

Tribute to Rev Robina Winbush

On behalf of Council for world Mission, and on my own behalf, I join the international ecumenical community in expressing sadness at the sudden and unexpected passing of our dear sister, friend and colleague, Robina Winbush. We pay tribute to her for her outstanding and selfless service to the mission of the Church, especially on the international ecumenical stage. All of us who knew her personally, can attest to the fact that a vacuum is created by her passing, one that will not be easily filled. She gave much, served well and left a legacy of goodwill and exemplary stewardship for us to draw on and emulate. We offer to her immediate family and the Presbyterian Church, USA, (PCUSA) our heartfelt condolences and the assurance of our prayers during this time of bereavement.

The news of Robina's death confronted our deep emotions of a sense of loss, a strong feeling that we have been robbed of the opportunity to say our final goodbyes; to look her in the eyes and express our sentiments of joy, affirmation and gratitude for the positive ways in which she has impacted our lives; to tell her one last time that we love her and admire her discipline and dedication to prophetic witness. I did not know that the last time I would have had the privilege of a conversation, a hug and a smile from Robina was in Washington, at the CWM Legacies of Slavery hearing. There we sat together and talked about personnel and programme of the ecumenical movement and dreamed about what the future could look like. There we actually had our last encounter after a long history from the early days of Caribbean and North America Area Council (the regional expression of the then World Alliance of Reformed Churches), where she represented the PCUSA, and I, the United Church in Jamaica and the Cayman Islands. Little did we know.

Robina was a strong, passionate and courageous advocate for justice and peace. She was uncompromising in her articulation and relentless in her pursuit for that which she believed was right and just. She was a great and provocative preacher, who interweaved her personal story in the text to offer perspectives that were fresh, dynamic and engaging. She was impatient with callous indifference to suffering and intolerant of any compromise of the faith. She was a great partner in the faith and struggle for justice; a great source of inspiration to all who know pain and brokenness; and a channel of hope for all who know, or need to know, the power of God to heal.

In the corridors, at the dinner table, away from the sobriety of debates, discernment and decision-making, she was the perfect life of the party, with her engaging conversation, contagious laughter and hope-filled demeanour. Her charming personality and winsome disposition earned her many friends. She was a great deal of fun to be around.

It was while on duty, on her way to yet another context of pain and struggle, that God called her home, to rest from her toil. She worked to her last breathing moment; stayed on the side of God in the fight for life; and testified to the world that her devotion and loyalty was to God and God alone.

For all the saints who from their labour rest

Who Thee by faith before the World confessed

They name O Jesus be forever blest

Hallelujah!

Farewell my sister. Sleep and take your rest. You have "fought a good fight, finished the course and kept the faith". And now we know with certainty that a crown of glory awaits you as you join company with our ancestors, making way for our homecoming.

Rev Dr Collin Cowan
CWM General Secretary