

Founders' Day Award  
Alan R. Jones '72

**Alan R. Jones** — For nearly five decades you have galvanized this Academy and its community with a full heart — first as a student, then as a class volunteer and a valued trustee. This unswerving dedication is a testament to the deep appreciation you have for your own Exeter experience and the responsibility you feel to help “create the path” for those who come after you. Your colleagues say, “His moral compass doesn’t waver.”

Growing up, as today, you took your bearings from family and your Christian faith. You were the third of six children in a devout home where pitching in and going to church were never optional. Every Sunday, and often multiple times every Sunday, you attended church in South Central Los Angeles, where your “granddaddy,” Rev. Dr. Charles Franklin Jacob Jones, ministered. A prominent community leader, he taught you the meaning of love, fellowship and altruism. Surrounded by parishioners clapping and joyously calling out “Hallelujah!” you learned that a single passionate individual could stir a congregation to common crescendo.

When you were just 11 years old, the 1965 race riots rocked LA. Amid the unrest, you (as charismatic lead singer), your brothers (as backup) and your granddaddy (on piano) performed in a traveling gospel group, The Jones Boys. Together, you uplifted the spirits of people all over the City of Angels — playing at white churches, Hispanic churches and Black churches alike. Your most popular song was “Pray on Till the Answer Comes.”

Schoolwork came easily for you. You were a straight-A student at Crenshaw High School. But a guidance counselor noticed you weren’t working very hard to get those marks. She introduced you to an Exeter alum who sponsored you to attend the Academy’s Summer School program, where you thrived. You were admitted to Exeter with a financial aid scholarship during the winter of your upper year and saw the move as an “adventure.” Here you felt the chill of your first snowstorm and were challenged academically. “I got my grades back from my first semester,” you say, “and my charm had worn out apparently, because my highest grade was a C+.” You buckled down, improved your grades and learned that you had not even come close to achieving your true potential. “Exeter was an unrivaled opportunity,” you say, “made possible because someone saw in me a person that I had not yet come to know.”

That experience of another’s support inspired you to do what you could to give back. Your outgoing personality, warm smile and easy laugh served you well first as a proctor in Soule Hall, where the goal, you quip, “was to get the boys in bed before they got themselves in trouble.” Later, you served as class president, class vice president, class agent, reunion gift chair, regional president, General Alumni Association president and Admissions representative. You are currently the co-chair of The Exeter Fund. Many say that there isn’t a role you haven’t said “yes” to when the school reached out. Time and time again, you have energized your fellow alums to deepen their relationship with the Academy.

You joined the Trustees in 2000 for a two-year term. In 2003, they invited you to return, and for the next 10 years you participated on eight committees and task forces that positively impacted faculty, staff and students alike. With your “unique ability to really listen when others speak,” you drew supporters to your causes and advanced initiatives. As chair of the Compensation and Benefits Task Force, you ensured the Academy holistically supported its employees. On the Youth from Every Quarter Task Force and the Universal Access Committee, you helped make

Exeter more accessible, financially and physically, to qualified candidates from around the world. Having spent hours working in the Academy library and Wentworth dining hall during your student days, it was especially poignant for you to be part of the team that eliminated the work and loan requirement for students on financial aid.

But perhaps the area of campus you are most proud of is Phillips Church. During your time as a trustee, you oversaw changes to ensure multiple faiths were honestly and respectfully represented within its walls. You were driven by the desire to “make sure that each student who came to the Academy had an opportunity to maintain or even uplift their experience of their faith as they did when they were at home, be it Christian, Muslim, Buddhist, Jewish or Hindu.”

Alan, you say that your mom was afraid you’d lose your faith if you went away to boarding school. It is clear your faith only deepened. One of your favorite phrases is: “Go and be what you already are.” We are so thankful that you are who you are. It is our great pleasure to present you, one of Exeter’s most respected and tireless volunteers, with the 2020 Founders’ Day Award.