

Black History Month 2024

Today (Feb. 4, 2024) we celebrate Black History Month. This week's theme is Black History Accomplishments in Higher Education among our local institutions.

The St. James Presbyterian Church's Black History Month Planning Committee recognizes **Naurice Frank Woods. Jr.** as someone who has made Black History due to his influential work in the development of an undergraduate major in African American Studies at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro (UNCG), and he served as the Director of the program for 13 years.

Naurice Frank Woods. Jr. is the son of the late Naurice Frank Woods, Sr. and Ella Marienne Woods, both long-time members of St. James Presbyterian Church. He is the husband of Sadie Bryant Woods, father of Karmen Bell and Tori Woods, and grandfather of Cameron Rorie and Aiden Bell. He is also a lifelong member of St. James.

He began his teaching career at Johnson C. Smith University, followed by several years at Greensboro College, and more than 30 years at UNCG. During his time at UNCG, he taught in the African American Studies Program where he developed 13 undergraduate courses and was instrumental in creating a Master's Certificate program. He was also influential in developing an undergraduate major in African American Studies and served as the Director of the program for 13 years. This was significant for Black History because UNCG was a predominately white institution at the time, and students wanted to learn more about Black and African American history. Creating this major area of study would not have been possible without the works of Dr. Woods. Upon retirement, he was named Associate Professor Emeritus of African American and African Diaspora Studies and had the program library named in his honor permanently.

(Let's give God Praise for his living legacy of Black History.)

The St. James Presbyterian Church's Black History Month Planning Committee recognizes **Nellouise Divers Watkins** as someone who has made Black History due to being instrumental in bringing \$7 million in grants to Bennett College during her tenure there, and for her efforts as a philanthropist.

Nellouise Divers Watkins was the daughter of a father who was a Methodist Minister, and a mother who had Master's Degree in Music. She married Dr. Flotilla Watkins, and had three children with him: Dr. Flotilla Watkins, Jr., Dr. Sharon Cooper-Brooks, and Dr. Paul Watkins. She also had four grandchildren: Quentin Brown, Sunni Madison, Tresca Nellouise Pennington, and Flotilla Watkins, III. She was a long-time member of St. James Presbyterian Church.

After raising her children, she earned her Ph.D. in computer science in 1979 at a time when only 17.8% of women in the American workforce had a bachelor's degree or higher. Her greatest career success was during her time at Bennett College. She joined the mathematics department in 1961, and eventually became the Department Chair. Her passion was for the Saturday Academy program where she served for 30 years to support children from 10-15 years of age as they had extracurricular work in mathematics, science, English and computer science. She was a mother, an author, a scientist, an educator, and a philanthropist. In 2009, she donated \$300,000 to Bennett College to build a faculty house, which still stands beautifully today.

(Let's give God Praise for her legacy of Black History.)

(Mona Edwards will come to present Black History Certificates to each family representative.)

Mona:

I would like to call Karmen Woods to accept the certificate on the behalf of her father Dr. Naurice Frank Woods. (Pause).

I would like call Quentin Brown to accept the certificate on behalf of his grandmother Dr. Nellouise Watkins. (Pause).

Thank you both for being here today to accept these certificates for such outstanding contributions to Black History. You may return to your seats.

If anyone would like to join the Black History Planning Committee, then please contact Don Miller or Christina Yongue. They welcome you to join this ministry.

Full Bioparagraph of Naurice Frank Woods. Jr.

Naurice Frank Woods. Jr. is the son of the late Naurice Frank Woods, Sr. and Ella Marienne Woods, both long-time members of St. James Presbyterian Church. He is the husband of Sadie Bryant Woods, father of Karmen Bell and Tori Woods, and grandfather of Cameron Rorie and Aiden Bell. He is also a lifelong member of St. James.

He was educated at Bluford Elementary, Lincoln Middle, and Dudley High School. He received his BFA at UNC-Chapel Hill, MFA at UNC-Greensboro, and PHD in art history at the Union Institute and University. He began his teaching career at Johnson C. Smith University, followed by several years at Greensboro College, and more than 30 years at UNCG. During his time at UNCG, he taught in the African American Studies Program where he developed 13 undergraduate courses and was instrumental in creating a Master's Certificate program. He was also influential in developing an undergraduate major in African American Studies and served as the Director of the program for 13 years. Upon retirement, he was named Associate Professor Emeritus of African American and African Diaspora Studies and had the program library named in his honor permanently.

He is a member of The Order of the Long Leaf Pine Society, awarded by the governor to persons for "...exemplary service to the State of North Carolina and their communities that is above and beyond the call of duty and who has made a significant impact and strengthened North Carolina." He is the author of nine books and numerous scholarly articles. One of his favorite quotes is by Frederick Douglass who said, "Power concedes nothing without a demand. It never did and it never will."

Full Bioparagraph of Nellouise Divers Watkins

Nellouise Divers Watkins was a mother, an author, a scientist, an educator, and a philanthropist.

She earned her undergraduate degree from Wilberforce University, and then married Flotilla Watkins. She then earned her Masters Degree from Fisk University. Then she and her husband birthed and raised three children.

She first taught on the higher education level in the Mathematics Department at North Carolina Central University (NCCU). In 1961, she was recruited to become a professor at Bennett College to help build the Mathematics Department and eventually became the Department Chairman. She was in her 50s when she went back to school to earn her Ph.D. She received her Ph.D. in computer science in 1979 at a time when only 17.8% of women in the American workforce had a bachelor's degree or higher.

During her tenure at Bennett College, she was instrumental in securing \$7 million in grants to the college. She successfully nurtured many young African-American women who later became computer technologists, scientists, educators, and physicians. She was an ambassador for the National Science Foundation to HBCUs across the United States of America, including colleges that served the Native American community. She was involved in projects with the U.S. Department of Energy, the National Institutes of Health, the National Science Foundation, and the National Aeronautics and Space Administration. Her passion was for the Saturday Academy, where she functioned as administrator and teacher for 30 years. This program encouraged local businesses and community organizations to support children from 10-15 years of age as they had extracurricular work in mathematics, science, English and

computer science. In addition to these academic areas, the real lessons were about character, conduct, perseverance, dignity and respect.

She donated \$300,000 to Bennett College to build a faculty house. It was built in 2009 as a place for current, visiting, and adjunct faculty to use for brainstorming and preparations for teaching, networking, and policy-making.

Dr. Nellouise D. Watkins died at her Greensboro home on Saturday, March 25, 2017, due to complications of breast cancer, at 92 years old. She remains a formidable influence on her family, even after her death. Her husband, Dr. Flotilla Watkins, passed away in 1994 after 50 years of marriage. She was survived by their three children: Dr. Flotillo Watkins, Jr., Dr. Sharon Cooper-Brooks, and Dr. Paul Watkins. There are also four grandchildren, Quentin Brown, Sunni Madison, Tresca Nellouise Pennington, and Flotilla Watkins III, as well as seven great-grandchildren.

During her funeral, her family requested that donations be made to Bennett College instead of giving flowers, which shows her entire family's dedication to uplifting the education of Black women in her honor.

She lived a life around this motto, "To Whom Much is Given, Much is Required."