



Bishop Robert A. Culp

Holland

In the words of his nominators, "Bishop (Robert Culp) is affectionately referred to as Toledo's Bishop. He has been on the front lines of the social justice fight as a servant leader for over 60 years. He is known for his compassion and willingness to roll up his sleeves and get to work. His passion for the Toledo community is diverse and far reaching as he was profoundly impacted by Dr. King."

Culp, who had the honor of spending time with Dr. King on three occasions, credits Dr. King with helping people grasp the relationship between Christianity and civil rights.

His nominators said, "In 1967 as president of Toledo's NAACP chapter, Bishop Culp arranged to have Dr. King give a speech inside of Toledo's Scott High School. The same year, Bishop and other African American leaders convinced Toledo City Council to pass what would have been one of the nation's first anti-discrimination housing laws. The housing policies took effect in 1968."

His nominators credit him for bringing sustainable change to Toledo. For example, Culp helped expand job opportunities by creating a corporation which operated a McDonald's franchise, factory, and two grocery stores.

His nominators added that at the same time Culp is changing city ordinances and leading and developing leaders in the fight for equality, he can be found serving food to the homeless and playing with disadvantaged children.

A native of Sharon, Pa., Culp was called to the ministry as a youth. After receiving his undergraduate degree at Anderson University where he was a star basketball player, Culp was part of an elite group of athletes who played basketball and ministered in South America and Southeast Asia. He also received his master's degree and honorary doctorate from Anderson University in Anderson, Ind.

After serving his first pastorate in Danville, Ill, Culp became senior pastor of First Church of God in Toledo in 1961. He still serves there today, although he retired from his pastoral role in September 2022. He was consecrated to the office of Bishop in 2014.

Under his six decades of leadership, First Church of God has thrived and reached the community through several ministries, including the First Church of God Christian School, the Facts and Forward program fighting substance abuse, and the Four Corners Project serving youth.

Culp also has made a significant impact nationally, launching several "spiritual sons" who pastor churches from California to New York and planting churches in Alabama and Mississippi, according to his nominators.

Culp is remaining active in the community. He is helping transform a closed satellite campus of the University of Toledo into a hub for community services programming.

Ohio Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Governor's Humanitarian Award

Award criteria: This award seeks to honor those quiet soldiers who promote the welfare of humanity and the elimination of pain and suffering through their own selfless service, often without recognition.

Nominees possess a personal activism that has inspired unheralded long-term service to the community and stands as a model for others to emulate.