

MCC Mourns the Passing of Rev. Elder Freda Smith
22 November 1935 -
3 December 2019



[Rev. Elder Freda Smith](#) has inspired a generation of women, lesbians, and people of every gender and orientation. Just yesterday, we learned that Freda was placed into hospice care, and today we heard that she died. We give thanks for the compassionate care of hospice, and we pray for her long-time spouse of 40 years, Kathleen Meadows.

There aren't many people in the history of the movement of Metropolitan Community Churches that have been as instrumental as Rev. Elder Freda Smith. And, we pause together to give thanks and to honor her life and her contribution. Not only did she inspire and change MCC, she also worked tirelessly and courageously in her state of California for legislative change as an early political activist.

Freda came from a Nazarene and Salvation Army background, and she was the first woman ordained in MCC, as well as the first woman elected as an Elder. In fact, for all who remember her, her story is THE story that will always be told about MCC in terms of inclusive language. At one of our early General Conferences, Freda noticed that most of the terms for pastors or leaders were exclusively male; so Freda asked for all the bylaws to be changed so that "he" could become "he or she," or something more inclusive. (She was ahead of her time in asking for a quick "search and replace.") Freda was told our process did not allow for that kind of change. Nevertheless, she persisted. Freda stood up EVERY TIME there was a gender-specific

word in MCC bylaws, and petitioned for it to be changed to "he or she" instead of only "he." Rev. Elder Freda Smith is the one we should credit for bringing about inclusive language as an early value and guiding principle of MCC.

Two contributions of note include:

1. Freda wrote a poem called "[Dear Dora](#)" that was read in the California Legislature in the early 1970s, and in countless other churches in these last 40 years.
2. Freda was the one who gave a sermon entitled, "Purple Grass," which is now the name of an MCC award that honors those who have exceptional gifts in evangelism and preaching.

Rev. Elder Troy Perry, the Founder of Metropolitan Community Churches reminds us, "Freda Smith was a member of the Board of Elders and the Vice Moderator of our denomination. As most of us know, she was also the first woman ordained in MCC. Freda has shaped this movement as much as anyone has, and we have lost a hero."

Rev. Elder Don Eastman, former Vice Moderator for MCC, says: "Rev. Elder Freda Smith was a true apostle of Jesus Christ in our lives and world. With the heart of a pastor and the voice of a prophet, she was a passionate and eloquent herald of the inclusive gospel - good news - that God gave Rev. Troy Perry and Metropolitan Community Churches. She was a formidable advocate for justice and inclusion. As an evangelist, Freda was a powerful witness of God's unconditional love and acceptance for all people. She brought that message to many thousands of people in our churches and communities.

In her ministry as an Elder, Freda was often a pastor to pastors. She inspired, challenged, enlightened, and encouraged us. Like the apostle Paul was to the Corinthians, to many of us Freda was a spiritual parent. By her word and example she nurtured our growth as servant leaders.

Rev. Freda Smith's influence will continue in the days and years ahead. The inspiration of her faithful life and ministry abides to encourage us as we carry on MCC's mission to transform ourselves as we transform the world."

On her website, Freda said this was her final prayer, as an evangelist: "When I stand before God at the end of my life, I would hope that I would not have a single bit of talent left, and that I could say, 'I used everything you gave me.'" We are confident this is the absolute truth about Freda, and that we have been the grateful recipients of so many of her gifts.

Further details about memorial services and how you can honor Freda with your contributions will be forthcoming.