



**GREENSBORO MASSACRE:
LESSONS FOR TODAY**



October 17, 2019
info@greensboromassacrelessonstoday.org

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

National Presbyterian Leader Dr. J. Herbert Nelson to Preside at Interfaith Service for Greensboro Massacre Commemoration

November Third is a significant day in the history of Greensboro, NC. 2019 marks the 40th anniversary of the Greensboro Massacre, the event that makes that day both painful and memorable. The call for healing is still heard. On November 3rd of this year, as the culmination of a 3-day series of commemorative events, an interfaith, interdenominational worship service will be held at Shiloh Baptist Church in Greensboro. The service will feature Rev. Dr. J. Herbert Nelson, the national Clerk of the Presbyterian Church (USA), who will speak on *"The Role of Faith Communities in Today's Quest for Economic, Racial, Environmental, and Social Transformation."*

Forty years ago, Greensboro was convulsed by the murders of five young activists. They were members and supporters of the Workers Viewpoint Organization (later named Communist Workers Party), gunned down on the streets of a Black neighborhood in broad daylight by KKK and Neo-Nazis. Some say the city has never recovered. Survivors still search for acknowledgement and apology from the City for its role in the murders. Even after a third trial in 1985—the first two earlier trials ended in acquittals—established the role of the Greensboro police and federal authorities in promoting the violence and then standing back and letting it happen, the City resisted.

In 2004, the City refused to endorse the Greensboro Truth and Reconciliation Commission, a community-initiated process modelled on the successful Truth and Reconciliation processes in South Africa and Peru. The seven Greensboro TR Commissioners, supported by a broad coalition of religious leaders and other community-based groups and individuals, gathered testimony and studied the facts of the Greensboro Massacre. After an intensive two-year process, in 2006, the

Commission issued a final report on its findings, along with recommendations for healing Greensboro. See <http://www.greensborotrc.org/>

Dr. Nelson is uniquely qualified to address the need for healing and the role of the faith communities in that process. As a third-generation Presbyterian pastor, he is called “a prophetic voice for justice” on the PCUSA website. As the first African American elected to lead a major, predominantly white denomination, Dr. Nelson is familiar to Greensboro, where he pastored St. James Presbyterian Church from 1986-1997. His tenure as Stated Clerk of PCUSA since 2016 has highlighted the church’s role in social justice and Christian activism, particularly focused on issues of poverty, racial division, economic injustice, and gender equity.

Rev. Nelson Johnson, who was wounded on November 3rd and is still an active organizer, said, “Herbert Nelson is among the best friends I have ever had. We spent many hours discussing the church and its role in the social justice movement. Rev. Nelson and I worked closely on the pace-setting K-Mart labor struggle (1996). Using the concept of “community unionism”, we drew in the entire Greensboro community, resulting in the best “first labor contract” in North Carolina’s history.”

For a dozen years after his ministry at St. James in Greensboro, Dr. Nelson served as organizing pastor of Liberation Community Church in Memphis, Tennessee. He also has served as associate director of the Benjamin L. Hooks Institute for Social Change at the University of Memphis in Tennessee. Before his election to the national PCUSA post in 2016, he had led the denomination’s Office of Public Witness in Washington, D.C. for six years. Dr. Nelson earned a doctor of ministry degree from Louisville Presbyterian Theological Seminary; a master of divinity degree from Johnson C. Smith Theological Seminary, and a bachelor of arts degree in political science from Johnson C. Smith University.

The worship service will be held at 3:30 PM on November 3rd at Shiloh Baptist Church. It is the final gathering in a series of commemorative activities that includes educational, cultural, and other worship events. The public is invited.

For a schedule of events and background information, visit www.greensboromassacrelessonstoday.org. For other information, email info@greensboromassacrelessonstoday.org.