



THE VOICE

The Pittsburgh Chapter of the National Black Presbyterian Caucus (NBPC) Newsletter

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The Mission of the National Black Presbyterian Caucus is to serve Jesus Christ, and enrich the Black Presbyterian Congregations and their communities, through our commitment to congregational enhancement, advocacy, social and racial justice; and challenging the Presbyterian Church (USA) when it fails to take seriously the needs of the poor, oppressed, and disenfranchised. To join us, contact the Pittsburgh Presbytery Office at 412-323-1403.

We meet the 3rd Saturday of each month. Membership is always open.

“Learn to do good; seek justice, correct oppression; bring justice to the fatherless, and please the widow’s cause.”

Isaiah 1:17



The Work of Christmas

When the song of the angels is stilled,
 When the star in the sky is gone,
 When the kings and princes are home,
 When the shepherds are back with their flocks,
 The work of Christmas begins:
 To find the lost,
 To heal the broken,
 To feed the hungry,
 To release the prisoner,
 To rebuild the nations,
 To bring peace among people,
 To make music in the heart.

A poem by Howard Thurman





We Are Not There Yet

In 1967, the late Rev. Clarence Cave, a Minister of Word and Sacrament in the Presbyterian Church, a member of Philadelphia Presbytery and a member of the National Staff of the United Presbyterian Church, wrote a position paper titled *HERITAGE OF BLACK PRESBYTERIAN PRIDE*. In that paper, he wrote “Black Presbyterians United was born for the purposes of bringing Blacks together for Change, for Power, for Love, for Justice and to help the United Presbyterian Church come to grips with her pluralistic nature.”

Those words were written 53 years ago. Here we are in 2020, in the National Black Presbyterian Caucus, the successor to Black Presbyterians United and I raise the questions; Have we met the purposes of which Rev. Cave wrote? Are we, Black Presbyterians, making a difference in the Presbyterian Church (USA) and Pittsburgh Presbytery? Has our mission been accomplished? After all, look where we have come from.

I raise the question against these facts:

...We are in an “inclusive church where we speak an inclusive language.”

...The Executive Director of the Presbyterian Mission Agency of the PC (USA), the PMA is an African American woman.

...The Stated Clerk of the PC (USA) is an African American.

...African Americans serve on the boards and agencies of the church and even chair some of them.

...Some Blacks serve as Executives and Stated Clerks of some of the mid-councils

...In Pittsburgh Presbytery the Co-Chair of the Executive Committee is an African American woman.

... We have an African American serving as Director of Justice Ministries for Pittsburgh Presbytery.

...We even have some White people who are members of our Caucus and some predominantly white churches as institutional partners.

Do we still need the Caucus? What else do they, the African American Presbyterians want? Has not the mission been accomplished? THE ANSWER IS A RESOUNDING NO!

To be continued in the next edition of *THE VOICE*.

Rev. Dr. Johnnie Monroe

Ralph Lowe Joins Pittsburgh Presbytery Staff

Ruling Elder Ralph Lowe is the newest Executive Staff member of the Pittsburgh Presbytery. Ralph grew up on Pittsburgh's Northside. He attended Manchester Elementary School and is a graduate of Oliver High School. Following high school, he attended and graduated from Slippery Rock University. He is a 2020 graduate of the Pittsburgh Theological Seminary.

Elder Ralph has not always been Presbyterian. He grew up as a member of Metropolitan Baptist Church on the Northside. He united with the Presbyterian Church following his marriage to his bride of 22 years, Kelli. He, Kelli and their four sons are members of Calvin Presbyterian Church in Zelienople, PA. The church is part of the Beaver Butler Presbytery. In 2005, he was elected and ordained as a Ruling Elder in the Calvin Church. He expects to be ordained as a Teaching Elder/Minister of Word and Sacrament in the Presbyterian Church (USA) very soon.

As a member of the Pittsburgh Presbytery staff, he is Director of Social Justice Ministries. In that role, he anchors Self Development of People, Presbyterian Men, Amos 5:24, Peacemaking, Anti-Racism Transitional Team, National Black Presbyterian Caucus, African American congregations, and he serves as Presbytery liaison for the South and West Branches.

Before joining the staff of the Pittsburgh Presbytery Ralph was employed by Sysco Food Company. His hobbies are reading fiction and golfing.

Rev. Dr. Johnnie Monroe





Worldwide Communion Sunday Virtual Unity Service “Holy Spirit Raman”

On Sunday, October 4, 2020 the Pittsburgh Chapter of the National Black Presbyterian Caucus hosted a virtual service at 4:00 p.m. at the Pittsburgh Presbytery.

The preached word entitled, “*Holy Spirit Raman*” was given by Rev. Gavin Walton, Pastor of Grace Memorial Presbyterian Church, emphasizing that the church calls us to come together as one in unity.

The service can be viewed on YouTube.

https://youtu.be/XQxnfzSSI_I

Words of welcome were given by Rev. Dr. Sheldon Sorge, General Minister, The Pittsburgh Presbytery; Elder Lenore Williams, Moderator of Pittsburgh NBPC; and Elder Ralph Lowe, Pittsburgh Presbytery Justice Ministry.

Musical selections were performed by Ms. Adrianna Cleveland accompanied by Rev. Dr. Sheldon Sorge.

The Sacraments of Communion were administered by Rev. Dr. John Welch of Bidwell Church and Rev. Steve Werth of Riverview Presbyterian Church and Community House.

Also participating was Rev. Elizabeth Ross, Pastor of Community of Reconciliation.

Technical support done by Elder Ralph Lowe and Mr. Jason Freyer from Laboratory Presbyterian Church.

Joyce Matthews





Grace Memorial Presbyterian Church

Meal Ministry

I recall praying and asking God how the church can be helpful during the COVID-19 pandemic. One early summer day as I was sitting on my front porch a meal ministry idea came to mind. I knew we were not able to go to church, visit the sick and shut in, or even share a meal after fellowship. I must admit, although I enjoy cooking, I had not been preparing big meals unless it was for a special gathering. After much discerning, I decided to share the Meal Ministry idea with our beloved Pastor, Rev. Gavin Walton. After he gave his blessing, we began to have conversations with others to get input and seek out the interest of others. The Meal Ministry is now a reality—Thanks be to God!

We had to identify who would be willing to cook, what meals would be prepared, and when and how to get the meals delivered. We even had to consider diets, food allergies, and the like. Grace Church is blessed with so many gifted and talented members. It did not take long to build a Meal Ministry Team of Volunteers to donate their time to cook, bake, and deliver meals. We also created fun activities and devotional readings to go along with the meals.

Having community with others is a big part of being a Christian. Needless to say, it has been very difficult over these past 8 months due to the pandemic. The Meal Ministry is just one way to supply nourishment to the body, but also the soul and spirit. Preparing home cooked meals to members of our beloved community also gives us the opportunity to engage in conversation, express acts of caring, check on their well-being, and even make lasting relationships. You see, the meal is just one way to let our community know that we, “The Church” cares and that they are not alone during this pandemic.

A special thank you to Rev. Gavin Walton for supporting the work of the Meal Ministry, Michelle Penn-Nored, Dennis and Sylvia Bowles, Angie McCoy, Barbara Reagan, Phyllis Lavelle, Joyce Matthews, Stephanie Simmons, Gwen Brunasky, and Rachel Black. As God loves and blesses us, we are to love and be a blessing to others. The Meal Ministry’s hope is that we are doing just that.

Dawn Harvin





Bethesda Prayer Vigil

Bethesda Presbyterian Church became the target of vandalism in recent weeks. There are lots of speculations on why, no idea of whom and no leads. But the members of Bethesda along with their Senior Pastor, Rev. Dr. Jermaine McKinley, were determined – they will not be forced out of their beloved building. Bethesda is one of the historical African American churches in the Pittsburgh Presbytery and was the former home church of civil rights advocate and Presbyterian Pastor, the Rev. Dr. Leroy Patrick.

It had promised to be rainy, windy, and cloudy for the Prayer Vigil on Sunday, November 22, 2020. They got the windy right, and it was a bit cloudy. The sun did pop out on occasion, and it was not as cold as we thought. The rain stayed away. God smiled on us.

The front steps of the church held not only members of Bethesda but members of the Pittsburgh Chapter of the National Black Presbyterian Caucus, Pittsburgh Presbytery’s General Minister, Rev. Dr. Sheldon Sorge, Pittsburgh Presbytery’s Director of Justice Ministries, Ralph Lowe, along with members of Grace Memorial Church, First Presbyterian Church of Pittsburgh, Beulah Church, Valley View Presbyterian Church, Riverview Church, East Liberty Church, representatives from Pittsburgh Police and others. We gathered at Bethesda Presbyterian Church united and determined. The prayers and music went across and down the streets and a passerby came looking for help and guidance and was embraced – yes, physically embraced, into the love of worshipers. Donations were received to help with damages to the building and other necessities. The congregation and pastors were uplifted with prayer and praise. A church family in crisis received and felt the love of fellowship. As we move forward in this Advent season, may we look for the strength and support of God’s people to continue to grow.

Donations can still be made by sending them to:
Bethesda United Presbyterian Church
7220 Bennett Street
Pittsburgh, PA 15208

Lenore Williams





Upcoming Services of our Institutional Members

Institutional Mission Partners of the Pittsburgh NBPC:

- Bethesda Presbyterian Church
- East Liberty Presbyterian Church
- Grace Memorial Presbyterian Church
- Hot Metal Bridge Faith Community
- Riverview United Presbyterian Church
- Valley View Presbyterian Church
- Waverly Presbyterian Church

Institutional Mission Partners - All Sessions of Presbyterian Churches are encouraged to become a partner with the National Black Presbyterian Caucus as a supporter of our mission towards "congregational enhancement, advocacy, social and racial justice..."

1 Peter 3:8 "Finally, all of you, be like-minded, be sympathetic, love one another, be compassionate and humble."

Waverly Presbyterian Church

Blue Christmas Service, December 21, 7:00pm

A healing service of prayer, music and meditation

Christmas Eve Service, December 24, 7:00pm

Both services will be streamed on our Facebook page, facebook.com/waverlychurch





THE VOICE

DECEMBER 2020



East Liberty Presbyterian Church

Celebrate the birth of Jesus at our early Christmas Eve service. **Thursday, December 24, 2020** at 5 pm with an intergenerational celebration of Christ's birth—including video segments, carols, and a sermon by Pastor Heather Schoenewolf. Then at 8pm is our memorable service featuring special music, Christmas quotes, and a sermon by Pastor Randy Bush. Both sermons will hold communion and a candle-lit version of "Silent Night." You can access the service on [YouTube \(https://www.youtube.com/user/thecathedralofhope\)](https://www.youtube.com/user/thecathedralofhope) or

[Facebook \(https://www.facebook.com/EastLibertyPresbyterian\)](https://www.facebook.com/EastLibertyPresbyterian).

The service also will be archived and made available for on-demand viewing.

Worshippers may call in to listen to the services by dialing **929.205.6099** and entering meeting ID **188 135 194#**

Needed: Justice Seekers, Christian Believers

A battle has been won, but the fight has only begun! This is not the time to sit down, we must hold our position and continue demanding, "**Justice for All**"!! When we stand up as a body we are so much stronger than when we stand up alone. This is why The Pittsburgh Chapter of the National Black Presbyterian Caucus (**PGH NBPC**) is recruiting members to continue the fight for justice for all people. It is critical that we don't relinquish our position, but reinforce it with more soldiers, more lieutenants, and more generals.

Many of you have been holding your position for years demanding justice for all people with your voice through your NBPC membership. We thank the Lord for you and your diligence. Please continue your stance by renewing your membership to the NBPC for 2021. This should be done before January 31, 2021. Encourage your family and friends to do so, also. We truly need to strengthen our position!

Not a member? No problem. You can be!!! We need anyone wanting to help strengthen the fight for justice to join the NBPC, ASAP, so collectively we can have a bolder stance in this fight. You can find applications at nationalnbpc.org in the MENU listed as "Membership Applications."

Please be sure to make a copy of your completed application and payment method for confirmation as our Technology Systems and Postal Service are running a race as to who can make the most errors. 😊

You can also download your application and forward it with your payment to Rev. Maxine E. Jenkins, our PGH NBPC Membership Chair. She will then forward it to the NBPC Office.

However, you choose to send your application, please be sure to make a copy for your files.

Mail applications and payment to:
Rev. Maxine E. Jenkins
2008 Palm Avenue
Pittsburgh, PA 15235

Jean Cox



NATIONAL BLACK PRESBYTERIAN CAUCUS (NBPC)
2021 APPLICATION FOR MEMBERSHIP

www.NationalNBPC.org

"The Black Family, Congregation, and Community in the
Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.): Navigating Identity, Equity, and Economics"



Check only ONE BOX below for your MEMBERSHIP selection: Today's Date: _____

- Individual Membership \$ 50
Affiliate Membership
Young Adult (Ages 18-25 years) \$ 25
Youth (Ages 12-17 years)
College / University
Seminary
Lifetime Membership \$ 1,000
Benefit: Pay ONLY Regional and Chapter dues in the subsequent years. --> \$25
Region Dues \$ 100
Chapter Dues

Table with columns: Institutional Mission Partner (IMP), Congregational Size, Institutional Partnership, Enter Amount Below From The Schedule On The Left. Rows include Church, Presbytery, Synod, and Other with corresponding dues.

General Donation to National for Ongoing Expenses: \$ _____

TOTAL AMOUNT ENCLOSED: \$ _____

Make all checks and money orders payable to:
National Black Presbyterian Caucus (NBPC)

Check Number: _____

Preferred Title [Please Check Appropriate Box(es)]: [] Rev. [] Dr. [] Mr. [] Mrs. [] Ms. [] Miss

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip Code: _____

Preferred Email Address: _____

Primary Phone: _____ Secondary Phone: _____

Church: _____

Region: _____ Chapter: _____

For Students:

Name of College / University / Seminary: _____

Major / Concentration: _____

Mail / Forward Membership Application, Dues, and IMP Contributions to:

NBPC Memberships

P.O. Box 99696 | Troy, MI 48099

Direct questions to: membership@nationalnbpc.org or (248) 921-8102

RETAIN COPIES FOR YOUR RECORDS

As a 501(c)3 organization, membership dues are not tax deductible, while donations are deductible for tax purposes.



SAVE THE DATE:

Please donate on Sunday,
January 17, 2021



Celebrate Freedom Rising Sunday



Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Weekend
Sunday, January 17, 2021

For liturgical resources and donations, go to
https://www.pghpresbytery.org/justice-ministries/freedom_rising/

In 2018, the Executive Committee of Pittsburgh Presbytery voted to designate the Sunday before the celebration of Martin Luther King, Jr. Day to be an annual celebration of “Freedom Rising Sunday,” a time for congregations in our presbytery to unite in prayer, worship, witness, and giving to support Freedom Rising. Join your fellow Presbyterians in ensuring a future.

The Pittsburgh Chapter of the National Black Presbyterian Caucus and Amos 5:24 Ministry team along with staff from Pittsburgh Presbytery wrote an overture to the 2016 General Assembly that was passed UNANIMOUSLY by the Presbytery at its quarterly meeting to assist in overturning the plight of the African American Male.

To date, three organizations have received funds in Pittsburgh in support of enriching the education and circumstances of young African American males and, thus, their families.

- Foundation of Hope: Pilot Diversion Program
- Schenley Heights Development Corporation of Grace Memorial Presbyterian Church: Saving & Raising Our African American Boys
- Infinite Lifestyle Solutions: Saving Our Sons & Daughters Drop-In Center





SAVE THE DATE– Virtual Program Saturday, February 20, 2021



Join the National Black Presbyterian Caucus, Pittsburgh Chapter for *The Second Annual -THE RICH HERITAGE OF AFRICAN AMERICANS IN AND TO PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH (USA)* led by Rev. Dr. Warren Lesane, Synod Executive/Stated Clerk Synod of the Mid-Atlantic. More information to follow.



- A day to honor the history of Black Presbyterians
- What do we need to do for the future?

\$10.00 Donation Welcome



Checks can be made payable to Pittsburgh NBPC and mailed to:
1000 Bryn Mawr Road, Pittsburgh, PA 15219



“When we’re not hungry for justice, it’s usually because we’re too full with privilege.”
Carlos A. Rodriguez

The Pittsburgh Chapter of NBPC needs financial support to continue to be of service. Please consider donating to us. **Checks can be made payable to Pittsburgh NBPC and mailed to:**

1000 Bryn Mawr Road, Pittsburgh, PA 15219

Pittsburgh Chapter of the NBPC Officers:

Moderator—Lenore Williams

Vice Moderator—Rozalia Jordan

Treasurer— Alan Perry

Secretary—Milea Perry

The Voice is issued quarterly. Articles are encouraged. Submit articles to Milea Perry at nbpcthevoice2020@gmail.com

The deadline to submit articles for the March 2021 issue is February 15, 2021.

Editor of *The Voice*: Milea Perry



THE VOICE

DECEMBER 2020

