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# PITTSBURGH SEMINARY REMEMBERS DISTINGUISHED ALUMNUS THE REV. TOM JOHNSON

Pittsburgh Theological Seminary mourns the loss of the Rev. Thomas (Tom) E. Johnson Jr. '93, who died peacefully April 13, 2024, at the age of 68. In 2016, PTS honored him with the Distinguished Alumnus Award in Mission.

Johnson held a bachelor's degree from The College of Wooster, a master of divinity from Pittsburgh Theological Seminary, and an honorary doctorate from Bethany College. Together with Jodie Moore '96, he co-founded The Neighborhood Academy—a faith-based, independent, college-prep high school for Pittsburgh's low-income youth—in 2001, where he was headmaster for 18 years. Their vision for The Neighborhood Academy was developed while students at PTS. Over the course of two decades, with their shared passion for educating underserved youth and breaking the cycle of poverty, they built the school from a small program

for a handful of students in a renovated warehouse to a beautiful new facility in Garfield for more than 150 middle and high school students. At the time of his death, Johnson was in the process of starting another school, the Mon Valley Boys' Academy—a faith-based college preparatory school for boys grades 9-12—where he had already worked with the first cohort of students in a summer academy and a subsequent tutoring and mentoring program.

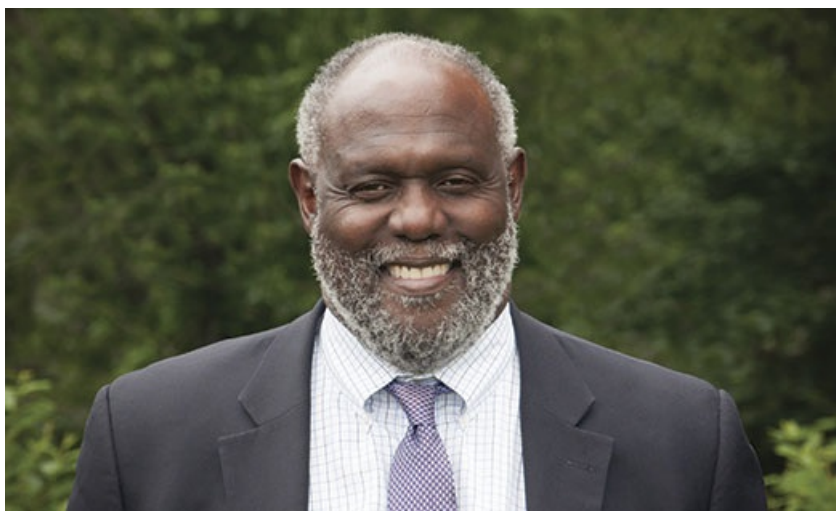
“Tom's legacy and commitment to children's education and formation was extraordinary and something that absolutely impressed me about him,” said the Rev. Dr. Asa J. Lee, president of Pittsburgh Theological Seminary. “He was a powerhouse intellect, leader, and thinker that was always full of life with the desire to see Pittsburgh grow into a better and brighter future.”

As a teacher and coach for 10 years at his alma mater, Shady Side Academy, Johnson honed the skills and garnered the experience necessary to partner in the founding and building of both a pilot summer school and the later educational model which became The Neighborhood Academy.

An ordained minister in the United Church of Christ, he served as pastor at Allegheny United Church of Christ on the North Side, associate pastor at East Liberty Presbyterian Church, and associate pastor at the Community of Reconciliation.

Johnson relished his journey through a vast array of experiences including: running a prison college program, teaching philosophy at the Community College of Allegheny County, tutoring in writing labs, serving as a ministry youth group leader, and teaching ethics and philosophy to 10<sup>th</sup>-graders at The Neighborhood Academy.

As an advocate for educating the urban poor, Johnson spoke to audiences across the region on issues affecting education and low-income youth. Throughout his career, Johnson was recognized with several awards, including the Andrew W. Matheson FAME [Fund for the Advancement of Minorities through Education] Leadership Award, the General Synod United Church of Christ Excellence in Teaching Award, and the *New Pittsburgh Courier's* Man of Excellence Award.



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