

*The William Sloane Coffin, Jr. Scholarship has been initiated through several generous gifts from former students who were impacted deeply by Coffin's ministry at Yale. These scholarships will be awarded annually to students who demonstrate some of the attributes of Bill Coffin's prophetic leadership, his passion for justice, and his critical theological interpretations of the contemporary social and political scene. With an endowment goal of \$1 million, the scholarship program will provide annual scholarships for these outstanding students.*

*To meet the goal of \$1 million, former students, colleagues, and friends are invited to contribute generously to support this new scholarship initiative.*

## *Supporting this Initiative*

Yale Divinity School is a university-based, ecumenical theological school dedicated to academic excellence, pastoral formation, and the training of leaders of communities of Christian conviction.

Reverend William Sloane Coffin, Jr. has impacted deeply the lives of those who have graduated from Yale University, most especially the Divinity School. We invite you to honor him by sharing in an initiative that will endow a scholarship for students who demonstrate his gifts for prophetic leadership and passion for social justice. There are several ways in which you can support this initiative:

1. By personal gifts (checks, securities, or other property).
2. By encouraging your church or other institution to give to Yale Divinity School for the William Sloane Coffin, Jr. Scholarship.
3. By suggesting to your fellow alumni, alumnae, and friends that they join you in contributing to these funds.

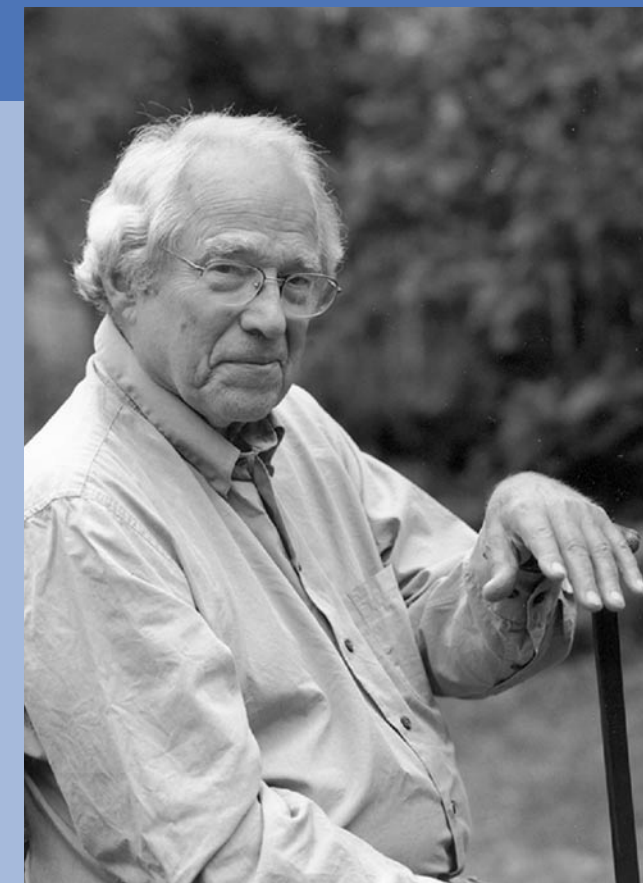
Gifts will be placed in a special endowment for the William Sloane Coffin, Jr. Scholarship with the income used to support the funding for the scholarship.

Your gift, which is tax deductible, may be made payable to Yale Divinity School and sent to:

The William Sloane Coffin, Jr. Scholarship  
c/o Development Office  
Yale Divinity School  
409 Prospect Street  
New Haven, CT 06510

If additional information is desired regarding how to make a gift of securities or property, or to establish a planned gift, please call John Lindner, Director of External Relations and Development at Yale Divinity School, at 203.432.5358.

## The William Sloane Coffin, Jr. Scholarship Fund



*A Scholarship Honoring the Life and Work  
of Reverend William Sloane Coffin, Jr.*

*“Hope arouses, as nothing else can arouse, a passion for the possible.”*

William Sloane Coffin, Jr



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One of the most important churchmen of the twentieth century, William Sloane Coffin, Jr. was born on June 1, 1924, in New York City to William Sloane Coffin, Sr. and Catherine Butterfield Coffin.

Coffin attended Yale University School of Music, studying to be a concert pianist, for one year before enlisting in the United States Army. He served in the army until 1947, rising to the rank of captain while working as a liaison with the French and Soviet armies. He returned to Yale University upon his discharge and received his B.A. in 1949. After working for the Central Intelligence Agency for three years, Coffin returned to Yale once again in 1953, this time attending the Divinity School, from which he received a B.D. in 1956. In 1958, he began his tenure as University Chaplain, a position he held until 1975.

While chaplain at Yale, Coffin emerged as a public figure involved in numerous prominent events, activities, and organizations. He became involved in international relief work, beginning with Operation Crossroads Africa. In 1961, Coffin was appointed to the President's Advisory Committee on the Peace Corps and established its training program.

Coffin also became a prominent figure in the civil rights movement in the early 1960s. He was one of the “Freedom Riders,” a group of black and white activists who rode interstate buses in the South to challenge segregation laws. In addition to his direct participation in civil rights protests in the South, Coffin recruited and coordinated the work of many northern activists.

With the escalation of military actions in Vietnam, Coffin became heavily involved in the protests against the war. His activism began in 1965 with the formation of Americans For Re-appraisal of Far Eastern Policy. Later that year, Coffin joined with a group of religious leaders, including John Bennett, Abraham Heschel, and Daniel Berrigan, to form the National Emergency Committee of Clergy Concerned About Vietnam. Coffin was named executive secretary of the organization.

As the war in Vietnam escalated and lay people became interested in the work of the group, it changed its name to Clergy and Laity Concerned About Vietnam (CALCAV). CALCAV organized mobilizations, supported conscientious objectors and acts of civil disobedience, and urged members to offer draft resisters sanctuary in churches and synagogues. At an October 1967 protest in Boston, over 1000 draft resisters turned in their draft cards at a church service led by Coffin. As a result of these actions, Coffin was indicted along with Benjamin Spock, Marcus Raskin, Mitchell Goodman, and Michael Ferber on charges of conspiracy to aid draft resisters. They were convicted in 1968, but the charges were dropped

in 1970 after the verdict was overturned on appeal. Coffin continued to protest against the war, and even traveled to North Vietnam in 1972 to accompany three released prisoners on their trip back to the United States.

Coffin left Yale in December 1975, citing the need to remove himself from the academy in order to work on a global level for social justice, disarmament, and an end to hunger. After leaving Yale, Coffin published his memoirs, *Once to Every Man: A Memoir*, and in November 1977, he became senior minister of Riverside Church in New York City. While at Riverside, Coffin dedicated himself to a variety of human rights causes, including world hunger, disarmament, homelessness, and poverty, among others. In 1979 he made headlines again by traveling to Iran to hold Christmas services for hostages being held in the American Embassy. In 1987, he left Riverside to become president of SANE/FREEZE, which was renamed Peace Action in 1993.

Coffin is married to Virginia Randolph Witson. They live in Vermont, where he continues to write and lecture. Coffin has three children, Amy, Alexander, and David, from his first wife Eva Rubinstein, a ballet dancer and the daughter of Arthur Rubinstein. In January 1983, Alexander was killed in a car accident. In the wake of his death, Coffin wrote and delivered the sermon titled simply “Alex’s Death.” To this day it is the most requested of his hundreds of sermons.

In his retirement, Coffin has written several national best sellers, including *A Passion for the Possible*, *The Heart Is a Little to the Left: Essays in Public Morality, Credo, and Letters to a Young Doubter*. In 2004, Westminster John Knox Press produced the documentary film *William Sloane Coffin: An American Prophet*, a powerful tribute to his remarkable life and prophetic call to action.

*Adapted from the “Guide to the William Sloane Coffin, Jr. Papers, Manuscript Group 1665,” compiled by Tom Hyry.*