

African American Leaders in the PC(USA)

Clinton McClurkin Marsh

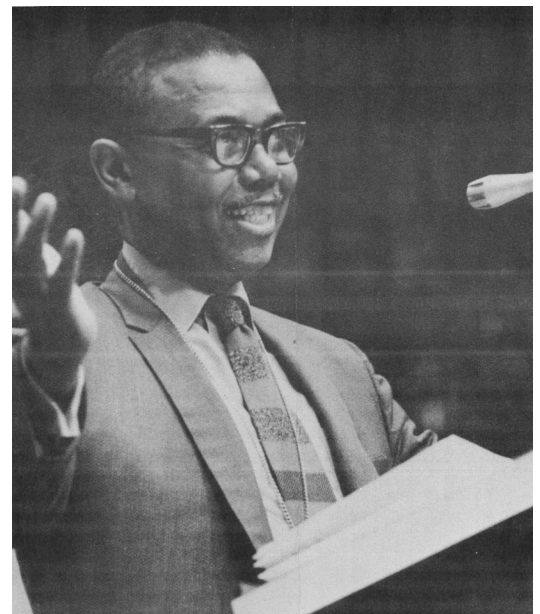


Clinton McClurkin Marsh was born October 28, 1916, in Wilcox County, Alabama. Marsh attended his father's alma mater, Knoxville College, where he earned his degree in 1939 and went on to Pittsburgh Xenia Theological Seminary where he earned a degree in theology in 1944. That same year, Marsh was ordained by the Tennessee Presbytery of the UPCNA and entered formal ministry as pastor of a church in Chase City, Virginia. Two years later, he became pastor of Witherspoon Presbyterian Church in Indianapolis, Indiana. Marsh faithfully served Witherspoon for 18 years and grew that congregation to the largest Black church in its Presbytery and the second largest Black church in the denomination.

At the same time, Rev. Marsh found "challenging and varied opportunities to serve his God, his church and his Black heritage." Some of the many calls that Marsh answered included serving as moderator of the Indianapolis Presbytery, a member of the board of the Indiana Council of Churches, interim executive of the Synod of the South, and in the years following the 1958 merger of the UPCNA and the PCUSA, a member of the General

Assembly Committee on Segregated Presbyteries and Synods. Eventually, Marsh was asked to join the staff of the Board of National Missions where, as a resource to churches in the north central region, his mission was to spur evangelism. Marsh held to this mission throughout his years of ministry, where it would lead him to Nairobi, Kenya, in the mid-1960s to help organize the All Africa Conference of Churches and to stand as Moderator of the General Assembly of the UPCUSA in 1973.

Marsh held steadfast to the belief that the church played a critical role in the life and health of the people and the nation. This guiding force doubtlessly shaped his later ministries as president of Knoxville College, Chairperson Emeritus of the Presbyterian Peace Fellowship, and in his activism against gun violence. He and his wife, Agnes Marjorie Watson Marsh (1922-2017), were active members of Blacksburg Presbyterian Church in Blacksburg, Virginia until his death on November 1, 2002. Marsh is perhaps best recognized as a key leader who served as Moderator of the UPCUSA and quite simply as a patriarch of the church.



Portrait of Rev. Marsh taken from a flyer promoting a speaking engagement. From the Clinton M. Marsh Papers.



Read more about Clinton McClurkin Marsh on the PHS blog
history.pcusa.org/about/blog/african-american-leaders-series



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