

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### **BELOVED HOUSTON PASTOR AND ACTIVIST SUCCUMBS TO COVID-19**

HOUSTON, TEXAS, USA – Monday morning, July 6, began as fairly typical during these atypical times for Reverend Vickey Gibbs, Associate Pastor of Resurrection Metropolitan Community Church in Houston. She joined the regularly scheduled Zoom meeting with the other members of the church's staff, remarking that she felt that she was "over the worst" of her COVID-19 symptoms, having tested positive a few days before. Then on Wednesday at noon, for another virtual meeting with her colleagues, she attended from her bedroom. Her voice was weaker. One colleague later remarked that Reverend Gibbs "was very different" from Monday's meeting. Later that afternoon, she was taken to a local emergency room, where she coded, was resuscitated, and intubated. Her diagnosis was pneumonia. On Friday, July 10, Reverend Gibbs died at 7:31 a.m. of COVID-19—just 5 days after having tested positive. She had been diligent, even adamant about wearing her mask, maintaining a distance of even more than six feet, and severely limiting her public outings. Her underlying condition, lupus, along with a heart doctors said was simply too weak to fight the infection, contributed to her death.

Vickey had come a long way, personally and theologically, from her conservative Baptist upbringing in Beaumont, Texas. Having acknowledged that she was lesbian, she ventured into the sanctuary of the progressive and welcoming Resurrection MCC in December 1981 at the age of 18. She quickly became immersed in its ministries and soon began singing with its Southern Gospel quartet, helped establish its Gospel Ensemble (singing music from the African-American tradition), and formed an African-American women's ensemble. Vickey was elected to the congregation's Board of Directors and also served the church on its Pastoral Search Committee, Building Committee, Ministry Coordinating Council, practically every other committee, and as a Lay Delegate. During this era, she also worked as the Confidential Administrative Assistant for the Resurrection's Senior Pastor, Reverend Elder Dwayne Johnson, for nearly a decade.

Tapped for both her skills and personality, Vickey became employed by the Metropolitan Community Churches denomination as Confidential Assistant to Reverend Elder Darlene Garner. Ultimately, her path led to a different call, and Vickey was ordained as Reverend Vickey on December 8, 2014. She continued to serve as an MCC denominational staff member until October 2015, providing resources to MCC congregations and members globally as a Curriculum Specialist and in the Office of Emerging Ministries, then as Diversity and Inclusion Program Coordinator.

Reverend Vickey's long relationship with MCC is noteworthy and distinguished. Known for her planning, innovation, and attention to detail, she had a passion for justice and equity. She worked tirelessly to invite, push, and pull others into conversation and action surrounding justice for all, especially those on the margins. At the time of her passing, she had been serving Resurrection as Associate Pastor since 2015.

Having supported numerous People of African Descent (PAD) conferences, Reverend Vickey received the Rosa Parks Award in 2017. More recently, she served the MCC denomination as Worship Coordinator for its 2019 Global General Conference.

During her many years in Houston, Reverend Vickey was engaged in the community as a member of the Houston Coalition of Black Affirming Pastors, Houston Faith Leaders Coalition, Planned Parenthood Faith in Action Cohort, and Texas Advocates for Justice. She served on the Board of the Montrose Center Women's Programming Advisory Committee. She loved living in the most diverse city in the USA, as it afforded her the opportunity to immerse herself in the cultures of people from around the world. She loved learning and she loved teaching.

On Sunday afternoon, July 12, hundreds of people who loved Reverend Vickey Gibbs logged onto a Zoom gathering to share grief over her passing. Among those attending were three certified grief counselors. Among the speakers was Reverend Elder Dwayne Johnson, Vickey's former boss who currently serves as Senior Pastor at Metropolitan Community Church of Washington, DC. He remarked that in times of grieving, one of his least favorite words is *closure*. "I don't ever want to feel closure with Vickey Gibbs," he said. With that, as the tears flowed, virtual applause erupted across the screens.

Reverend Vickey Gibbs leaves behind her wife Cassandra White; their daughters Cara and Ariel; grandson Xavier; several aunts and cousins; and countless church members, congregants, friends, and admirers throughout the world.

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Additional Resources Which May Be Helpful:

**Resurrection Facebook Group Page** created for friends to post memories, photos, videos:  
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/revvickey/>

**Resurrection MCC Facebook Announcement** & hundreds of reactions:  
<https://business.facebook.com/ResurrectionMCC/posts/10158742181583854>

**Resurrection MCC (Houston) Announcement:**  
Mourning the loss of Rev. Vickey, our beloved Associate Pastor  
<https://conta.cc/2W5VZ0t>

**Metropolitan Community Churches (Global Denomination) announcement:**  
<https://conta.cc/3gWXmqP>

**Dignity Memorial - Memories Page**  
<https://www.dignitymemorial.com/en-ca/obituaries/houston-tx/vickey-gibbs-9255828>