) Stuart was the person to consult about the best hiking trails and campsites in Colorado, and he would provide very, very detailed instructions about how to get to those places. His ability to name virtually every peak in the Colorado Rockies by sight was astounding. Last year, he was exhilarated when a friend drove him and Kat to the mountains to see the aspen fall colors.

Stuart was an avid gardener and loved to spend weekends in the summer tending to his crops. Everyone who knew him, as well as some strangers, was given bounty from his enormous vegetable garden.

Stuart loved sports and played tennis every week, well into his eighties. He was a devoted Rockies fan and held season tickets until recently. He loved the Broncos and would cheer on any and every Colorado team.

Stuart and Kat shared a love for the arts, often attending theater productions and symphony concerts. Stuart played the piano, and took lessons as an adult, becoming the pianist for the Lions Club meetings. He also loved to sing, which he would admit was with moderate talent; his favorites were hymns, Tom Lehrer, and Flanders and Swann, and Jesus Christ Superstar. No one who has heard it can forget Stuart and Kat's holiday tradition, singing a duet in harmony of "The Boar's Head Carol."

Stuart was an insatiable reader; he read current fiction, mystery novels, theological works and publications, science books, and everything he could get his hands on. He read the New York Times every day – the real paper version – and the New Yorker magazine every week without fail. He and his son John would work the Sunday Times crossword. He also loved movies and any television mystery series on PBS.

Stuart and Kat loved to travel. In the 1960's when their children were young, they would throw the kids in the back of the Country Squire station wagon – yes, with wood siding and no seatbelts required – and take extended road trips across the country to see family and friends, national parks, educational,

cultural, and natural sites. Summers in New England were often spent with the family at a cabin on Lake Winnepesaukee, New Hampshire where swimming, boating, sailing and hiking were activities he loved. Stuart and Kat sometimes combined their love of travel with church youth retreats, mission trips and sabbaticals that included places like Nantucket, Martha's Vineyard, Puerto Rico, the Dominican Republic, Venezuela, Madurai (India), and Israel. Famously, Stuart loved to lead the groups as navigator, even when he had no idea where he was going. After retirement, not wishing to go to the usual tourist sites, Stuart and Kat took international cultural tours to many interesting and exotic places that were off the beaten path. They also frequently traveled to visit friends and relatives or to vacation with them in various parts of the globe.

Stuart was mentally sharp and physically active to the end of his life. He was the eternal optimist; according to him, the sun was always about to come out no matter how bleak and foreboding the skies looked. He and Kat had a zest for people, for nature, for art and for experiences that led them to share a remarkable and marvelous life together.

Stuart is survived by his wife of 72 years, Katherine (Kat) Haskins; his brother David Haskins; his four adult children: Jane Wolfe Zamudio, George Haskins, Stephen Haskins, and John Haskins; his six grandchildren: Jessica Nolan, Christopher Wolfe, Jeremy Wolfe, Elizabeth (Lizzy) Chitmitre, Emily Haskins, and Christopher Haskins. He is also survived by five great-grandchildren, numerous extended family members, devoted in-laws, and many close friends whom he regarded as family.

In lieu of flowers, the family requests that donations be made to the Denver Inner City Parish: <https://dicp.org/support/make-a-donation/>.

A memorial service will be held on May 10th at 2:00 p.m. at First Plymouth Church, 3501 S. Colorado Blvd., Cherry Hills Village, CO 80113. A reception will follow the service; all are welcome.