

Memorial

Rev. Dr. E. Leicester Bigby
June 14, 1931 – January 1, 2020



Rev. Dr. Leicester E. Bigby passed away early New Year's morning. He passed away peacefully at home surrounded by the love of his family. He is the cherished husband of Hazel, father of Wayne (Diane), Paul, Karyn and Sherryl, and brother of Rupert (Lelieth) and Windsor (Yvonne).

After emigrating from Jamaica to Canada with his young family in 1969, Leicester served United Church congregations in Plainfield, Roslin, Thomasburg, Enniskillin, Tyrone and Welland, Ontario, as well as Montreal's Union United Church. Prior to coming to Canada Leicester served the Presbyterian Church in Trinidad and Tobago.

It was John Wesley who said, "The world is my parish," and Leicester lived it – using his experiences and expertise to not only help his congregations, but the Black community and the wider church in Canada and the USA. He worked tirelessly on many committees at the local, national, and international levels. For example, in 1982 Leicester started Heritage Week at Union United Church to celebrate differences amongst the many cultural groups which comprise Union United. Along with Hazel, Leicester served as a resource person to "The Whole People of God" curriculum writers and editors. This Christian education curriculum has been used by various denominations in the USA, Australia, New Zealand, New Guinea and some European countries. The "Voices United" hymnbook also received input from Leicester in its use of inclusive language and imagery as it pertains to Blacks. And, his passion for singing and music led to the formation of the Union Church Gospel Choir.

Leicester received several awards for his involvement in the local Montreal community. He also felt honoured and blessed to have shared the Union United Church pulpit with such pioneers in the fight against racism, more specifically against apartheid in South Africa, as President Nelson Mandela, Bishop Desmond Tutu, Rev. Allan Boesak, and Walter and Albertina Sissulu came to Union United.

Leicester received his training in Education, Public Health and Theology in his native Jamaica. He also earned his B.A., M.Div. and M.Ed. degrees from Queen's University in Kingston, Ontario, and a Doctor of Ministry (D.Min.) degree from McCormick Theological Seminary in Chicago, Illinois.

His life and ministry was celebrated at Grace United Church in Brampton, Ontario on January 11, 2020.