UNITEDCHRISTIANLEADERSHIP MINISTRY

     of Western, New York, Inc.

MEDIA RELEASE

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

Oct. 28, 2023

**For more information:**

*Rev. Dr. Dwight Fowler, President of UCLM*

*(585) 820-2093*

**Rev. Lewis Stewart, revered president emeritus of United Christian Leadership Ministry, passes away**

On Oct. 27, 2023, after a long illness, Rev. Lewis W. Stewart, Jr. passed away at his home in Rochester, New York.

A lifelong advocate of social justice, Rev. Stewart was most recently known to the Rochester community as the co-founder, president, and president emeritus of United Christian Leadership Ministry (UCLM). A man who considered himself a “Liberationist” rather than as an “activist”, Rev. Stewart used action and words to eradicate social, economic, and racial inequities. He was a beloved drum major for justice who courageously spoke truth to power, who could “breathe fire at you” and let you know that he loved you at the same time. He was able to maintain friendships even with those he vehemently disagreed with, and he earned the respect of all.

Rev. Stewart was born February 3, 1946, in Newburgh, New York.  He was the son of the late Bishop Lewis W. Stewart, Sr., and the late Carrie Stultz Williams.

Lewis Stewart graduated from Brockport with a B.S. degree in Political Science and earned a Master of Divinity degree from Colgate Rochester Divinity School/Bexley Hall/Crozer Theological Seminary.  He also studied at Syracuse University School of Social Work.

Prior to his activities with UCLM, Rev. Stewart served as a Chaplain at the N.Y. State Department of Corrections at both Groveland Correctional and Five Points Correctional Facilities, where he served as beloved pastor to inmates and advocate for prison reform.

Rev. Stewart co-founded UCLM in 2013, serving as its president from 2013 until 2022. In that role, he personally advocated for and supported several individuals mistreated by the justice system. Under his leadership, UCLM was a powerful voice for criminal justice reform. The organization helped to bring about a number of needed changes in policy and practice. Some of the most notable of these included:

·       Implementation of body-worn cameras by the Rochester Police Department and later by the Monroe County Sheriff’s Office. UCLM continues to work with both agencies to monitor and update these programs.

·       Initiation of annual police community summits in 2016, aimed at bringing law enforcement and the community together for honest dialogue, relationship-building, and mutual problem solving. These summits continue to the present day.

·       UCLM was an early driver of civilian review of police misconduct.

·       Helping to preserve threatened funding for OACES (Office of Adult and Career Education Services), an important adult education program that serves Monroe County.

·       Development of community programs to address gun violence and especially to support and educate those affected by gun violence, especially children.

·       Working cooperatively with the local court system to develop the Judicial Observation Project, training citizens to observe court proceedings and offer advice on addressing implicit bias and systemic racism.

·       Catalyzing the establishment of a Civilian Interview Panel in both Rochester and Brighton, where citizens can participate in the screening of candidates for the local police force.

A more comprehensive biography of Rev. Stewart is attached.

Services will be held at First Church of God, 334 Clarissa Street, Rochester NY, under the direction of Bishop Dr. Dwight Fowler, UCLM’s current president. Details are forthcoming.