Alexander B. Morrison

December 22, 1930 ~ February 12, 2018

Elder Alexander B. Morrison, Emeritus General Authority of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, has passed away quietly at home after a long and valiant battle with Parkinson's disease. He was 87.

Elder Morrison served as a member of the First Quorum of the Seventy from 1987,2000. During that time he was a counselor in the British Isles/Africa Area Presidency and Area President in the North America Southeast and Utah North Areas. In addition to these public assignments, Elder Morrison carried out many responsibilities at the request of senior Church leaders and became a trusted advisor to them.

He was born Alexander Baillie Morrison in Edmonton, Alberta to Alexander S. Morrison and Christina Wilson Morrison, who were Scottish immigrants. He was proud of his Scottish heritage. Once while on a Church speaking assignment in Edinburgh, he deliberately lapsed into the brogue he had learned as a boy, much to the amazement of his daughters.

Elder Morrison grew up on a farm near Vermilion, Alberta. For schooling, he attended his first several grades in a one-room schoolhouse.

He left home to enroll in the University of Alberta at 16 years old. While studying there he met and married his beloved wife, Shirley Brooks. Theirs was a truly celestial partnership. They were married for 67 years.

Also while attending the university, Elder and Sister Morrison joined the Church because of the good example of one of his classmates. Two latter-day doctrines moved their hearts to accept baptism,Äîthat the glory of God is intelligence and that marriage can be eternal. Lessons in Church leadership came early. Their first branch president was N. Eldon Tanner and their first Sunday School teacher was Hugh B. Brown.

Education was paramount in Elder Morrison's life. Following a bachelor's degree in agriculture and a master's degree in biochemistry (with a gold medal) from the University of Alberta, he earned a Ph.D. in nutrition from Cornell University and a second master's degree in pharmacology from the University of Michigan.

Elder Morrison was a skilled scientist and internationally known expert in infectious tropical diseases. For a quarter century, he led Canada's version of the FDA as the federal Assistant Deputy Minister of Health and Welfare. He was also a senior official at the World Health Organization where he directed several international committees, including groups of Nobel-prizewinning scientists, and worked to treat malaria and end the scourge of river blindness in West Africa. In addition, he was Chair of the Department of Food Sciences at the University of Guelph.

His experience battling infectious disease in Africa profoundly touched Elder Morrison. He said, "I carry victims' faces in my mind as I brush my teeth and rinse my mouth with water whose purity I take for granted. I feel jungle heat on my skin as I move through air-conditioned corridors. I remember what starvation looks like as I sit down to abundance three times a day. Carrying this burden keeps me, on the most fundamental of all levels, human."

Elder Morrison received many professional honors. In 2004, he received the Distinguished Service to Humanity Award from the Association of Mormon Counselors and Psychotherapists. Brigham Young University honored him as the first recipient of the David M. Kennedy International Service Award in 1984. He also received the Queens Jubilee Award and the Borden Award of the Nutrition Society of Canada. Besides these, he was a fellow of the Royal Society of Medicine and the Chemical Institute of Canada.

He authored seven books, addressing topics as varied as the growth of the Church in Africa and the history of the Great Apostasy. Among his writings, he is perhaps best known for Valley of Sorrow: A Layman's Guide to Understanding Mental Illness for Latter-day Saints. It is widely recognized for its accurate and powerful depiction of mental illness as an illness,Äîdeserving, he explained, of no less compassion and professional assistance than cancer or any other disease.

Elder Morrison anxiously worked to serve the most vulnerable among us. "One of the great passions of my life," he said, "is my concern for the poor and neglected and downtrodden." He contributed his time and talents to community organizations in Utah, in an effort to lift the burdens of poverty, homelessness, and mental illness.

Elder Morrison was a man of unusual intelligence, wisdom, and generosity of spirit. He simply exuded love. Nothing gave him greater joy than his family,Äîfrom his beloved wife to his newest great-grandchild. But above all, his life was shaped by his testimony of the Restored Gospel and his love of our Savior, Jesus Christ.

Elder Morrison married his sweetheart Shirley in 1950. Their marriage was blessed with eight children: David (Josie); Barbara (Terry McKee); Howard (Wendy); Sandra (Peter Misinchuk); Allen (Angela); Jeffrey (Judith); Heather (Shawn Gunnarson); and Mary,Äîas well as 24 grandchildren and 24 great-grandchildren. All will miss him.

The funeral will be held on Saturday, February 24 at 11am at the Bountiful Utah Orchard Stake Center, 3599 N. Orchard Drive. Friends and family may call Friday evening from 6 to 8pm at Larkin Mortuary, 260 E. South Temple, and Saturday at the stake center from 10 to 10:45am. Interment will take place at the Bountiful City Cemetery, 2224 S. 200 W. Online condolences are welcome at Larkinmortuary.com.