



**Council of Bishops**  
The United Methodist Church



November 23, 2020

Mrs. Jo Ann McClain  
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Fort Washington, MD 20744  
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Dear Mrs. McClain:

On behalf of my colleagues in the Council of Bishops of The United Methodist Church, please accept our sincere condolences on the passing of your beloved husband, the Rev. Dr. William Bobby McClain.

The bishops salute the ministry and life of Rev. Dr. McClain, who was a longtime leader in United Methodism and the civil rights movement. We honor his life as a professor who molded the lives and ministries of hundreds of United Methodist leaders in the 34 years he taught preaching and worship at Wesley Theological Seminary in Washington, D.C. He also touched the lives of students at Boston College, Harvard University, Northeastern University, and Emerson College.

Apart from his work as an educator, Rev. Dr. McClain will also be remembered in The United Methodist Church for the leadership he offered in the creation of the hymnbook, *Songs of Zion*; for being a pioneering leader in the founding of Black Methodists for Church Renewal; and for his profound contributions to religion and civil rights in this nation.

As an elder in the UMC, Rev. Dr. McClain blessed our denomination with his pastoral work at Union UMC in Boston, and Tindley Temple UMC in Philadelphia. For those reasons and many more he deservedly was awarded in July of 2015, the Roger Deschner Award by the Fellowship of United Methodists in Music and Worship Arts.

We are praying that God's comforting arms will encompass you and the entire McClain family during this painful time and that God's grace will provide you with the strength needed at this time of bereavement.

Even as we mourn, we thank God and the family for sharing Rev. Dr. McClain with millions of people in The United Methodist Church through his work as a pastor, scholar, professor and advocate.

Yet we know that a life in Christ does not end when the earthly journey is over. We are reminded of Jesus' promise: "I am the resurrection and I am life; those who believe in me, even though they die, will live, and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die" (John 11:25).

We are asking God to sustain you with love and to offer you comfort today and in the days ahead.

In Christ's love,

Bishop Cynthia Fierro Harvey  
President  
Council of Bishops  
The United Methodist Church