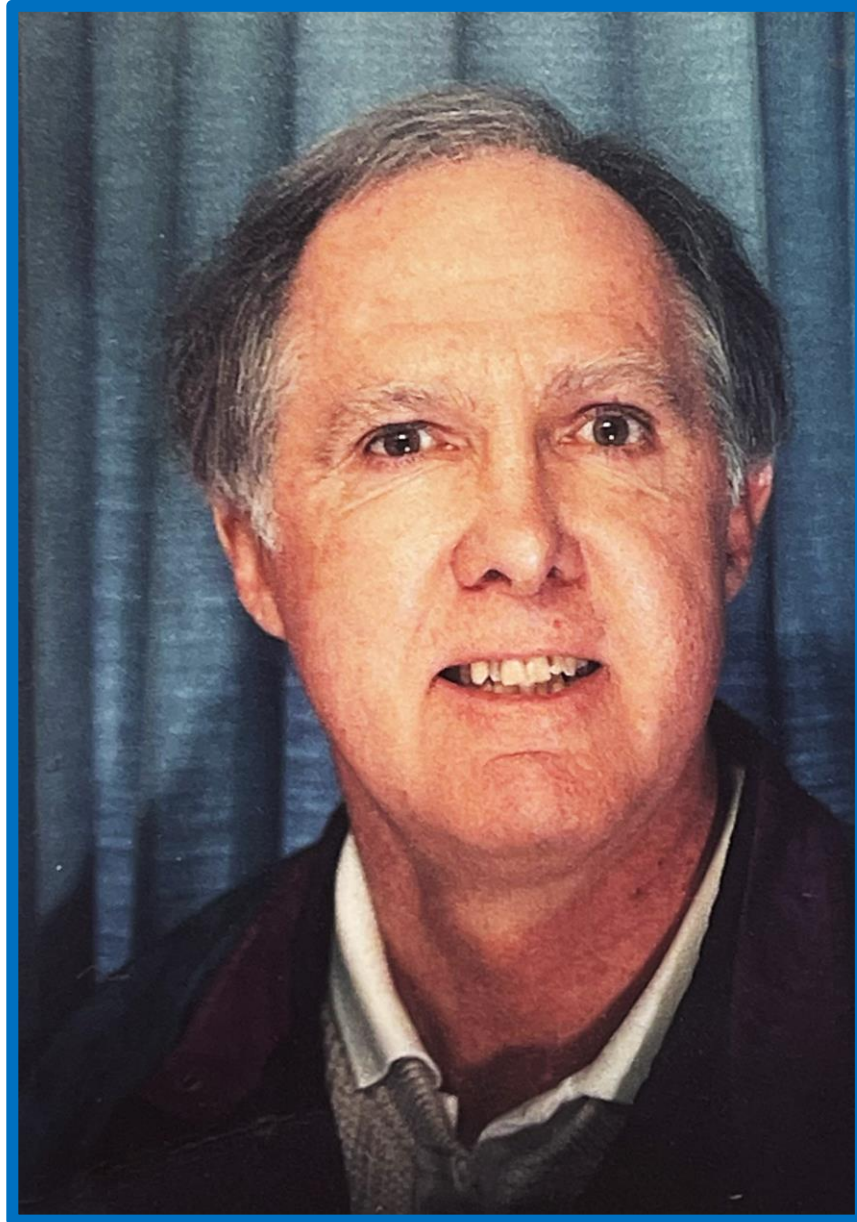


**A Celebration of Life for
RICHARD WHITFIELD “WHITTY” BASS**

March 31, 1943 - August 11, 2024



Saturday, November 2, 2024 / 2:00 pm

St. John United Church
10431 Twin Rivers Road, Columbia MD 21044

Richard Whitfield Bass was born in 1943 and raised in Wilson, North Carolina. This past August, Whit passed away at 81 of pancreatic cancer. He was at home in Columbia Maryland, with his devoted wife Gretta by his side.

Whit is survived by wife Gretta Ferrell, daughter Melika Bass, brother Glenn Bass, sister-in-law Jean Bass, nephew Brandon Bass, niece Lisa Bass, and sister-in-law Andrea Thorin.

Bass lived a far-ranging, and highly engaged life of sports, ministry, community-building, and fun. In college at Eastern Carolina University, Bass was captain of the track team, setting 2 school records in the 440 and 880. He was the first at ECU to be named an All-American for both track and field as well as football. While quarterback, he led the ECU Pirates team to two Tangerine Bowl victories.

In 1964, Bass earned his Bachelors of English and History from ECU. At Union Theological Seminary, in Richmond Virginia, he graduated with a Master of Divinity in 1970, during a turbulent time of political dissent and protest. At the University of Oregon, Bass received an MA in Counseling in 1974, the same year his daughter Melika was born.

Bass had two great professional callings – ministry, and track and field.

While serving in the Peace Corps in Rabat, Morocco, from 1970-71, Whit worked in Olympic Development as a national Track and Field coach, training women and men middle distance runners, for competition at the 1972 Munich Olympics. While there, he purchased a white Fiat with black leather interiors and drove it back from Spain.

Back in the US, as a competitive runner in Eugene, Oregon, Bass became part of the emerging American Running movement of the 1970s. At age 33, he ran a mile in under 4 minutes, a rare feat at the time. A member of the storied Oregon Track club, Whitty trained alongside legends Steve Prefontaine and Frank Shorter and ran in early prototype shoes made by a burgeoning, small regional company called Nike.

Bass's commitment as a coach sustained a lifelong passion for nurturing talent and discipline in others. Over 40 years, he expertly trained, challenged, razzed, and supported hundreds of runners, leaving an indelible mark on young lives in Richmond, Virginia; Denver, Colorado; Eugene, Oregon; Rabat, Morocco; Oxon Hill, Columbia, Maryland, and beyond.

Bass's exceptional coaching ability earned him recognition from the *Washington Post* and *Baltimore Sun*, which named him the All-Metro Coach of the Year in cross country in Virginia, DC, and Maryland.

Recent accolades for his runners at Wilde Lake High School, in Columbia Maryland include: an undefeated record in 2005; a Howard County championship win; a Maryland 3A Regional Championship win and a Maryland 3A State Championship.

Nationally, Bass served on the coaching staff for Reebok athletic shoe company, writing a monthly column for coaches and holding clinics as a special consultant.

In a 40-year parallel career as a minister, Whit was a strong preacher, asserting that sermons should speak to life experience, the scripture, and the community at large.

Whitty's coalition-building spanned from protesting for civil rights in the South in the 1960s, to Chairing the Human Relations Commission in Eugene Oregon in the 1970s, to the 1980s as Executive Director of Community Ministry of Prince George's County. Bass was a leader of many groups, including founding the Annual Interfaith Commemoration for Martin Luther King, Jr, and the Alliance for a Rainbow County; President of the Interfaith Council; and an advocate for gay marriage rights, alongside an ecumenical coalition of Maryland clergy.

As an activist, Bass served as a key organizer in the national boycott of DC's South African Embassy, and during the 2-year vigil and protest, was arrested alongside legendary singer Harry Belafonte.

Whitty's lifelong calling as a Presbyterian minister found him leading churches nationwide: St. John United Methodist/Presbyterian Church [USA] in Columbia, MD (1999-2013), Cann Memorial Presbyterian Church in Elizabeth City, NC (1995-1999), and Sixth Presbyterian Church in Washington, DC (1990-1995); and as an Associate Pastor at Central Presbyterian in Eugene, OR (1973-74) and Church of the Pilgrim in Washington, DC (1969). At his first church job, at First Presbyterian Church in Concord, NC (1968-1969), Whit worked to integrate the congregation and was chased down the street by local KKK.

Adventurous and full of life, Whitty enjoyed sailing, golf, and travel. He never turned down a good crab cake, a visit to Parkers BBQ in NC, or a chance to dance to a classic R & B tune. He was inquisitive, intrigued by fellow humans, and cherished his animal companions.

We are grateful for Whit's dedication to others, his insight, and to his lively, playful spirit. We will keep his memory close.

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Please turn off your cell phone.

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WE GATHER IN GOD'S NAME

PRELUDE

Patricia Hammer
Accompanist

A WORD OF WELCOME

Rev. Lon Chesnutt

SCRIPTURAL SENTENCES

“I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.” *Romans 8:38-39*

CALL TO WORSHIP

Jesus said: Behold, I stand at the door and knock;
if those who hear my voice open the door,
I will come in to them and eat with them, and they with me.
O taste and see that the Lord is good!
Happy are all who find refuge in God!

PRAYER OF ADORATION: Psalm 23 (KJV)

The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.
He maketh me to lie down in green pastures:
he leadeth me beside the still waters.
He restoreth my soul:
he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness
for his name's sake.
Yea, though I walk
through the valley of the shadow of death,
I will fear no evil:
for thou art with me;
thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.
Thou preparest a table before me
in the presence of mine enemies:
thou anointest my head with oil;
my cup runneth over.
Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me
all the days of my life:
and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

HYMN

“When in Our Music God Is Glorified”

GTG #641

When in our music God is glorified,
and adoration leaves no room for pride,
it is as though the whole creation cried:
Alleluia!

How often, making music, we have found
a new dimension in the world of sound,
as worship moved us to a more profound
Alleluia!

So has the church, in liturgy and song,
in faith and love, through centuries of wrong,
borne witness to the truth in every tongue:
Alleluia!

And did not Jesus sing a psalm that night
when utmost evil strove against the light?
Then let us sing, for whom he won the fight:
Alleluia!

Let every instrument be tuned for praise!
Let all rejoice who have a voice to raise!
And may God give us faith to sing always:
Alleluia!

SJU COVENANT

Affirming our belief

- That God is the power of on-going creativity;
- That God created the world and is creating the world;
- That God's spirit of creativity and love is in us, call us to be co-creators with Him;
- That Jesus Christ was fully God and fully human – God's love present amongst people – our highest example of the power of reconciliation;
- That the Church of Jesus Christ is people – wherever they find themselves – in the service of love to their fellow human beings;
- That, as struggling, questing Christians, we are accepted by God and are called to accept each other:

OLD TESTAMENT LESSON: Psalm 139: 1 – 18

¹ O Lord, you have searched me and known me.

² You know when I sit down and when I rise up;
you discern my thoughts from far away.

³ You search out my path and my lying down,
and are acquainted with all my ways.

⁴ Even before a word is on my tongue,
O Lord, you know it completely.

⁵ You hem me in, behind and before,
and lay your hand upon me.

⁶ Such knowledge is too wonderful for me;
it is so high that I cannot attain it.

⁷ Where can I go from your spirit?

Or where can I flee from your presence?

⁸ If I ascend to heaven, you are there;
if I make my bed in Sheol, you are there.

⁹ If I take the wings of the morning
and settle at the farthest limits of the sea,

¹⁰ even there your hand shall lead me,
and your right hand shall hold me fast.

¹¹ If I say, 'Surely the darkness shall cover me,
and the light around me become night',

¹² even the darkness is not dark to you;
the night is as bright as the day,
for darkness is as light to you.

¹³ For it was you who formed my inward parts;
you knit me together in my mother's womb.

¹⁴ I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made.
Wonderful are your works;
that I know very well.
¹⁵ My frame was not hidden from you,
when I was being made in secret,
intricately woven in the depths of the earth.
¹⁶ Your eyes beheld my unformed substance.
In your book were written
all the days that were formed for me,
when none of them as yet existed.
¹⁷ How weighty to me are your thoughts, O God!
How vast is the sum of them!
¹⁸ I try to count them—they are more than the sand;
I come to the end—I am still with you.

PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING

Almighty God, in Jesus Christ you promised many rooms within your house. Give us faith to see, beyond touch and sight, some sure sign of your kingdom, and, where vision fails, to trust your love which never fails.

Lift heavy sorrow and give us good hope in Jesus, so we may bravely walk our earthly way, and look forward to glad reunion in the life to come, through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.

SOLO

“Precious Lord”

Jordana Woodford

NEW TESTAMENT LESSONS

John 14:1 – 6

14 ‘Do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe in God, believe also in me. ²In my Father’s house there are many dwelling-places. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? ³And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, so that where I am, there you may be also. ⁴And you know the way to the place where I am going.’ ⁵Thomas said to him, ‘Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?’ ⁶Jesus said to him, ‘I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.

2 Corinthians 4:16—5:1

16 So we do not lose heart. Even though our outer nature is wasting away, our inner nature is being renewed day by day. ¹⁷For this slight momentary affliction is preparing us for an eternal weight of glory beyond all measure, ¹⁸because we look not at what can be seen but at what cannot be seen; for what can be seen is temporary, but what cannot be seen is eternal.

5 For we know that if the earthly tent we live in is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.

HOMILY

Rev. Mary Ka Kanahan

THE LORD’S PRAYER

Congregation

Our Father, which art in heaven, hallowed be thy Name. Thy Kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen.

TRIBUTES AND REMEMBRANCES

Rev. Marshall Dunn
Mr. Charles Shoemaker
Mr. Sammy Thompson
Ms. Melika Bass

HYMN

“Every Time I Feel the Spirit”

GTG #66

Refrain:

*Every time I feel the Spirit
moving in my heart, I will pray.
Yes, every time I feel the Spirit
moving in my heart I will pray.*

Up on the mountain, when my Lord spoke,
out of God's mouth came fire and smoke.
Looked all around me, it looked so fine,
till I asked my Lord if all was mine.

Refrain

Jordan River, chilly and cold,
it chills the body but not the soul.
There is but one train upon this track.
It runs to heaven and then right back.

Refrain

THE CHARGE AND BENEDICTION

Rev. Mary Ka Kanahan

POSTLUDE

Patricia Hammer
Accompanist

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**The family invites you to join them for refreshments in the lobby
immediately following the service.**

Make [Memorial Gifts](#) in Whitty Bass’s name to St. John United Church.



Use the “Memorial Gifts” link above, or this QR code, to donate through GIVELIFY. Choose the “In Memory or In Honor Of” envelope; **include Whitty Bass’s name in memo section.**

Or you can mail a check to the church (address is below).

St. John United Church
(a UMC/PCUSA community)

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Ingrid Sampson, Music Director • Patricia Hammer, Accompanist
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