

Frank Loris Peterson

(1893-1969)

FRANK LORIS PETERSON was born in Pensacola, Florida, August 12, 1893, and passed to his rest on October 23, 1969, in Los Angeles, California. He was the youngest of four children born to devout Methodist parents, Frank and Elizabeth Peterson. Frank received his elementary and high school education in private Methodist schools, where at an early age he displayed an unusual aptitude and proficiency in his academic studies and in music.

At the tender age of fourteen, while in high school, he was privileged to hear the dynamic preaching of Elder J. H. Laurence. Though just a young lad, Frank Loris Peterson responded to the tender pleadings of the Holy Spirit and gave his heart to God, and in 1907 was baptized by Elder Laurence into the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Those who knew him could see in Frank the characteristics and potential for being an outstanding worker in the cause of God and encouraged him toward the ministry.

He entered Pacific Union College as a theology student and in 1916 became the first "man of color" to graduate from this Seventh-day Adventist college located on beautiful Howell Mountain in northern California. Immediately after his graduation, he was invited to assist Elder P. G. Rogers in Baltimore, Maryland, for a brief period.

That autumn he became a teacher in the church school at Louisville, Kentucky. In September of 1917 he accepted an invitation to teach at Oakwood Junior College in Huntsville, Alabama, and served there until 1926. He left Oakwood to become assistant MV, educational, and home missionary secretary for the old Southern Union of Seventh-day Adventists, with headquarters in Nashville, Tennessee, and held this position until 1929. In that year he was ordained to the ministry in Nashville, Tennessee.

Elder Peterson became pastor of the Berea church in Boston Massachusetts, in January of 1929 and continued in this capacity until July of 1930. In 1930 he was chosen as secretary of the North American Negro

Department of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists and he served in this position until 1941. He then accepted an appointment as pastor of the Wadsworth church of Los Angeles, California, from 1941 until 1945. In 1945 he became president of Oakwood College in Huntsville, Alabama, and served in that capacity until 1954.

In 1954 at the forty-seventh World Conference of the church Elder Peterson was nominated as an associate secretary of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists and secretary of the Regional Department of the General Conference. In 1962 the same body elected him a vice-president of the denomination, the first Negro to hold such a position. The world was his parish.

He married Bessie Jean Elston on May 3, 1922, at Anniston, Alabama. They became the parents of five children. They are: Frank L. Peterson, Marjorie E. Knight, Calvin E. Peterson (now deceased), Katherine E. Palmer, and Clara E. Rock.

In 1966 at the General Conference session in Detroit, Michigan, Elder Peterson retired from the active ministry but not from service for his Lord. After moving back to California, he and Sister Peterson, in spite of considerable physical suffering, continued to serve the cause of God willingly and unselfishly whenever called upon to do so. Up until the time that death came, he never ceased to show interest and concern for the young people of the church and for Christian education.

Truly a courageous soldier has fallen—a soldier who companioned with his Commanding General and followed his orders explicitly; a soldier who did not flinch in the heat of battle; a soldier who did not retreat when confronted by the enemy; a soldier who fought a good fight and finished the course; a soldier who kept the faith when it was not always easy; a soldier who now awaits the reward which the Commanding General shall give to those who endure unto the end.



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