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Mudge remembered for influence on ecumenical movement

(Presbyterian News Service contributed to this report)

SAN ANSELMO, Calif., Sept. 22 – The Reverend Lewis S. Mudge, a scholar and theologian, not only enriched virtually every corner of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), but his contributions to the ecumenical movement will have a lasting impact on Christianity worldwide.

Mudge, a former dean and professor of theology at San Francisco Theological Seminary, passed away peacefully in his sleep on Sept. 11 at his home in Berkeley at the age of 79. He is survived by his wife of 52 years, Jean Mudge, a writer/filmmaker, and three adult children: Robert Mudge, William Mudge and Anne Mudge.

A memorial service in his honor will be held at First Presbyterian Church in San Anselmo on Nov. 28 at 11 a.m. A Philadelphia native, Mudge will be buried at the Princeton Cemetery following a service at Nassau Church in Princeton, N.J., on Oct. 19.

Mudge moved to San Anselmo in 1987 to serve SFTS as Dean of the Seminary, Vice President for Academic Affairs and the Robert Leighton Stuart Professor of Systematic Theology. After 13 years of distinguished service, including an eight-year tenure as dean, Mudge retired as the Stuart Professor of Systematic Theology Emeritus in 2000.

“My dad loved SFTS and his long affiliation with it,” Anne Mudge said of her father. “We are grateful for the joy he took in teaching there.”

Mudge’s love of teaching stretched from coast to coast, including the Graduate Theological Union in Berkeley, where he continued to teach until his death. His influence at both SFTS and the GTU is far-reaching.

“We are deeply grateful for the indelible influence Lew had on San Francisco Theological Seminary,” said SFTS President Phil Butin. “Lew continued to be a valued adviser to me even with respect to the current recession and its implications for seminary education.”

Most recently, Mudge was a member of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) Advisory Committee on Social Witness Policy, where he was spearheading an effort to apply Christian social ethics to the global financial crisis as a way to advocate for just social order throughout the world. He also served as a leader and writer for organizations such as the World Council of Churches, National Council of Churches, World Alliance of Reformed Churches and the Consultation on Church Union. He was on the committee that produced the final version of “The Confession of 1967.”

Mudge earned a B.A. and a Ph.D. from Princeton University and a Master of Divinity from Princeton Theological Seminary. In 1958 he studied at Oxford University as a Rhodes Scholar.

Ordained by Philadelphia Presbytery in 1955, Mudge served as Presbyterian university pastor at Princeton University for two years before his first ecumenical assignment as secretary of the Department of Theology for the World Alliance of Reformed Churches in Geneva, where he served from 1957-62.

Mudge's career in academia began with a 13-year stint on the faculty at Amherst College, including two terms as chair of the religion and philosophy department. From 1976-87, he served as dean of the faculty and professor of theology at McCormick Theological Seminary.

"Lew Mudge was a truly great church leader who lived out the rare combination of being both a prophet and a pastor," said PC(USA) General Assembly Stated Clerk Gradye Parsons. "His enormous intellect and integrity were apparent throughout his extensive history in the ecumenical movement, the classroom, and beyond."

Former General Assembly Stated Clerk Clifton Kirkpatrick said Mudge "was probably the greatest ecumenist in the PC(USA) in our time."

Mudge edited or authored 12 books, including of *One Church: Catholic and Reformed* (1963), *The Crumbling Walls* (1970), *The Sense of a People* (1992), *The Church as Moral Community* (1998), *Rethinking the Beloved Community* (2001), and *The Gift of Responsibility* (2008).

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