
LET US REMEMBER



Shirley I. Parris *July 31, 1933 to June 13, 2010*

Shirley Ianthe Clarke Parris was the last of four children born to James and Ruby Clarke in Barbados, West Indies. Shirley will be remembered throughout the Caribbean for her work in the late 1950s with Barbados Rediffusion Radio, where she co-hosted a daily show, “It’s a Woman’s World,” and appeared with comedian Joe Tudor in a weekly skit entitled “The Mistress and the Yardboy” and several other shows.

Nurtured at Dalkeith Methodist Church in Barbados, Shirley felt a call to lay ministry and was deeply involved in the work of the church, eventually becoming a Sunday School teacher and then lay preacher and was a participant in almost every aspect of the life of the church.

Under the umbrella of the (British) Deaconess Order, she attended United Theological College in Jamaica, West Indies. Leaving before ordination, she migrated to the United States and eventually settled in Brooklyn, New York, where she joined Union United Methodist Church in 1964. The Rev. Arthur Caliandro encouraged her love of preaching and Shirley preached her first sermon at Union UMC.

Shirley served in virtually every capacity at Union including as the member of annual conference until 2008. She also served on both district and conference levels, holding the position of District Lay Leader and Conference Lay Leader—the first woman to do so in both capacities. She was elected as a delegate from the New York Conference to the General and Jurisdictional Conferences in 1984, 1988, 1992, 1996, 2000 and 2004 after which she decided not to run. She led the delegation twice and in that role, she was a member of the Jurisdictional Episcopacy Committee.

She served on several conference committees including the Committee on Finance and Administration, the Episcopacy Committee, Conference Board of Laity and Parish Development Committee and was a lay member of the Conference Board of Ordained Ministry. She chaired Legislative Section 3 for many years, guiding the section in their deliberation of many challenging and divisive issues with grace and patience.

She was elected Lay Leader of the General Conference for a quadrennium; and served the general church as a member of the General Council on Finance and Administration, the Commission on the General Conference, the National Association of Annual Conference Lay Leaders and as chair of the Inter-jurisdictional Committee on Episcopacy. She was also a delegate to many sessions of the World Methodist Council.

Shirley loved preaching and as a district lay speaker she filled the pulpits in most of the churches in the Long Island West District, as well as beyond the district and The United Methodist Church, including both Baptist and Episcopal churches. She was a popular Bible study and workshop leader both locally and in other conferences. Her sense of humor and unapologetic love of God were well known, as were her love of music and singing and her familiarity with the hymns of both the British and The United Methodist Church.

Shirley was a devout Christian and a woman of great prayer, praying daily for the people and situations on her prayer list that she updated constantly. She lived her Christian witness in many activities beyond the church including recording readings of books for the blind and sending greeting cards of support to friends and acquaintances at every opportunity.

In the secular field, Shirley enjoyed a successful business career which culminated in her position as Vice President of Human Resources with Bank of America. Using her extensive knowledge of finance, she audited the books of several churches.

Shirley counted herself blessed to have loved and known the love of two children—a daughter, Shannon, who is an accomplished pediatric dentist, and son, Parris, who is a force within the cosmetic industry.

She believed in excellence and maintained a high standard in all her endeavors. She leaves a legacy of faith and service to Christ and the Church.

Submitted by the Rev. Dr. Gennifer Brooks

