



# NATIONAL BLACK PRESBYTERIAN CAUCUS PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH (U.S.A.)

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March 1, 2022

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May the Peace of God and the Lord Jesus Christ be with you.

We write in reaction to the recent attacks on the Stated Clerk of the General Assembly, the Rev. Dr. J. Herbert Nelson, concerning his statement describing the history of the Israeli/Palestinian relationship.

In each of his called positions, he has lived out his faith and given leadership with energy, intelligence, imagination, and love in calling for justice and equality for all. His marching orders come from Micah 6:8 which requires him to do justice and love mercy and also from Amos 5:24 requiring him to let justice roll down like water and righteous flow like a mighty stream. In addition, we believe his Lord Jesus the Christ, in Luke 4:18, leads him to work to set the captives free.

As an African American and as a third-generation Presbyterian clergyman, Dr. Nelson has personally witnessed the devastating effect of oppression and dehumanization of some of God's children and he has spoken out eloquently against it throughout his ministry. We applaud his courage to refuse to be quiet and to speak the truth as he believed it to be.

As the first African American Stated Clerk of the General Assembly, there are pressures placed on him that were not placed on his predecessors. Therefore, our prayers are with him and the whole church of Jesus Christ that we may be one as Jesus prayed for his disciples.

We acknowledge that many amongst us may not know this long and ongoing history between the Israelis and Palestinians; and that some may be in support of the status quo. We affirm as Presbyterians, "God alone is Lord of the conscience."

We understand that the position of Stated Clerk is to speak on behalf of the Presbyterian Church USA, "a community of love, where sin is forgiven, reconciliation is accomplished, and the dividing walls of hostility are torn down." (F-1.0301)

We acknowledge that there is a difference between "disagreeing" and "criticizing" the Stated Clerk. Yet, we are highly concerned that some have failed, by attacking "the person" of the Stated Clerk, rather than disagreeing with "the statement" of the Stated Clerk.

Therefore, the National Black Presbyterian Caucus firmly supports the Stated Clerk of the General Assembly, the Rev. Dr. J. Herbert Nelson, in his called duty to speak on behalf of the Presbyterian Church USA. We commend him for his faithfulness to the Foundations of Presbyterian Polity: the calling of the Church, the historic principles of church order, and the principles of presbyterian government. We thank him for calling to the attention of our beloved Presbyterian Church USA what he believes is, "Truth and Goodness." (F-3.0104)

When tested with the question: "Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?" Jesus answered, and gave a second part, "Love your neighbor as yourself." (Matthew 22:34-40)

To love neighbor, speak truth and walk in goodness, are the hard works of Christ's ministry. The NBPC will encourage its constituent congregations to continue this work. We accept the words of our Stated Clerk, "We have some hurdles to overcome."

Yours in Christ,

Rev. Dr. Charles C. Heyward, Sr.      Elder Lenore Williams,      Rev. Dr. James A. Thomas, Sr.  
President      Secretary      Circle of Elders

CC: OGA, COGA, PMA, Presbyterian News, Presbyterian Outlook, 224<sup>th</sup> GA Co-Moderators