

11th Annual Howard Thurman Convocation

Building Beloved Community: Truth & Reconciliation



October 15, 2006, 3:00 p.m.

**THE CHURCH FOR THE FELLOWSHIP OF ALL PEOPLES
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FROM THE DESK OF THE PRESIDING MINISTER

Dear Members and Friends:

Each year, The Church for The Fellowship of All Peoples celebrates its anniversary by convening the Howard Thurman Convocation. This is our 62nd Anniversary and 11th Annual Howard Thurman Convocation. We give thanks for those who have supported us on our unique, pioneering journey.

From its beginning in 1944 as the nation's first avowedly interracial, interfaith congregation, Fellowship Church has committed its resources to developing a religious fellowship that expands and deepens experiences of unity, thereby, subverting the divisiveness in society. We are dedicated to being a rallying point for all in search of the common good and ground of humanity.

The convocation is a forum for strengthening our resolve by applying insights of the spirit to contemporary questions and issues. The speaker for this year's convocation is Rev. Nelson Johnson, a prophetic voice for justice and right relations. His subject is: "Building Beloved Community: Truth and Reconciliation." He has consistently and persistently devoted his energy, creativity, and steadfastness to increasing the measure of freedom in the world by stepping into arenas of conflict with his authentic witness. Rev. Johnson and his spouse, Joyce Johnson, are this year's recipients of the Howard Thurman Award. The award is given in recognition of their embodying the life and legacy of Dr. Thurman. Jacqueline Hairston and Dominion A Cappella Ensemble under the direction of Valerie Brown will provide music. Enjoy a reception prepared by our culinary artist, Christy Witherspoon.

Laura Magnani and Shirley Strong join Joyce Johnson and Rev. Nelson Johnson on the panel following the service.

Dr. Thurman stated: "The quality of reconciliation is that of wholeness; it seeks to effect and further harmonious relations in a totally comprehensive climate. . . . The experience of God reconciles all the warring parts that are ultimately involved in the life of every (wo/man) as against whatever keeps alive the conflict, and its work is healing and ever redemptive. Therefore there is laid upon the individual the need to keep the way open so that s/he and (the Divine) may have free and easy access to each other."

Linger with us each Sunday morning at 11:00 A.M. as we attempt to illumine and enlarge the access.

In Faith,

Dr. Dorsey Odell Blake
Presiding Minister

University of Iowa
Iowa City
August 1946

Dear Friend:

I thought you might be interested in some of the happenings at the University of Iowa, where I have been a visiting professor for the eight weeks of the summer session, offering a course in Mysticism and Ethics.

The Summer School has many distinctive features. The Friday evening public lectures held out of doors have created much popular interest in matters of national and international concern. Heard in this series were Arthur Compton, Nobel Prize Physicist and Chancellor of Washington University in St. Louis, who addressed himself to the question of moral implication of the Atomic Bomb. Ass. Justice Rutledge of the U.S. Supreme Court gave an exciting account of the democratic process as it is revealed in the way in which that court arrives at its decisions. Denny of the Town Meeting of the Air, described the working of the democratic process through the medium of public discussion over the air waves. Canon Bernard Iddings Bell, outspoken rebel of the Episcopal Church, discussed the whole matter of the kind of philosophy of life and religion adequate for an atomic era. An finally, Congressman Walter Judd, drawing heavily upon his knowledge of China, with his years as a missionary-surgeon to that great people, outlined the clues necessary to achieve understanding of the tremendous upheaval in China today. Oh yes, Henry Wallace, in the nature of a special homecoming, addressed some 5000 people on friendship between the populations of the hemisphere, especially those of South and Central America.

We have had great music. Three times during the summer the University Orchestra and Band have given concerts on the green. The final high occasion was the rendering of Verdi's Requiem, by the Summer Session Chorus and Summer Session Orchestra under the baton of Thompson Stone of Boston. This was the climax of the Fine Arts Festival.

The University Student Union has presented a series of four Wednesday afternoon Lectures by visiting professors. I gave the Lecture on American Fascism under the title "The Fascist Masquerade."

There were several institutes especially designed to meet a variety of the need for the Commonwealth of Iowa: (a) a short course for police officers from all parts of the State sponsored by the University Law School; (b) an institute for school superintendents dealing primarily with a study of plans for the architecture of public school buildings; (c) an institute on Intercultural Relations within the hemisphere which featured in its closing session, a Latin American folk artist in a program of indigenous songs; (d) a Physics Symposium presenting visiting physicists from various parts of the country; and (e) an adult education institute, using fully the vast resources of the State University.

This is the year for Centennial celebrations of the State, and many public occasions have had a touch of Iowa State history in evidence. The 4th of July parade was mad up of floats with groups depicting in physical appearance, dress, and in other graphic ways, the life and customs of the State a hundred years ago.

One on the most fascinating aspects of the life here is the Radio Station WSUI – owned and operated by the University. The station goes on the air at 8 o'clock each morning, except Sunday with 15 minutes of worship under the sponsorship of the School of Religion. Four regular classes are broadcast each day plus items of special interest, including may programs of classical music in many cases furnished by the faculty and students of the University School of music. It is a great public service reaching about 30,000 listeners each day – a tremendous social force in the life of the state.

The School of Religion here is the most unique in the United States. Established 20 years ago, it grants the B.A., M.A., and Ph.D. degrees. It is an integral part of the University but its budget is contributed by the Catholics, Protestants and Jews of the State. The faculty consists of the Director Dr. William Lampe, and Catholic, Protestant and Jewish professors, designated as Professors of Religion rather than as Professors of Theology. The atmosphere is one of remarkable fellowship which provides great stimulation for honest scholarship of very rare quality.

Now that the Summer Session will be over in a few days, I shall return to my work in San Francisco at the Church for the Fellowship of All Peoples (Office 2142 Pierce Street). If I can get space on a ship, I shall go to Honolulu before long to give the Crossroads Lectures on Christianity at the University of Hawaii and Minister during the time to the Interracial, Intercultural Church of the Crossroads in that city.

If you would like to be placed on the mailing list of our Church in San Francisco, please send a card to the address indicated above.

Sincerely yours,
Howard Thurman

A letter from our past

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF REV. NELSON JOHNSON

(Excerpts from Mr. Johnson's Testimony before the Greensboro Truth and Reconciliation Commission (Aug. 26, 2005))



I am a 40 year resident of Greensboro. I'm pastor of Faith Community Church. I direct the Beloved Community Center. And I was perhaps the chief organizer of the anti-Klan march and labor conference in 1979. ...

Greensboro is not unique in that something terrible and tragic happened here. With the United States Senate recently apologizing for 4,700 recorded and largely unexamined lynchings, it is clear that our national history is replete with such tragedies. Greensboro, however, might become unique if we humbly and truthfully face this tragedy and learn from it....

I believe that our challenge as a community is to cultivate an atmosphere where people want to tell the truth, where there is compassion for everyone, and understanding, and using that to learn from our past and then to put into place those necessary restorative measures so that there's peace, justice and fairness for all.

This morning at the Beloved Community Center, we provided breakfast for over 80 of our homeless neighbors. We provided the opportunity for showers and the use of the phone for those seeking work. Our workers' center located upstairs works with low-income workers, largely unorganized, helping to protect their rights and providing much needed services. We have been approached by some Latino workers who earn as little as \$2.60 an hour when, and I'm talking about now when the minimum wage is \$5.15 an hour. We work in coalition with education.

Ten years ago we worked closely with the K-mart workers, the union and the community to help get one of the best first labor contracts in the State of North Carolina. [Our work has been documented in union manuals, such as, the Rockefeller Report *Louder Than Words*, and the *University of Pennsylvania Journal of Labor and Employment Law*].

Similar to our work today, twenty six years ago in 1979, we were engaging shoulder to shoulder with workers in the textile industry who labored under suffocating conditions, often breathing cotton dust resulting from their work while the company doctors were denying there was any problem.... Many people who worked faithfully all their lives retired without sufficient benefits...; [therefore, they are ...] leaning on their children and their neighbors....

It has been a long, difficult journey from the bloody scene at Carver and Everett Street [on November 3,] 1979 to this auditorium. For nearly twenty six years, I and others who helped to organize or participate in the aborted anti-Klan march and labor conference of 1979 have had virtually no place to share our views or our feelings so I am deeply grateful to be in this room tonight. We have been projected by establishment culture as evil, manipulative, liars and ideologically driven people with little regard for the life and the welfare of others. And the reason I took a moment to sketch out my own journey is because all of the history stands in opposition to that distorted point of view.

Nevertheless, under such a cloud of distortions, we have found very few empathetic ears that would listen to the difficult and painful events related to the killings of our relatives and our loved ones. In addition to the loss of life, injuries, disruption of careers and families, we've had to endure ongoing perversion of the context, a constant stream of distortions of the facts as well as demeaning assaults on our motives and characters....

Seeking authentic truth and understanding around the killings of 1979 is part of my life-long struggle for democracy and justice. And by democracy I mean a real voice, a voice that translates into some kind of positive improvement of one's life....

In the course of my life's work I have been involved in many organizations and movements known by many different names. Some of the names I would not choose to use again. In all these years I have

made no secret of my commitment to stand with and stand for the poor, those who are often voiceless and pushed to the sidelines of life and often into the ditches of death.

What has been consistent over the years that I have been a grassroots community organizer is not the name under which I have undertaken my life's vocation but rather the substance of the struggle for democracy and justice to which I have given my life. Put metaphorically, the cover of the book has been changing but the content has been consistent....

It should therefore be no surprise that the work for racial justice and labor justice that resulted in the tragic events of 1979 was also met with resistance. Unless and until the killings of that day are placed within a truthful context of the ongoing struggle for democracy and justice, in that case specifically labor and racial justice, the killings and related events will remain essentially unintelligible. The killings, the terrorizing of the Morningside Homes community and what is portrayed sometimes, as, not sometimes but often, as a shootout and this is sometimes linked to the notion of a desperate ploy by communists whose work is not going well and so they needed some kind of work to draw attention to themselves....

Rev. Nelson Johnson was wounded on November 3, 1979. He is married to Joyce, and they have two daughters and three granddaughters.

THE HOWARD THURMAN AWARD RECIPIENTS **Rev. Nelson & Mrs. Johnson**

Rev. Johnson is Vice-President of the Greensboro Pulpit Forum, Chairperson of the Chicago-based Interfaith Worker Justice and Chairperson of the Gulf Coast Commission on Reconstruction Equity, established in response to the devastation from Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. Guided by his multiple emphases of faith, diversity, justice and democracy, Rev. Johnson is actively building relationships with and providing leadership among faith groups, organized labor, and community organizations in Greensboro and the south. The Johnson's are significant participants in the Greensboro community. Two of their most significant initiatives have been involvement with the successful K-Mart labor struggle in the late 1990's, and the establishment of the historic Greensboro Truth and Community Reconciliation Process, modeled after the South African. Rev. and Mrs. Johnson were recognized for their work through the prestigious Ford Foundation Leadership for a Changing World Award.

Rev. Johnson holds a baccalaureate degree in political science from North Carolina A&T State University, and a Master of Divinity Degree from the School of Theology at Virginia Union University.

[The words of Mrs. Johnson] We have been mutually engaged in this work for about 35 years. We are motivated by a deep compassion for people, especially the poor, and a strong desire for racial and socioeconomic justice. While we have overarching unity on the underlying motives for our work, we each have traveled separate paths toward our life's vocation of community building and social transformation.

I am motivated by love, a sense of debt, a sense of possibility, a sense of what my grandmother called, "making a way out of no way." I am motivated by a strong sense of family and community. I long for all people to exist in circumstances that allow and encourage them to offer their best to their families, communities and themselves. I am saddened that our society is riddled by inequities and injustice. Yet, I am energized and encouraged by my own story of "overcoming." I was born into a very poor, uneducated, hard-working, proud, single parent black family in 1946 – an "at risk" baby boomer. Though I experienced the hardships of the segregated South of that time, I grew up with a keen sense of possibilities and responsibility that I gained from my family, community and church. I was a very sickly child; my family often feared for my life. My entire community gathered to nurture me. I owe my very life to the family and community that gave me life and nurtured me. It was because of my family, teachers, neighbors and others that I moved from a family with less than five high school graduates in our immediate circle to become one of the first 10 African-American graduates from Duke University in 1968. Regardless of my personal achievements, my sense of being and purpose are motivated by an ever growing desire to build community and to find creative ways to remove those barriers we hide behind as individuals and groups that prevent each person from living a rich, affirming quality of life.

BIOGRAPHIES OF OTHER PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS

Jacqueline B. Hairston - is an accomplished pianist/composer and illustrator of the sacred/secular connection in music. Jackie is former head of the music department at Merritt College, Oakland, California. Jackie is an internationally known composer and arranger of Gospel, jazz and Broadway show tunes. She received a Certificate of Honor from the San Francisco Board of Supervisors for her work with youth. She teaches: Spiritual World of Gospel Music; Healing the Soul With and Through Music and African American Sacred Music at Wisdom University. She is a noted authority on Black spirituals and has arranged spirituals for or written tributes to renowned singers such as Leontyne Price and Kathleen Battle. She has a B.A., Music, Howard University, and an M.A., Music, Columbia University.

DOMINION A CAPPELLA ENSEMBLE has been singing the praises of Spirit, bringing joy, love and harmony to audiences in the Bay Area since 2001. Dominion was founded by Artistic Director Valerie Brown. Dominion is an ensemble of individuals who not only can sing but also can testify about life's struggles and how each of them overcame them to sing rich polyrhythmic harmonies. Dominion has spread their musical message at such events as the 48th Monterey Jazz Festival, An Evening with Yolanda King, Annual International Forgiveness Day program, Santa Rita Jail Holiday Concert, Agape Spiritual Center's Music Symposium Concert, and Rising Hope Church of Alameda Gospel Brunch.

Laura Magnani, is Assistant Regional Director for Justice, of the Pacific Mountain Region of the American Friends Service Committee. Most of her work has been in the area of criminal justice. She is author of *American's First Penitentiary: A Two Hundred Year Old Failure* (1990), and *Beyond Prisons: A New Interfaith Paradigm for Our Failed Prison System*, (Fortress Press, 2006). In the 1980s she worked for the Tenderloin Reflection and Education Center, doing small group work with the homeless, elderly, and people living in single occupancy hotels in San Francisco. In the 1970s she worked as a lobbyist for the Friends Committee on Legislation in Sacramento. She has a B.A. from the University of California, Berkeley, and an M.A. from the Pacific School of Religion. She is a member of the Berkeley Friends Meeting (Quaker).

Shirley Strong has been involved in education, philanthropy and social action for nearly 30 years, ten of which she has spent with the Levi Strauss Foundation and the Tides Center. She is a dean at California Institute for Integral Studies in San Francisco as well as the executive director for Project Change, a Levi Strauss Foundation-originated national initiative that develops and supports multi-racial community coalitions, partnerships and alliances in operating locally based anti-racist community building programs. She holds a master's degree in educational psychology/counseling, and had done doctoral work in organization and leadership. Experienced as a teacher, academic counselor, and administrative leader in student affairs at a variety of colleges and universities, she has focused particularly on work with underrepresented and "at-risk" students.

In 1993, she undertook the direction of the Project Change Anti-Racism Initiative, which flourished and is now a partner in the national joint anti-racism venture with Claremont Graduate University's Institute for Democratic Renewal, where she is a senior fellow.

ORDER OF SERVICE

Dr. Dorsey Blake, Presiding
Jacqueline Hairston, Musician

| | |
|---|--|
| Prelude | Jacqueline Hairston |
| Call to Assembly | Dr. Dorsey Blake |
| Opening Music “Lift Every Voice and Sing” | Musician & Congregation |
| Invocation | Rev. Kathryn Benton |
| Welcome | Mrs. Iola Riley |
| Music | Dominion A Cappella Ensemble |
| Introduction of Speaker | Shirley Strong |
| Keynote Presentation | Rev. Nelson Johnson |
| Offertory “Guide My Feet” | Rev. Kathryn Benton Ushers & Congregation |
| Music | Dominion A Cappella Ensemble |
| Recognition of Howard Thurman Award Recipients: Rev. Nelson & Mrs. Joyce Johnson | Shirley Strong Glenn Nance |
| Remarks | Dr. Dorsey Blake |
| Sending Forth Music “Once to Every Soul & Nation” | Musician & Congregation |
| Blessing | Dr. Dorsey Blake |
| Postlude | Jacqueline Hairston |

The guiding spirit of Fellowship Church is expressed in our statement of commitment:

I affirm my need for a growing understanding of all peoples as children of God, and I seek after a vital experience of God as revealed in Jesus of Nazareth and other Great religious spirits whose fellowship with God was the foundation of their fellowship with all people.

I desire to share in the spiritual growth and ethical awareness of men and women of varied national, cultural, racial, and creedal heritage united in a religious fellowship.

I desire the strength of corporate worship through membership in The Church for The Fellowship of All Peoples, with the imperative of personal dedication to the working out of God's purposes here and in all places.

SONGS

“Lift Every Voice and Sing”

Lift every voice and sing, till earth and heaven ring,
ring with the harmonies of liberty;
let the rejoicing rise high as the listening skies,
let it resound loud as the rolling sea.

Sing a song full of the faith that the dark past has taught us,
sing a song full of the hope that the present has brought us;
facing the rising sun of our new day begun,
let us march on till victory is won.

Stony the road we trod, bitter the chastening rod,
felt in the days when hope unborn had died;
yet with a steady beat, have not our weary feet
come to the place for which our fathers sighed?

We have come over a way that with tears has been watered;
we have come, treading our path thru the blood of the slaughtered,
out from the gloomy past, till now we stand at last
where the white gleam of our bright star is cast.

God of our weary year, God of our silent tears,
Thou who hast brought us thus far on the way;
Thou who hast by thy might led us into the light,
Keep forever in the path, we pray.

Lest our feet stray from places, our God, were we met thee;
lest our hearts drunk with the wine of the world,
we forget thee; shadowed beneath thy hand,
may we forever stand, true to our God, true to our native land

“Guide My Feet”

Guide my feet while I run this race. (Repeat twice)
For I don't want to run this race in vain!

Hold my hand while I run this race. (Repeat twice)
For I don't want to run this race in vain!

Stand by me while I run this race. (Repeat twice)
For I don't want to run this race in vain!

“Once to Every Soul and Nation”

Once to every soul and nation comes the moment to decide,
in the strife of truth with falsehood, for the good or evil side:
then to stand with truth is noble, when we share its wretched crust;
ere that cause bring fame and profit, and 'tis prosperous to be just.

Though the cause of evil prosper, yet 'tis truth alone is strong;
though its portion be the scaffold, and upon the throne be wrong.
Then it is the brave one chooses, while the coward stands aside,
till the multitude make virtue of the faith they have denied.

Planned Giving Program @ Fellowship Church

Since 1944 Fellowship Church has been helping individuals to “share in the spiritual growth and ethical awareness of men and women of varied national, cultural, racial and creedal heritage united in a religious fellowship.” With a planned gift from your estate, you can make a promise to future generations that this institution will always be here. Your gift will live on; leaving a legacy that will enrich the lives of generations to come.

Gift Planning allows you to make a charitable gift of your estate assets, which helps to ensure Fellowship Church’s long-term future; with such gifts, you can make a satisfying and, usually, substantial contribution while meeting your own personal and financial objectives.

To support the church through fully tax deductible gifts, please complete this form and mail it to the church. Through the Planned Giving program you will become a partner in leaving a legacy.

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Fellowship Church, a Beloved Community



We remember with loving gratitude:

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Dr. William Louis Blake, Sr.
Mae Frances Blake Scullark
William Louis Blake Jr.
Edgar Neal Blake
Alfred Blake**



**Dr. Dorsey O. Blake
Dr. Carl L. Blake**

THE HOWARD THURMAN CENTER FOR SPIRITUALITY AND SOCIAL JUSTICE is a 501(c)(3) organization.

The Center's Purpose

The Center will sponsor classes and activities, and provide resources on engaged spirituality in a way to nurture the spirit while engaging in activities that promote peace, justice, and building the Beloved Community.

The Center's Mission

The Center will work to develop, evaluate, and disseminate programs to raise awareness in the community at large about the harm that's created by systematic oppression that deprive people of their right to equal justice.

The Center will endeavor to achieve its mission through forums, discussion groups, films, dramatic presentations, poetry readings, musical events, art exhibits, and through collaborations with other like minded organizations.

Look for events sponsored by The Center!

It Is Possible To Live In Peace

If someone with courage and vision can rise to lead in nonviolent action, the winter of despair can, in the twinkling of an eye, be turned into the summer of hope.

It is possible to live in peace.

Nonviolence is not a garment to put on and off at will. Its seat is in the heart, and it must be an inseparable part of our being.

It is possible to live in peace.

Nonviolence, which is the quality of the heart, cannot come by an appeal to the brain. It is a plant of slow growth, growing imperceptibly, but surely.

It is possible to live in peace.

If a single person achieves the highest kind of love it will be sufficient to neutralize the hate of millions.

It is possible to live in peace.

If we are to reach real peace in this world, and if we are to carry on a real war against war, we shall have to begin with the children.

It is possible to live in peace.

The future depends on what we do in the present.

It is possible to live in peace.

MOHANDAS K. GANDHI

Where the mind is without fear and the head is held high;
Where knowledge is free;
Where the world has not been broken up into fragments by narrow domestic walls;
Where words come out from the depth of truth;
Where tireless striving stretches its arms toward perfection;
Where the clear stream of reason has not lost its way into the dreary desert
sand of dead habit;
Where the mind is led forward by thee into ever-widening thought and action

Into that heaven of freedom, my Father, let my country awake.

RABINDRANATH TAGORE

NOTES

Greetings, Love and Support to
The Church for the Fellowship of All Peoples

In Celebration of its

62nd ANNIVERSARY

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and

11th CONVOCATION

to

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We carry the written works of Dr. Howard Thurman and others. In addition to these works, for today only, we have copies of the following materials:

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2. Final Report of the Greensboro TRC – Printed Format
3. Final Report of Greensboro TRC – CD (Electronic Format)
4. The Voices of Greensboro DVD
5. Final Report DVD

However, additional copies can be obtained from the Beloved Community Center. They welcome orders from universities and other organizations.

Contact: Nelson and Joyce Johnson
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417 Arlington Street, Greensboro, NC 27406
(336) 230-0001
joycej@belovedcommunitycenter.org

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