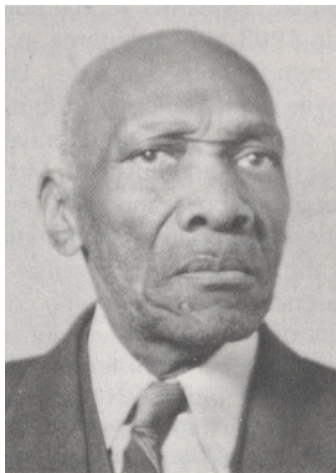


African American Leaders in the PC(USA)

Warren Julius Nelson, Sr.



On October 6, 1884, Warren Julius Nelson was born in Sumter County, South Carolina. He attended the New Haven Parochial School and the Kendal Institute, which was sponsored by the Board of Missions for Freedmen. Nelson, who was grateful for this access to an education, continued it at Biddle University where he earned high school and college degrees. In 1909, he graduated from Biddle's Theological Seminary and emerged as a young pastor eager to pass on his teachings to the wider community. He answered his first call to a small rural congregation in Marion. After five years, he accepted a call in Ridgeway. At both congregations, Nelson served alongside his wife, Maggie Grant. The couple worked steadfastly—Maggie held the roles of schoolteacher and director of music while Warren acted as pastor. They remained together until Maggie's death, after which Warren remarried to Lillie B. Moore.

In 1925, Nelson accepted another call in Mayesville at Goodwill Presbyterian Church, where he was both pastor and principal of the Goodwill Day School. Goodwill Presbyterian Church had many needs when Nelson inherited it. The vast majority of Sumter County's Black population were working as sharecroppers. Few owned land or were formally educated. In his 36 years of service there, the county's social and economic standings were substantially improved. One of the biggest achievements was the establishment of the Goodwill Larger Parish, a consortium of nine congregations across Sumter, Lee, and Clarendon counties. The mission of the Parish was to join together pastors and other Christian education leaders to support the more than 3000 shared congregants and their surrounding communities.

Warren Julius Nelson served Goodwill Presbyterian Church and Christians all around South Carolina until he retired in 1960. Two years later, he passed away. However, Nelson's legacy remains immeasurable. Goodwill Presbyterian Church and Day School raised future successful members of the community including business, civil, and religious leaders. Nelson had a positive impact on Atlantic Presbytery, which during his lifetime produced an inordinate number of Black ministers compared to the rest of the denomination.



Goodwill Presbyterian Church, 1992.



Read more about Warren Julius Nelson, Sr., on the PHS blog
history.pcusa.org/about/blog/african-american-leaders-series



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