



# FRED Talks + Guests

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## WELCOME

Thank you for joining Dr. Fred Garmon and LeaderLabs for **FRED**Talks + Guests.

**FRED**Talks + Guests is a leadership development online talk show presenting relevant and practical leadership content through *interviews* with prominent leaders. Fred's goal is to address the ***“where has this stuff been”*** subject matter needed by faith-based and non-profit leaders—as Paul wrote to Titus, for ***“setting in order the things that are lacking.”***

## EPISODE SPEAKER:

**Bishop Hugh Nelson, D.Min.** is a man committed to a ministry of restoration that reaches beyond the sanctuary. He was born on the beautiful island of Jamaica and in 2007 moved to Flatbush, New York, a neighborhood in the New York City borough of Brooklyn.

The bishop serves as Senior Pastor for the Church of God in East Flatbush. He is a visionary whose guidance and focus on leadership development enabled the Church of God of East Flatbush to evolve from a single cell church model into a vibrant Urban Ministry Center that is home to more than 1700 members and ministers to over 2500 on a weekly basis.

## TOPIC

**THE CHURCH AND FAITH: IMPACTING YOUR COMMUNITY FOR GOOD**

## EPISODE NOTES

### 1. YOUR PASSION FOR IMPACTING YOUR COMMUNITY AND WHERE IT CAME FROM.

The passion was birthed within me initially by my father and mother who pastored in Jamaica for many years and moved to England in their later years to pastor in Brixton, a suburb of London.

My father sent a copy of “Like a Mighty Army,” by Paul Conn, the history of the Church of God, to Buckingham Palace and actually met with Margaret Thatcher (Prime minister at the time), to discuss issues of race and building a more equitable community in England. I saw this and it impacted me greatly.

While we lived in Brixton, the police abused a young black during a traffic stop. Riots erupted for days within our neighborhood. I witnessed first-hand how my father earned respect from both sides of the conflict. My dad reached out to the police and opened the church as a neutral space where dialogue

could take place concerning high unemployment and tensions between police and young black men. Out of this dialogue the church became a place of reconciliation. The church was seen as a safe place.

Amazingly, out of these talks, some of those young black men were recruited and became police officers and worked at Scotland Yard.

Our family moved to Ottawa, Canada in 1994. It was during this time that I was seeking God for direction in “my” ministry. The LORD distinctly said, **“Don’t pastor a church, pastor the community.”**

My philosophy was tested when an inter-racial relationship turned bad and a young black man drowned during a police chase. I was asked to lead a demonstration, but my first action was to extend an olive branch to the police first. So, we planned a police appreciation service. You can imagine, this was not the most popular decision at the time. We were able to show appreciation for dedicated service and discuss accountability for rogue officers.

We later established an organization called COMPACT, “Community and Police Action Committee,” with two co-chairs, the Chief of Police and me as a local pastor.

**Fast forward to 2003** when we moved to New York City.

Again, I prayed, how should I pastor in New York?

The LORD said to *“train the people with a global mindset,”* hence the vision, **“Making disciples to impact the world.”**

Our challenge to the people was, **“it’s not the number of people in the building, it’s the number of disciple makers who have a global mindset.”**

Racial issues are not just a United States issue, it’s a human issue.

\* I went to school in Germany in 1982, as a 22-year-old. I was the only black person in the entire city of Rudersburg and my only mental context was the second world war. I learned, however, about going into situations and places with preconceived notions. But God helped me as a young black man in Germany. I had German families embrace me.

Our greatest message is not in what we say. It’s how we live, how we relate.

**Back to New York City.** When I arrived in New York, our entire congregation was of Jamaican background. I started talking to our congregation saying, “If God has placed us in New York City, it surely has to be greater than our national identity- he’s calling us to embrace a more inclusive kind of ministry.”

Integration doesn’t necessarily mean black / white, it simply means, *“the other.”*

So, we began to intentionally embrace the other and integrate, not only small groups, but the deacon board and pastoral team.

**“If the inclusion, the embrace, is not reflected at the head, it will never be considered as credible. The integration has to begin at the head.”**

If it is not mixed in at the head of the stream, when it goes downstream, it will never reflect the vision.

## 2. TELL US ABOUT THE EBENEZER PLAZA HOUSING PROJECT.

We had a space issue in New York from the beginning.

When we started looking at space we found the prices to be out of sight – warehouse space for 13 million dollars, 9 million dollars, another one, 7 million dollars.

I came across a 4-city block piece of property near our church—the billboard advertisement was for 24 million dollars, and my first thought was, “we can’t even think in those terms.” But we had an entire manual for an urban ministry center so I took a step of faith and called the broker’s number. After an hour of talking the broker said, “this idea may actually be interesting to the seller.”

Amazingly, we settled for 2 large lots for 8.1 million dollars. A few years into paying on the property a new mayor came into office. Part of his platform was that he wanted to see a major push for affordable housing for residents in New York City. He started looking for churches who could create a creative partnership with developers; a partnership where the developer could give the church space but also build out the project for affordable housing.

Against everyone’s discouraging statements, we were able to successfully rezone those two city blocks from commercial to residential property and go into partnership with two developers. The value of the property immediately shot up to 12.5 million dollars.

We are now building sanctuary space of 43,000 square feet and we are co-owners of 530 affordable apartments above. It became the largest faith-based project in New York City.

We were able to do this without having to sell our present worship space. Our plan is to expand and use it for benevolence ministry once we move into our new sanctuary space.

What an amazingly, wonderful journey!

We can all take so much of this story and implement it into our own lives and ministry.

## HOW TO CONTACT DR. NELSON

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