

Deaths

News in the [November 3, 2009](#) issue

Forrest Church, one of the nation's best-known Unitarian Universalist pastors, died September 24 after a three-year battle with cancer that shaped his final years of ministry into an extended reflection on death and dying. Church, 61, had been pastor of New York's Unitarian Church of All Souls for more than 30 years, transforming a declining parish of 100 worshipers into a flagship pulpit that regularly attracted crowds of 1,000 or more. Church died of esophageal cancer, a condition that caused him to step down as senior pastor in 2006 and take on the title of minister of public theology. During his illness he wrote two books, including his most recent, *Love and Death*. His 25th and final book, *The Cathedral of the World: A Universalist Theology*, will be published in November. Church, the son of the late Idaho senator Frank Church, was barely 30 when he was tapped to lead All Souls in 1978. Quickly distinguishing himself as a sought-after preacher and author, he led All Souls toward a more public presence, especially around the issue of HIV/AIDS in the 1980s.

Fred Kaan, 80, a prolific 20th-century hymnologist who once described himself as the "world's most surprised hymn writer," died October 4 in England. The Dutch-born Kaan, who was unable to read music, wrote the words for more than 200 hymns in English, even though he did not start learning the language until age 16. Kaan became a minister in Britain's United Reformed Church. His hymns include "For the Healing of the Nations"—his most widely reprinted work. He started as a lyricist in earnest in 1963 when, as pastor of Pilgrim Church in Plymouth, he could not find hymns that expressed what he wanted to convey in worship. He was called "the dean of 20th-century hymn writers, arguably the most influential person in that field," by R. Gerald Hobbs, who recently retired as professor emeritus of church history and music at the Vancouver School of Theology.