



Telling Our Stories

250 Years of United Methodism
in the New York Area

1766-2016 www.nyac.com/250years



Teacher, Mentor, and Community Leader

1915-2013

William Marcus James

Rev. Bill James is remembered as a “dynamo” within the UMC denomination and a “go-to” person within the New York Conference. During his 30 year pastorate at Metropolitan Community UMC in Harlem he mentored hundreds of youth into higher education and meaningful careers, and inspired his church members to get involved in their lives as well.

Born in Mississippi in 1915 and ordained an elder in 1940, James was also a leader in the larger church as a delegate to eight general and jurisdictional conferences, a key participant in the fight to end the segregated Central Jurisdiction, and a long-time board member of the UM City Society.

In the larger community he helped to found the Harlem Urban Development Corporation to attract public and private investment in the area. He became involved in anti-war efforts and was an early champion of gay and lesbian rights.

James was so well-known in the Harlem community that it was said he could not walk one block without someone wanting to talk to him. One night upon arriving back from a conference at 2 am he encountered several young people who called him by name and offered to carry his suitcase! James continued his community involvement after his 1985 retirement and passed away in 2013 at the age of 97.

For Discussion

- Both James himself and his church members were involved in “pastoring the community” through youth ministry and other activities. How does your church emulate that model today?
- James not only taught and mentored young people himself, he created a “mentoring culture” within his church. What type of mentoring is happening in your church?

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