

# LUTHERAN MEMOIR

## BISHOP NELSON W. TROUT

**First African American Bishop of the American Lutheran Church (ALC)**

Nelson W. Trout, an ordained pastor, became the first African American Lutheran bishop in 1983. A mentor, teacher and preacher to many, he was also recognized for providing those services in the African American community. Trout was renowned as a vibrant preacher and commitment to social ministry. He inspired hundreds of seminary students while touching the lives of thousands of people in many communities.

Born in Columbus, Ohio, in 1921. Trout was a member of and ordained at St. Philip Evangelical Lutheran in Columbus. He graduated from Capital University and Trinity Lutheran Seminary in Bexley, Ohio. He was also awarded a doctor of divinity degree from Wartburg College in Waverly, Iowa.

Reverend Trout served as a pastor for several congregations in Wisconsin, Alabama and California. Trout was an inspiring and powerful preacher. While serving in Montgomery, Alabama, he became friends with Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., with whom he used to joke about being a Lutheran.

Trout is a significant figure in ELCA history as he was a dynamic leader in the church and the first African American bishop of the church. He was passionate, intelligent and powerful in both preaching and teaching.

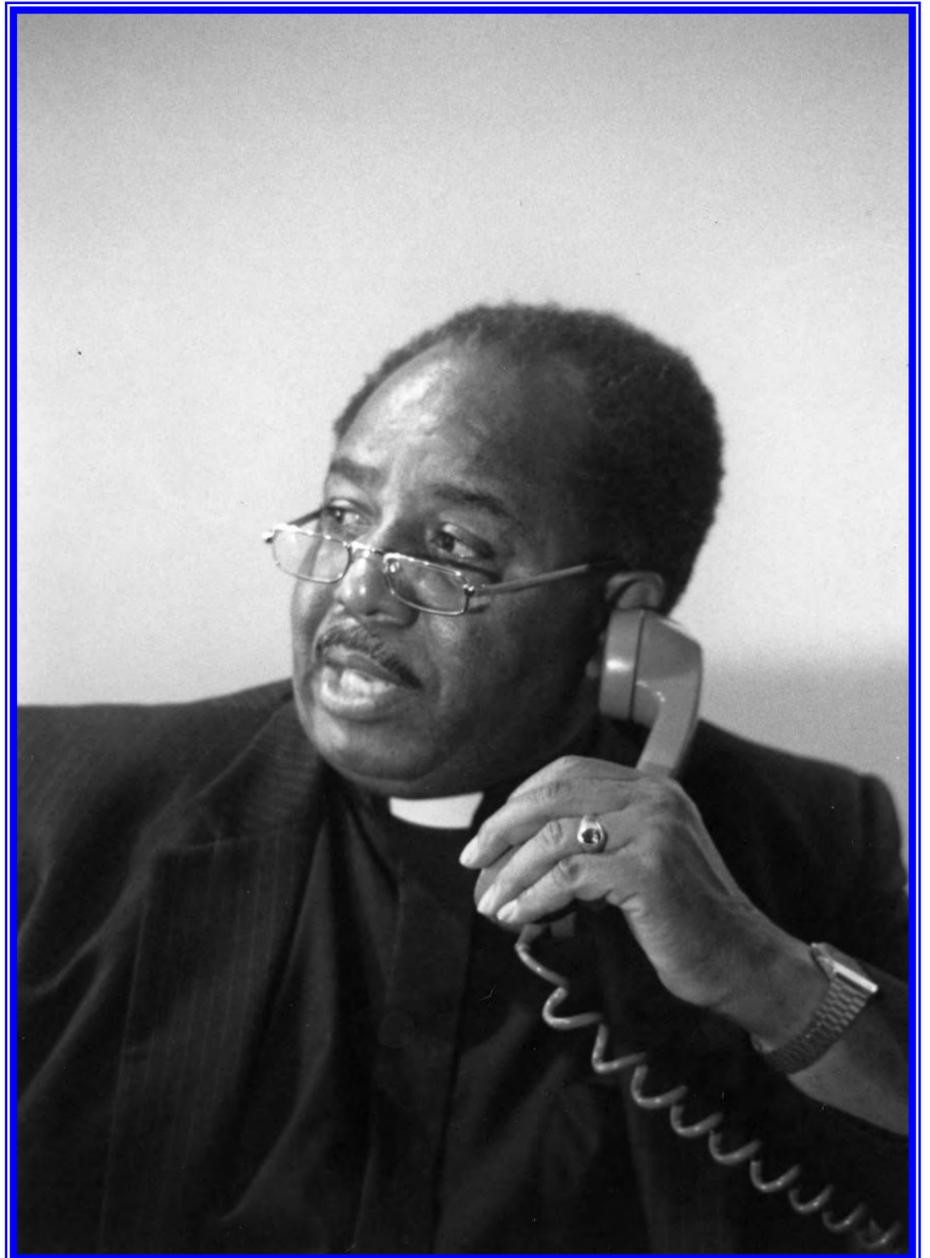
For a time Pastor Trout served as a professor and Director of Minority Ministry Studies at Trinity Lutheran Seminary in Bexley, Ohio. In 1991, Trinity Seminary established the Nelson W. Trout Lectureship Series in Preaching in his honor.

On Sept. 20, 1996, the Rev. Nelson W. Trout, 75, passed away in Inglewood, California.

**Sources:**

ELCA Archives: African American Lutheran Giants - Living Lutheran <https://www.livinglutheran.org/2021/02/african-american-giants/>

Photo Image of Bishop Trout Rev. Nelson Trout ELCA Archives image. <http://www.elca.org/archives>



**A quote from Rev. Dr. Nelson Trout**

*"When I suggest that the solution to our ever increasing racial problem be found in our ability to generate goodwill, I would not want such a suggestion to be discarded as the council of weakness. Granted, we do not normally think of such a quality of human experience as being in the same league with our military power, or with our scientific resources; yet, it is not to be discarded as utter sentimentality or some impotent form of effeminacy. I submit to you that human goodwill is the greatest power available to humanity."*

Lutheran Quarterly, May 1968

