

**“Because you have experienced God’s grace,
care for others with the talents
God has given you.”**

(1 Peter 4:10, paraphrased)

100 United Years

Wilbur Howard

Wilbur Howard was born on February 29, 1912, in Toronto. Back then, Black people in Canada were not treated the same as white people. This unfair treatment is called racism. Many Black men had tough jobs that didn’t pay well, like Wilbur’s dad and brother who worked as porters on trains. Porters helped passengers and handled their luggage.

Wilbur wanted to be a minister because he cared about people and wanted to share God’s love. But becoming a minister was hard for Wilbur. At the school where he studied to be a minister, people treated him differently because of his skin color. This was also racism.

When Wilbur was 29, he became the first Black person to be a minister in The United Church of Canada. Sadly, no churches wanted a Black minister, so Wilbur didn’t get to work at a church until he was 53. Even though Wilbur was talented and called by God, people only saw his skin color.

But Wilbur didn’t give up. He spent his life teaching others about God, especially young people. Finally, a church in Ottawa saw how special Wilbur was and asked him to be their minister. He worked there for many years and was loved by the community.

Later, Wilbur became the Moderator of The United Church of Canada, which means he was the spiritual leader. A new Moderator is chosen every three years. Wilbur is the first and only Black Moderator the church has ever had. He is remembered as a quiet, kind, and funny man who loved words and poetry.

Wilbur didn’t talk much about the unfair treatment he faced, but we remember his story and think about how unfair it was. Our skin color doesn’t make us better or worse than anyone else. It was Wilbur’s love for God and others that made him a great minister. Wilbur’s story makes us wonder how many other people have gifts to share but are not given a chance because of how they look or sound.



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