

UMC's first Asian American bishop, Wilbur Choy, dies at 103

by [Dawn Araujo-Hawkins](#) in the [February 9, 2022](#) issue



(Courtesy of the United Methodist Council of Bishops)

Wilbur Wong Yan Choy, the first Asian American to be elected as a United Methodist bishop in the United States, died December 28, 2021. He was 103.

Choy, who was born in Stockton, California, was ordained in 1946. In 1954, he was appointed to his first pastorate at St. Mark's Methodist Church in Stockton. In 1967, Choy served as the chaplain to the California Senate.

He was elected to the episcopacy in 1972 and spent eight years serving the Seattle area and then four years serving the San Francisco area. He served as president of the UMC Council of Bishops from 1983 to 1984, after which he retired.

In a statement from the UMC Council of Bishops, Elaine Stanovsky, bishop of the denomination's Greater Northwest Area, called Choy a person of great humility who

was unmatched in his vision for the “whole, just and kind community” God calls the church to be.

“Bishop Choy loved the Church and served it with unparalleled grace and humor,” Stanovsky said. “Under his leadership, new lay and clergy leaders from many racial, ethnic, and cultural identities rose to leadership in the Conference and the general church. Many served for a generation and more and established the values that continue to focus on becoming an anti-racist church and an engaged, beloved community.”