

A Brief Biography of The Rev, Dr. William Bobby McClain

Dr. William Bobby McClain earned his B.A. degree, *summa cum laude*, at Clark College, Atlanta. His Master's and doctoral degrees were earned at Boston University School of Theology. He conceived of and chaired the committee which produced the hymnbook, *Songs of Zion*, which sold more than 2.5 million copies and changed the composition of Christian hymnals of every denomination. He most recently co-chaired the committee for the sequel to *Songs of Zion: Zion Still Sings! For Every Generation*. After the publication of *Songs of Zion*, he wrote *Come Sunday: A Liturgical Companion to Songs of Zion*, and he is at work completing *African American Preaching and the Bible: The Preaching of Zion*, the third book in this trilogy.

In 1978, Dr. McClain established and served as the executive director the Multi-Ethnic Center for Ministry at Drew University, Madison, New Jersey. There he wrote *Travelling Light: Christian Perspectives on Pluralism*. He is also the author of *Black People in the Methodist Church: Whither Thou Goest* and with the late Dr. Grant Shockley and Dr. Karen Collier, *Heritage and Hope: African American Presence in Methodism*.

In 1991, his Clark Atlanta University alma mater awarded him the Doctor of Divinity degree in recognition of his achievements in religion and civil rights. In 1999, he was named to the Mary Elizabeth McGehee Joyce Chair in Preaching and Worship at Wesley Theological Seminary, the first fully-endowed chair in the seminary's history, where he taught preaching and worship for 34 years. He was the commencement speaker for Wesley's Commencement in 2013, held at Washington National Cathedral on May 13, retired from the seminary on December 31, 2013, and is now Professor Emeritus.

Professor McClain met Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., in Montgomery, Alabama, where Dr. King was pastoring and McClain was a teen-aged preacher in his hometown of Gadsden, Alabama. After completing his seminary degree at Boston University, where King had previously received his doctorate, Reverend McClain returned to Alabama in 1962 to work with King and the civil rights movement and to serve as pastor of Haven Chapel Methodist Church in Anniston, Alabama, where he remained until returning to graduate school at Boston University in the fall of 1964.

From 1968 to 1978, Dr. McClain, an ordained minister in the United Methodist Church, served as senior pastor of the historic Union United Methodist Church in Boston. During that same period he taught at Boston College, Harvard University, Northeastern University and Emerson College. While at Union, he and the Rev. Warner Traynham of St. Cyprian's Episcopal Church in Boston organized the nation's first Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial Breakfast on January 15, 1970. To this day, it is Boston's go-to event every January.

From 2001-2003 Dr. McClain served as the Senior Pastor of Philadelphia's Tindley Temple United Methodist Church where the great Charles Albert Tindley served as pastor and wrote many of his famous and beloved Gospel songs.

Called on frequently to lecture and preach in major pulpits and universities throughout this country and abroad, he has preached in Africa, Asia, the West Indies, New Zealand, and Europe. Professor McClain opened the 126th season of the New York Chautauqua Institution in 2000 as Keynote Preacher and Chaplain-in-Residence with thousands in attendance to listen to his preaching each day. In February of 2009, he lectured in Honolulu, Hawaii, as the 30th Annual Britt Lecturer.

Dr. McClain serves as the Advisory Board Chairperson for the Center for Music and Worship in the Black Church Experience, a one-of-a-kind North American institute that provides training in the sacred music of the Black church and beyond to musicians and worship leaders for the enrichment of congregational worship in diverse contexts.

He also serves as Vice President of the United Methodist General Commission on Archives and History, and writes and reviews features in their publications.

In July of 2015, Dr. McClain was awarded the Roger Deschner Award by the Fellowship of United Methodists in Music and Worship Arts. In September of 2015, he was honored as one of the Outstanding Alumni of Boston University School of Theology.

From July 1, 2017, until June 30, 2018, Dr. McClain served as Interim Senior Pastor for Union UMC in Boston for one year.

Dr. McClain is the father of two sons: William Bobby McClain, Jr. and David Wilson McClain. He and his wife, the former Jo Ann Mattos, who was the executive administrator of the Council of Bishops of The United Methodist Church for more than 12 years, make their home in Fort Washington, Maryland.