

# PRESBYTERIAN HERITAGE

Fall 2016 / Vol. 29, No. 2



## ORANGEBURG

Johnalee Nelson picked up the ringing phone at 1 a.m. on February 9, 1968. The news was terrible: police had fired into a crowd at nearby South Carolina State College, where two hundred African American students had gathered to protest the segregated All Star Bowling Lanes in Orangeburg.

Three young men—Samuel Ephesians Hammond Jr., Delano Herman Middleton, and Henry Ezekial Smith—would die from wounds they received that night, the first instance of deadly police violence against student protesters in American history, predating the killings at Kent State by two years and the murder of Martin Luther King Jr. by two months. Twenty-eight other students were injured.

Ms. Nelson's husband, Presbyterian minister J. Herbert Nelson, left home that night to be with the students, among them members of the college's Westminster Fellowship. Ms. Nelson stayed behind to monitor events and look after the Nelsons' youngest child, eight-year-old J. Herbert Nelson II. Forty-eight years after the Orangeburg Massacre, the second J. Herbert Nelson, himself a Presbyterian minister, would

become the first African American Stated Clerk of the PC(USA). Elected by the General Assembly this past June, he leads the Church through a time of renewed violence and racial tension in the nation, realities that harken back to the tragic events in Orangeburg.

Johnalee Barnes was born in Beaufort, South Carolina, grew up in Portsmouth, New Hampshire, and returned to South Carolina as a State College nursing student. One Christmas, while staying with a friend in Sumter, she met her future husband. J. Herbert Nelson held a dual call at the time, serving Sumter's Congruity Presbyterian Church and Westminster Presbyterian Church in Alcolu.

*(continued on page 4)*

Sincerely yours,

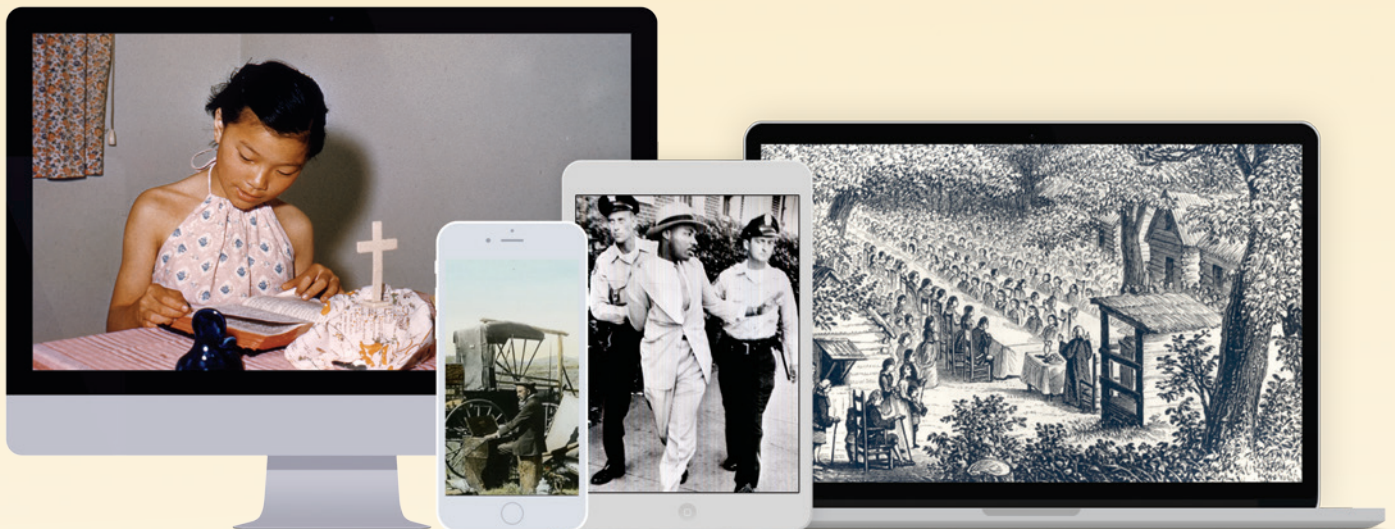
Pearl R. Buck

## PEARL ONLINE ARCHIVES

Already in 2016 PHS has added more than 4,000 items to “Pearl,” our new online archives. Each item, previously available only to onsite visitors in Philadelphia, can now be explored by remote users worldwide.

Pearl is named after Pearl S. Buck, the Nobel Prize-winning author of *The Good Earth* and a Presbyterian missionary to China. Virtual researchers can explore photographs, documents, sound recordings, and videos on their home

computers, smart phones, and digital readers. Pearl significantly enhances the Society’s ability to share historic Presbyterian and ecumenical collections. Notable recent additions include Congo mission photographs; David Brainerd’s 1742 letter describing his work with Native Americans; abolitionist correspondence from antebellum Ohio; films from the Civil Rights era; and thousands of church postcards from the early 20th century.



*Qui nus conem siminto rporiasperi  
quo te sa duciam, nem utentis  
ad quiae nist, si blandipitis rest  
il ipitaque renemqu isquiati esciisti  
apic tem fugiae pe occabo.*

Pearl is the culmination of five years of planning, digital reformatting, and generous outside support—from individual donors, grant organizations, congregations and mid councils, and PC(USA) colleagues. We especially appreciate assistance provided by the Board of Pensions IT staff, which began working with PHS in 2013 to build the server that runs Pearl and hosts an available 3 terabytes of interactive data. We salute the BOP and its 300 years of dedicated service to the Church.

**Would you please help Pearl grow in 2017 by making a financial contribution to our annual fund?**

Not only will your donation add unique items to the online archives, it will also keep Pearl, and our 500 years of historic onsite materials, free to all researchers.

Donations may be mailed to Presbyterian Historical Society, 425 Lombard St, Philadelphia, PA 19147 or transmitted online at [www.history.pcusa.org/donate](http://www.history.pcusa.org/donate). For more information, contact Samantha Piccolo at [spiccolo@history.pcusa.org](mailto:spiccolo@history.pcusa.org) or 215-928-3889.

## FIVE QUESTIONS

for The Rev. Dr. J. Herbert Nelson II,  
PC(USA) Stated Clerk



Orangeburg, Atlanta, Greensboro, Memphis, Washington, D.C. and Louisville. You've lived, studied, and ministered in places shaped by the Civil Rights struggle. What can Presbyterians in 2016 learn from the contemporary history of Southern cities?

Each is filled with persons who are left behind, and heavy pockets of poverty that place large numbers of individuals with an inability to provide for themselves and their children. The Civil Rights Movement is not over, as we are seeing emerging movements—Occupy, Black Lives Matter, and even recent movements in this country such as in the LGBTQ community—that are engaging the front lines of poverty and failed education systems that are creating wastelands for the human spirit.

As congregations and mid councils prepare to celebrate the 500th anniversary of Martin Luther's Ninety-Five Theses next year, how is Reformation theology impacting today's Church?

We are in need of another Reformation. However, there are emerging movements that need the assistance of the church in an effort to broaden and strengthen the core of their work. One of the great challenges for the PC(USA) and other mainline Protestant denominations is to link the work of local congregations with these emerging movements that are often times more fluid and without institutional restraints in both their actions and approaches to seeking liberation for oppressed communities of people.

How might Presbyterians with opposing political views come together to carry out the work of Jesus Christ in the world?

The Bible reminds us that the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world. When we cannot have discussions about tough political issues it is a weakness in us and our inability to love our fellow human being in the midst of our disagreement. Love must be at the centerpiece of all of our discussions—first a love for God, a love for our neighbor, and a love for ourselves, despite our disagreements.

Before becoming Stated Clerk, you directed the PC(USA) Office of Public Witness in Washington, D.C. How will the General Assembly's social justice agenda be implemented in coming years? What's the biggest challenge to that agenda?

The continual challenge is the influx of corporate money and power into the political system as a result of the Supreme Court case *Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission*, which has brokered a relationship with corporations to infuse large amounts of cash into political campaigns. On the other hand, the Supreme Court's decision to not affirm all parts of the 1964 Voting Rights Act has now disenfranchised many U.S. citizens from the process of government of the people, for the people, and by the people. Therefore, we are in a struggle to reclaim and implement the gains of the Civil Rights Movement, which focused specifically on voting rights and the opening of public accommodations.

The Book of Order directs the Stated Clerk to "maintain historical records." What would you like your historical record to be?

The development of openness to broader racial inclusion in the denomination, and a strong sense of transformation regarding our view of young people and the potential roles that they can play in the life of congregations and the larger church structure. Also, a fervor for the gospel and reclaiming of biblical scripture of prayer as the core of our way forward. We have placed much emphasis on the issue of evangelism. However evangelism in my reading of Jesus' ministry is really not possible without a centered view of Jesus Christ in our lives and an expectation that through Jesus Christ all things are possible. My hope is that we will return to a serious commitment to the Bible's call to be disciples, along with the understanding that we are baptized to do something for the Lord.

# ORANGEBURG

*(continued from page 1)*

National Guard photo: Lorem Ipsum

Rev. Nelson advocated for the full civil rights of African Americans and for a broad social witness role for the Church. In a 1955 sermon to his Omega Psi Phi fraternity, he said, “When the whole globe is a big neighborhood, no individual, group, or institution can isolate itself from crime, disease, and social blight.” In the 1960s Rev. Nelson deemed the Presbyterian Church’s social witness work vital to the health of the Church itself: “The [C]hurch is playing catch up with secular organizations [and] will certainly be in a bad state of affairs if she does not take longer strides and run a little faster.”

In 1960, Rev. Nelson began his work among students at State College and his pastorate at St. Luke Presbyterian Church in Orangeburg. An active member of the Presbytery of Atlantic, an African American governing body within the Church, he proposed that it establish a Commission on Religion and Race and identify charitable foundations to underwrite scholarships for African American college students. He befriended McLeod Frampton, pastor of the white First Presbyterian Church of Orangeburg. Together, the two men joined like-minded citizens in interracial discussion groups and would go on to co-chair the city’s human relations committee after the massacre. Ms. Nelson became a leader in Presbyterian Women, serving as moderator of the PW Synodical of the South.

According to Oscar Butler, Dean of Men at South Carolina State College in 1968, the chain of events which led to the massacre began at another bowling alley. In April 1967, the South Carolina youth chapter of the NAACP met in Sumter. When a local lanes refused to let the students bowl, they promised to picket the alley, and “close down the city.” Sumter’s mayor intervened, and the students were allowed to play. Some of the youths attended State College, and they returned to Orangeburg telling stories of their success. Butler, a member of a bowling team in Columbia, was especially receptive to the idea of integrating the Orangeburg lanes. In the summer of 1967, the dean, Rev. Nelson, and a contingent of students began discussions with the owner of All Star Bowling Lanes about desegregating the facility.

Those discussions stalled, and on February 5, 1968, a group of State College students walked into the bowling alley, leaving peacefully when asked. The next night student protestors were met by police, and the ensuing arrests escalated tensions between the growing crowd of protestors and police armed with billy clubs. Two days later students gathered at the edge of campus and built a bonfire facing Watson Street. Sixty South Carolina highway patrolmen and forty-five members of the National

Guard took up positions across the road. At approximately 10:30 p.m., a student threw a piece of banister from an abandoned house, striking a patrolman’s head. Police and FBI investigations would later conclude that the highway patrolmen who then advanced on the students had heard gunfire or an explosion. Eyewitness accounts disagreed. National Guardsman Clyde Jeffcoat claimed that his squad never felt threatened, never loaded their weapons, and heard no gun shots until nine patrolmen fired on the crowd, hitting fleeing students in the back.

The following Sunday, the NAACP organized a rally calling for the National Guard to demobilize from Orangeburg. Later that year, the U.S. Department of Justice successfully sued to desegregate All Star Bowling Lanes and Orangeburg Hospital. When a federal grand jury refused to indict nine patrolmen for manslaughter, the DOJ retried them on civil rights charges for imposing “summary punishment”; all would be cleared in May 1969. In 1970, Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee organizer Cleveland Sellers became the only person present at the massacre to be convicted of a crime. He spent seven months in prison for incitement to riot and received a full pardon in 1995. In February 2003, South Carolina Governor Mark Sanford issued a formal apology for the actions of the highway patrolmen that resulted in the massacre.

J. Herbert Nelson I served St. Luke Presbyterian Church until his passing in November 1981. Shortly before her death in 2014, Johnalee Nelson recounted her memory of the massacre for historian Jack Shuler’s book, *Blood and Bone: Truth and Reconciliation in a Southern Town*. A year later, J. Herbert Nelson II—then Director of the Church’s Office of Public Witness in Washington, D.C.—connected the shootings in Orangeburg with the 2015 murder of nine African Americans at Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church in Charleston, saying both events manifested a “belief that white supremacy is still the order of the day.”

After the 1968 massacre, the Nelsons and other citizens of Orangeburg began the daily work of reconciliation, a task Presbyterians are called to continue nationally nearly fifty years later. In the first full week of Rev. Nelson’s clerkship, the PC(USA)’s Office of the General Assembly issued statements of sorrow and support following the shooting deaths of Alton Sterling in Baton Rouge; Philando Castile in Minnesota; and five police officers in Dallas—Lorne Ahrens, Michael Krol, Michael Smith, Brent Thompson, and Patrick Zamarripa.



*From left to right: Lorem busanibiti rehentet. Pore non-senditio. Itam derchit*

# BRAZIL MISSION RECORDS

While the world focused on the Rio Olympics this summer, PHS announced the opening of the Presbyterian Church in the U.S. Brazil Mission Records, 1884-1991. Consisting of 28 cubic feet of minutes, reports, correspondence, printed materials, and photographs, Record Group 496 is another large collection now available to the world's researchers, in line with the recently processed mission collections from Japan and Syria-Lebanon

The PCUS Brazil Mission was established in 1869, when George Nash Morton and Edward Lane arrived in Campinas, in the state of São Paulo. The mission grew steadily, and by the early 20th century included three major areas: North, East, and West Brazil. In 1967, the three merged to become the Brazil Presbyterian Mission.

PCUS missionaries participated actively in presbyteries and synods of the national church, the Igreja Presbiteriana do Brasil, focusing on evangelizing and planting new churches as well as operating primary schools, colleges, and seminaries. In 1965, the North Brazil Mission initiated a major literacy campaign, the Cruzada de Ação Básica Cristã, or ABC Crusade. With support from the Brazil and U.S. governments, 200,000 people enrolled in small literacy groups in the first two years alone. Eventually the program spread throughout the country, and its management was taken over by the government. Similarly, responsibility for religious institutions and evangelical work was gradually turned over to the national church. The PCUS Brazil Mission formally dissolved in 1985.

These records are of special interest to researchers studying the international missionary movement. Jenny Barr, PHS Technical Services and Reference Archivist, notes that the materials demonstrate the shift in philosophy from external to domestic leadership that occurred in many international mission fields. In Brazil, that transition began relatively early.

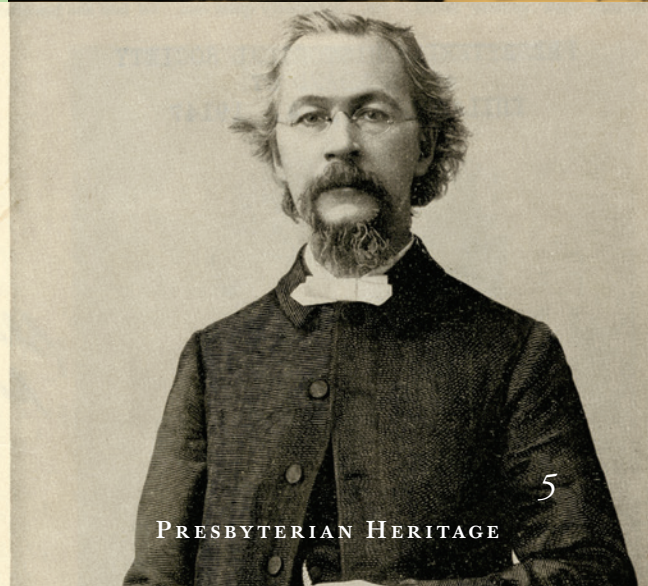
Find out more about the PCUS Brazil Mission Records at [www.history.pcusa.org/brazilpcus](http://www.history.pcusa.org/brazilpcus)



## JOURNAL PREVIEW

The Fall/Winter 2016 issue of *The Journal of Presbyterian History* commemorates the 300th anniversary of the First Presbyterian Church in the City of New York with two articles highlighting key time periods and figures in the congregation's history. Valerie Paley's essay focuses on the Revolutionary War era and John Rodgers, while Jeffrey Simpson looks at the great nineteenth-century reformer Charles Parkhurst (pictured), who took on Tammany Hall.

Visit [www.history.pcusa.org/journal](http://www.history.pcusa.org/journal) or call 215.928.3895 to receive *The Journal*.





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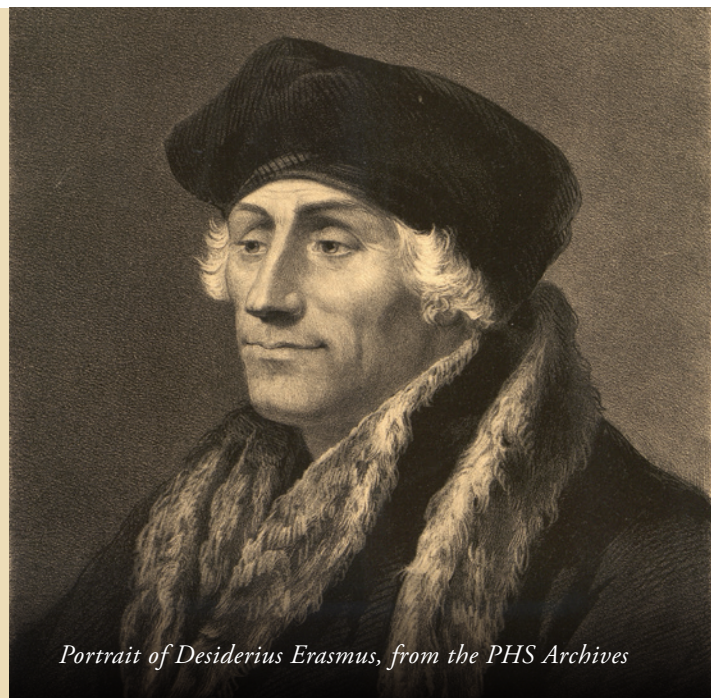
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## REFORMATION SUNDAY

### A New Testament

October 30th is Reformation Sunday. This year, learn about the *Novum Instrumentum omne*, Desiderius Erasmus's influential Greek translation of the New Testament, published one year prior to Martin Luther's Ninety-Five Theses. Download the free 2016 bulletin insert, and past bulletins, at:

[www.history.pcusa.org/reformation-sunday](http://www.history.pcusa.org/reformation-sunday)



*Portrait of Desiderius Erasmus, from the PHS Archives*