

Robina Winbush, ecumenical and interfaith leader, dies at age 61

Winbush worked for the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) and with global organizations, “envisioning together how justice can be lived and reflected in the life of the church,” one colleague said.

by Rick Jones, [Office of the General Assembly](#); [Christian Century staff](#) in the [April 21, 2019](#) issue



Robina Winbush speaking during the Conference on World Mission and Evangelism in Arusha, Tanzania, in March 2018. Albin Hillert/[WCC](#).

Robina Winbush, who was a leader for three decades in ecumenical and interfaith relations, died March 12 at age 61. She collapsed at the airport in New York returning from a visit to Israel-Palestine with a Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) delegation.

Winbush had been associate stated clerk and director of ecumenical relations for the PCUSA since 2001. She was former president of Churches Uniting in Christ, 11 Christian communions that came together in 2002, striving to strengthen their unity in Christ and “common mission, especially a mission to combat racism together.” She remained an advisor to the group’s coordinating council.

“She gave her life to fostering lasting relationships across the world,” said J. Herbert Nelson II, stated clerk of the PCUSA. “Her witness as a true and faithful ecumenist and interfaith leader was sealed by the broad range of global impact that she made on both people and institutions.”

Najla Kassab, president of the World Communion of Reformed Churches, said Winbush would be missed especially for her work to empower other women leaders.

“We were still envisioning together how justice can be lived and reflected in the life of the church,” she said.

Angelique Walker-Smith, senior associate for Pan-African and Orthodox Church Engagement at Bread for the World, had known Winbush since they were classmates in college.

“She was a trustworthy leader who . . . loved God’s people despite the oppressions of systems and historical challenges and causes that pit peoples and groups against one another,” Walker-Smith said. “She maintained her integrity and sense of transparency when it was very hard to do so in challenging ecumenical spaces.”

In addition to her ecumenical work, Winbush had been a pastor at churches in New York and Kentucky.

A version of this article appears in the print edition under the title “People: Robina Winbush.”