

May 13, 2011
For Immediate Release

Campbellsville University's long-time trustee, Dr. J. Chester Badgett, dies at 96

By Joan C. McKinney, news and publications coordinator

CAMPBELLSVILLE, Ky. – One of the senior statesmen of Kentucky and Southern Baptist life, Dr. J. Chester Badgett, has died at the age of 96.

Badgett, who was a member of Campbellsville University's Board of Trustees at his death and for 42 years, died May 10 at 12:38 p.m. at Jewish Hospital in Louisville.

Badgett was honored in 2009 with the naming of the Student Union Building into the Badgett Academic Support Center. He was also the author of the official "History of Campbellsville University 1906-2006" book that was a product of CU's Centennial Celebration.

"On behalf of the entire Campbellsville University family, we extend our heartfelt sympathy to the family of Dr. J. Chester Badgett," Dr. Michael V. Carter, president of Campbellsville University, said.

"Dr. Badgett was one of the 'great generation' of Southern Baptist and Kentucky Baptist leaders, and his more than three decades as the senior pastor of Campbellsville Baptist Church touched the lives of thousands of people across southern Kentucky and beyond," he said.

Carter called Badgett a "stalwart supporter of Campbellsville University" and a "key member of the CU Board of Trustees for many decades."

"His passion for evangelism and missions, advocacy of the Cooperative Program and leadership at all levels of our denomination are legendary across the Southern Baptist Convention and Kentucky Baptist Convention," Carter said.

"During my nearly 12 years as the president of Campbellsville University, Dr. Badgett has been a valued Board member and friend. He led a full life of Christian service in the cause of Jesus Christ, and his legacy remains alive in the lives of the many people he touched through the years."

Dr. Jay Conner, chair of the Board of Trustees, said it was "an honor and privilege" to serve with someone who had made such an indelible contribution to Campbellsville University.

Two other presidents of Campbellsville University, Dr. W.R. Davenport of Campbellsville and Dr. Kenneth W. Winters of Murray, Ky., also felt the loss of Badgett.

“ ‘ . . . Know that a prince and a great man has fallen today. . . ’ While the words were spoken by King David of old Israel on the death of Abner, his trusted army commander, they perfectly befit the passing of our dear friend and brother, Dr. Chester Badgett, who has gone from us today,” Davenport, president of CU from 1969 to 1988, said.

“In Dr. Badgett, Campbellsville University has lost a stalwart supporter, a devoted trustee, a loyal friend and an uncompromising champion of our cause.

“On more occasions than I can relate during my tenure at the campus, he rose to encourage support for us in ways that few, if any others, could have done.

“He leaves a legacy unmatched by others, not only for our university, but also for Campbellsville Baptist Church and the entire community of Campbellsville and Taylor County.”

Davenport said his life “has been enriched by his life, by his influence and by his preaching and teaching. Truly, a prince of God and a great man has passed from among us.”

Winters, president of CU from 1988 to 1996, said, “I was saddened to hear of the passing of Dr. J. Chester Badgett. It would be hard to imagine anyone more dedicated to an institution and its mission than that of Dr. Badgett.”

Winters said Badgett was “a strong supporter of my time as president of Campbellsville University, and was a strong encouragement to me individually. Our prayers continue for the Badgett family during this time of loss.”

In addition to his long-term service as a CU trustee, Badgett served the institution for a while as director of church relations.

At the 2009 ceremony of the naming of the Badgett Academic Support Center, his son, Dr. Thomas Badgett, spoke on behalf of the Badgett family. He recalled that, as a child, family meal discussions consisted of two things: Campbellsville Baptist Church, where his father was a preacher at the time, and CU’s campus. He said his family would always pray for the college. “We were nurtured by this campus,” he said.

Badgett served as pastor of Campbellsville Baptist Church from 1950 until his retirement in July 1980. He authored “Campbellsville Baptist Church, A Two-Hundred Year History 1791-1991.”

Dr. James Jones, who followed Badgett as pastor of Campbellsville Baptist Church, said, "He was one of the finest men I've ever known in my entire life." Jones came to Campbellsville Baptist Church as pastor in 1981 when Badgett was on a mission trip in Hong Kong.

Jones said, "Dr. Badgett was one of the greatest mission supporters I've ever known. He was a great guy, and I thought the world of him."

Dr. Skip Alexander, pastor of Campbellsville Baptist Church, said he and Badgett has an "unusually close relationship."

"We both started pastoring at the same age and were both graduates of Georgetown College," he said. "We both shared a passion for the lost and a commitment to the Cooperative Program."

He established the Badgett-Jones Scholarship at Campbellsville University in 2003, the year after he became pastor at Campbellsville Baptist Church. He took each of the recipients to meet with Badgett. "That was a living way each semester for us to honor his legacy," Alexander said.

Alexander said Badgett would pray with the students and encourage them. One of the scholarship recipients, Justin Watson of Campbellsville, who received his undergraduate and graduate degrees from CU and who was a pastoral intern at Campbellsville Baptist Church, said Badgett was a "great man who was faithful all the way through to the end of his life."

"One of the things that stood out for me about Dr. Badgett was his heart for missions. He wanted to reach out to those who did not know Christ in the region, country and globally."

Badgett served on the board of New Orleans Theological Seminary and was past president of the Foreign Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention and the Kentucky Baptist Convention.

He and his wife, the late Ruth W. Cloyd Badgett, who died Nov. 11, 2009, served several churches, in addition to Campbellsville Baptist Church, including: Clear Creek Baptist Church in Woodford County, Little Mount Baptist Church in Spencer County, Utica Baptist Church in Daviess County, Beaver Dam Baptist Church in Ohio County, Kowloon Baptist Church in Hong Kong and Bethel Baptist Church in Caracas, Venezuela.

He was a member of the Taylor County Ministerial Association and was the last surviving charter member of the Campbellsville Kiwanis Club having served as its president.

Badgett was a 1936 graduate of Georgetown College and received his master of theology in 1939 and his Th.D. in 1946 from The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville. He received an honorary doctor of divinity from Campbellsville College in 1980.

Badgett was born in Casey County and graduated from Stanford High School in 1931.

He is survived by two sons and one daughter: Tony Badgett and wife Priscilla, Ruth Ann Badgett Shaw and husband Bob of Frankfort and Dr. Thomas Badgett and wife Rachel of Louisville; five grandchildren: Dr. Joseph Russell Shaw and wife Caroline of Bloomington, Indiana, Jason Robert Shaw and wife Rachel of Frankfort, Jill Badgett Van Tassel and husband Joel of Lexington, Julie Badgett of Richmond, and Dr. Thomas Curry Badgett and wife Jeanne of Kensington, Maryland; seven great-grandchildren: Ian Shaw and Emma Shaw, Merritt Shaw and Sawyer Shaw, Elizabeth (Beppy) Badgett, Eleanor Ruth Badgett, and Lois Curry Badgett; one sister and brother-in-law, Sue Ella and Victor Gehlhausen of Stanford; several nieces and nephews and many other relatives and friends. He was preceded in death by two brothers, Faulkner Badgett and Wesley Badgett.

His funeral was Friday, May 13 at Campbellsville Baptist Church with burial in Brookside Cemetery. Visitation was at Campbellsville Baptist Church from 5 p.m. to 8 p.m. Thursday, Thursday, May 12. The family requests expressions of sympathy to be donations to the Badgett-Cloyd Scholarship Fund at Campbellsville University, the Annie Armstrong offering, Gideons or Campbellsville Baptist Church and may be made at Parrott and Ramsey Funeral Home in Campbellsville.

Campbellsville University is a widely acclaimed Kentucky-based Christian university with over 3,000 students offering 63 undergraduate programs, 17 master's degrees and five postgraduate areas. The website for complete information is campbellsville.edu.