



Council of Bishops

The United Methodist Church



May 1, 2018

President Serene Jones
President's Office
Union Theological Seminary
3041 Broadway
New York, NY 10027

Dear President Jones,

It is with great sadness that we join the Union Theological Seminary Community, our African Methodist Episcopal Church brothers and sisters, and the rest of the world in mourning the death of the Rev. Dr. James Cone, the Bill and Judith Moyers Distinguished Professor of Systematic Theology, who completed his earthly journey on April 28.

There are those who enter a field of study and contribute to it, enhance what has already been offered, or expand a particular aspect of the work. And, then there are those who enter a discipline and thoroughly forge an entirely new pedagogical stream. That is the gift and legacy of the Rev. Dr. Cone.

The Rev. Dr. Cone's work introduced an integrated theological perspective that was born in the crucible of struggle and oppression within the United States of America and read the gospel as a mandate to understand Christ as liberator.

Through that integration, the Rev. Dr. Cone introduced us to Black Theology; a theology that continues to provide new lenses to the mission and ministry of the church by re-examining our understanding of Christology and biblical interpretation that challenges white privilege.

So, as we mourn his passing, we also honor the Rev. Dr. Cone, who graduated from Garrett Theological Seminary and received his doctorate from Northwestern University, for his academic work that gives us hope for the future of racial relations not only in the United States but the world as a whole.

As Easter people, we are reminded of Jesus' promise: "I am the resurrection and I am the 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).

Please accept our condolences from the Council of Bishops and the entire United Methodist Church to the Cone family, the African Methodist Episcopal Church, and Union Theological Seminary. We offer our prayers of comfort and we trust that Jesus is welcoming the Rev. Dr. Cone with open arms and telling him, "Well done, good and faithful servant."

In Christ's love,

Bishop Bruce R. Ough, President
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