

John Buchanan, former Century editor and publisher, dies at 87

by [Dawn Araujo-Hawkins](#)

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John Buchanan (*Century* photo)

John McCormick Buchanan, former century editor and publisher and longtime pastor of the second-largest congregation in the Presbyterian Church (USA), died February 3 following complications from surgery. He was 87.

Buchanan graduated from the University of Chicago Divinity School in 1963, after which he pastored churches throughout the Midwest. In 1985, he became pastor of Fourth Presbyterian Church in Chicago, where he served for 27 years. Both as a pastor and as a leader in the broader PCUSA denomination, Buchanan was known for his commitment to equality. He was, for instance, an early voice in support of ordaining gay and lesbian clergy, a policy the PCUSA didn't adopt until 2011.

In 1999, Buchanan became editor and publisher at the century, a position he held until he retired in 2016. In an email to the century, Joyce Shin, pastor at Swarthmore Presbyterian Church in Swarthmore, Pennsylvania, recalled working with Buchanan at Fourth Presbyterian while she was a PhD student at the University of Chicago. He was a mentor, Shin said, who encouraged people to dream big.

“John understood the strength of institutions, and he was a builder of institutions and institutional relationships,” Shin continued. “He never took their strength for granted and knew that the relationships between institutions needed constant tending. He understood that scale matters.”