



# THE VOICE

The Pittsburgh Chapter of the National Black Presbyterian Caucus 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 (U.S.A.) when it fails to take seriously the needs of the poor, oppressed, and disenfranchised. To join us go to:

<https://nationalnbpc.org/register/>

You can also contact the Pittsburgh Presbytery Office at 412-323-1403.

We meet the 3rd Saturday of each month.

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

***Isaiah 1:17***

## Nan Currington: A Living Presbyterian Icon

Nan Moone Currington, who turned 104 years old on July 23, 2020, spent her entire life until 2007 as a member of Grace Memorial Presbyterian Church. Presbyterianism is in her blood. The Moone family were pillars of Grace Church. Mrs. Currington is the sixth child of nine children. Her mother was one of the first female Elders in the denomination and Grace Church. Following in mom's footsteps, Nan is an ordained Presbyterian Elder. She served as Clerk of Session for many years, Choir Director and Church Historian at Grace Church.

Her service to the church extended beyond the walls of the church and into the Pittsburgh Presbytery and the Synod of the Trinity. In the Presbytery, she served as Associate Stated Clerk and she trained other clerks. She worked in the Synod as an organizer of the African American Leadership Event and the Presbyterian African American Youth and Family Event (PAAYFE). Nan Currington planned the annual summer youth retreat for students from Presbyterian Churches held at Wilson College.

A retired teacher and Vice-Principal, Nan is a graduate of Cheyney University. She retired in 1981 and enjoyed learning how to bowl in her free time. She was married to Robert Ellsworth Currington for 64 years.

Nan continues to be involved in the work of the denomination. As a current member of Mount Hope Presbyterian Church in Penn Hills, she plans the Women’s Retreat. Due to the current pandemic, Mrs. Currington sews masks for family and friends. We are incredibly pleased to salute Mrs. Nan Currington as a Living Presbyterian Icon.



*Rev. Dr. Johnnie Monroe*



## The Rich Heritage of African Americans in the Presbyterian Church

On Saturday, February 22, 2020 we gathered in the historic Bethesda Presbyterian Church to learn about the very rich history of African American Presbyterians in Pittsburgh and around the country. We shared the history of people including Rev. Henry Highland Garnet. He was a teacher and abolitionist. Rev. Henry Highland Garnet was the founding Pastor of Grace Memorial Presbyterian Church, the oldest African American Presbyterian Church in the City of Pittsburgh. We also shared the history of our African American Presbyterian Churches that were led by Rev. Dr. Leroy Patrick, Rev. Dr. James Robinson, Rev. Samuel George, Rev. Louwanda Harris, Rev. Dr. Katie Cannon, Rev. Dr. Johnnie Monroe, and others. Rev. Dr. Warren Lesane, Synod Executive/Stated Clerk Synod of the Mid-Atlantic Presbyterian Church (USA) led the February Program. The program was sponsored by the NBPC, Pittsburgh Chapter in partnership with the Metro-Urban Institute of the Pittsburgh Theological Seminary. The program was recorded and the program video can be shared.

*Rev. Dr. Johnnie Monroe*



### Reminder:

#### Voting by Mail-in or Absentee Ballot

Mail-in and absentee ballot applications for the November 3, 2020 general election must be received by your County Election Office by 5 p.m. on Tuesday, October 27, 2020.

## Silent Vigil

The unnecessary killing of African Americans by police has been national news after video footage has gone viral. The nation witnessed the murders of George Floyd, Ahmaud Abernathy, Philando Castile, Eric Gardner, Tamir Rice, Antwon Rose, Elijah McClain, Rayshard Brooks, and more. The Caucus in collaboration with other organizations hosted a Silent Vigil on June 3, 2020 from Noon—1:00 p.m. on the block circling the host church, East Liberty Presbyterian Church. A large crowd gathered wearing masks and being sure to be socially distant from one another for a silent protest against police brutality. People were seen holding signs that listed the names of individuals that have been killed by police. The last words of victims were shown including, “I Can’t Breathe.” People prayed on the streets also. To view video of the vigil go to the Facebook link (must have a Facebook account):

<https://www.facebook.com/WPAJuneteenth/videos/708132359959869/>

*Milea Perry*

## Adopt a School

The Caucus, seeking to respond to the challenges that some students in the Pittsburgh Public School System and their families are facing, has formed a partnership with Miller African Centered Academy in the Hill District of Pittsburgh. The purpose of the partnership is to respond to the needs of the children.

Several virtual meetings have been held with the principal, Dr. Margaret Starkes and School Board Member, Sala Udin, to learn the needs of the school. We are donating resources to the school and seeking to recruit people to serve as mentors, tutors, and provide family support. Anyone interested in being a mentor or tutor please call The Pittsburgh Presbytery Office and speak with

*Rev. Dr. Johnnie Monroe*

412-323-1403



### Juneteenth Historical Walk

On June 19, 2020 (Juneteenth) the non-profit organization, “Stop the Violence Pittsburgh,” hosted a historical walk to various landmarks in Pittsburgh and educated about the significance of each landmark. The walk started at Freedom Corner in the Hill District of Pittsburgh. Attendees learned that the Hill District, the oldest Black neighborhood in the City of Pittsburgh was known as Little Haiti in the early 1800s. The Hill District is also the location of Grace Memorial Presbyterian church, the oldest Black Presbyterian Church in Pittsburgh. After learning of some of the history of the Hill District, participants went to the Northside of the city to learn about Avery College.

Rev. Dr. Johnnie Monroe, Pastor Emeritus of Grace Memorial Presbyterian Church, shared the history of Avery College. Avery College was the only Black College in the city from 1849 to 1873. Rev. Henry Highland Garnet, a former slave, was the President of Avery College before becoming the first Pastor of Grace Memorial Presbyterian Church. The walk continued on into Downtown Pittsburgh. Participants learned of locations that were part of the Underground Railroad. The historical walk was educational and worth being repeated annually. It was remarkable to learn of the Black business owners in Downtown Pittsburgh in the 1800s that only serviced Whites. The video footage of the presentations of each historian will hopefully be shared soon.

On Saturday, August 29, 2020, Mayor Peduto announced that starting in 2021 Juneteenth will be an official city holiday in the City of Pittsburgh.



### 2020 Coleman-Patrick Scholarship Recipients

Congratulations to the 2020 Awardees!

The Robert Coleman–Dr. Leroy Patrick Scholarship is awarded annually to students of color pursuing an undergraduate degree. The money awarded to the 2020 recipients totaled \$4,900.00. It came from congregations within the Pittsburgh Presbytery and the efforts of the Pittsburgh Chapter of the National Black Presbyterian Caucus.

#### 2020 Recipients:

- ◆ Jazmine Brown—Pennsylvania State University -Valley View Presbyterian Church
- ◆ Raven Self– North Carolina Central University - Valley View Presbyterian Church
- ◆ Derek Ricketts–Robert Morris University - Valley View Presbyterian Church
- ◆ Kiara Nicole Rockymore– Seton Hill University - East Liberty Presbyterian Church

Milea Perry





## THE VOICE

SEPTEMBER 2020



**SAVE THE DATE:**  
**VIRTUAL UNITY SERVICE,**  
**SUNDAY, OCTOBER 4, 2020**  
**AT 4:00 PM**

Zoom Link: <https://zoom.us/j/91627684698?pwd=VIM5dFNUTnJUS2lDTzRGdUhhWZVhMQT09>

The National Black Presbyterian Caucus, Pittsburgh Chapter, invites everyone to attend a Virtual Worldwide Communion Unity Service on Worldwide Communion Sunday. The service will be October 4, 2020 at 4:00 p.m.

Worldwide Communion was introduced to the church, the nation and the world in 1933 by the late Rev. Dr. Hugh Thompson Kerr. He was the Pastor of Shadyside Presbyterian Church from 1913-1945. In 1930, he served as the Moderator of the General Assembly. We will honor the legacy of Rev. Dr. Hugh Thompson Kerr as we worship together during a virtual service. Please join us.

During the virtual service, an offering will be taken to benefit Freedom Rising. When the General Assembly passed the African American Male Overture (Freedom Rising) in 2016, one of the suggested ways to fund the overture was from the Global Witness Offering (formerly the Peacemaking Offering) which is usually taken on Worldwide Communion Sunday. A donation can be sent to the Pittsburgh Presbytery Office: 901 Allegheny Ave., Pittsburgh, PA 15233. Please label the offering as for Freedom Rising. A donation can be made online at: [https://www.pghpresbytery.org/ministry\\_teams/ministry\\_teams/freedom\\_rising/](https://www.pghpresbytery.org/ministry_teams/ministry_teams/freedom_rising/)

Joyce Matthews

The members of the Pittsburgh NBPC Chapter and the recipients thank everyone that donated to the Robert Coleman-Dr. Leroy Patrick Scholarship.

**Scholarship Committee Members:**

Elder, Alan Perry, Chairman

Elder, Lenore Williams

Elder, Blanche Bennett

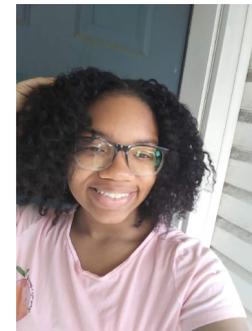
Elder, Judy Jerry

Elder, Mary Evans

Elder, Harriette McCray

*Alan Perry*

**Keep the current scholarship recipients in your prayers.**



Kiara Nicole Rockymore



Raven Self



Dereck Ricketts



Jazmine Brown



Charles "Teenie" Harris

**Nan Moone Currington conducting Grace Memorial Presbyterian Church choir including Hariette McCray, Gerry Wright, Dorothy Moone Beavers, Marlene Stevens McEnheimer, Mabel Adams Galloway, Barbara Payne, Janet Thompson, Sarah Thomas, Marilyn [surname unknown], Patricia Miller, Billy Hicks, MacKinley Tomlin, and Vann Johnson in television station studio with "Kliegl Bros." lights and Easter egg decorations on floor**

c. 1961

## Virtual Unity Worship Service

Worldwide Communion Sunday, October 4, 2020

at 4:00 p.m.

**Rev. Gavin Walton, Pastor of Grace Memorial Presbyterian Church, will share a message**

**Please Join Us!**



Zoom Link: <https://zoom.us/j/91627684698?pwd=VlM5dFNUTnJUS2lDTzRGdUhwZWVhMQT09>

Call In:

Dial: 929-436-2866

Code: 91627684698

Passcode: 533509

If you have questions,

Call Elder Joyce

Matthews, 412-247-7630





### An Interview with Danielle Brown

It was day 51 of her hunger strike. Danielle Brown had just driven up to Freedom Corner after having a meeting with prospective landlords.

It had rained the night before and was threatening to do so again on this Sunday afternoon. Moving into an apartment was not foremost in her thoughts, but Danielle Brown is a mother, with a mother’s heart -- a mother’s concerns – and a mother’s challenge.

Her concerns were rising to those young people who put up their own tents around her on Freedom Corner to make sure she had company and that she was safe. Amazing in her strength and with a momentary burst of energy (she has those at times) Ms. Brown welcomed a gathering of pastors to share the concerns of a mother.

Her son, Jaylen, was just 21 and a student at Duquesne University. He had much promise. He was an athlete – a running back for Duquesne’s football team.

Jaylen reportedly smashed a window in his 16<sup>th</sup> floor dorm room and jumped to his death in October 2018. Ms. Brown displayed a storyboard of the scene in which she showed that campus officers were in the room and yet, they said “he was able to take the chair, break a window, put the chair back down and then jump and no one did anything! Does that sound right to you?”

Ms. Brown did receive information from attorneys representing Duquesne University, but she believes there’s more action needed. “A mother should not have to worry that her child is in danger when he goes to college,” Ms. Brown commented. Campus police were not wearing body-cameras, a policy that the University of Pittsburgh has recently implemented, so it’s only the testimony of those present.

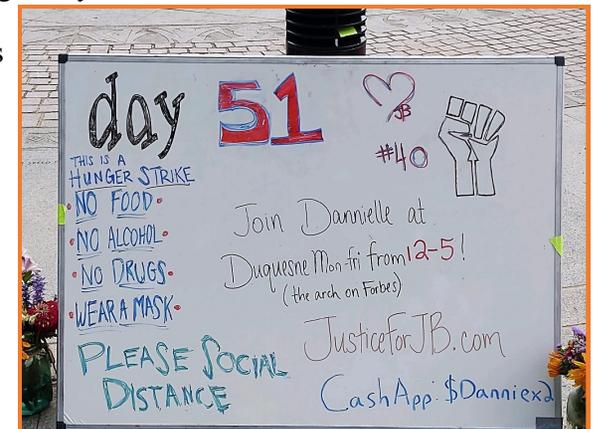
Officials had reported there was a level of marijuana in Jaylen’s system and people reported Jaylen was acting “erratically” in the elevator after returning to the dorm that evening from visiting a friend. There must be resources for people to go to get help.

Ms. Brown herself stepped in to help another young student earlier in the week who seemed to be suffering emotionally. “What would have happened if I weren’t here?”

Rain began to fall, and Danielle offered sanctuary in her tent for those around her. It was a huge tent, but social distancing was not possible, nor was it a concern for anyone except for Ms. Brown. Though she has not eaten for the past 51 days, she said, “I could have stood to lose some.” People have been delivering water and fruit juices (never Gatorade, however, since it reminds her of Jaylen). A doctor volunteers his services, checking on her almost daily and stands along with the pastors, as all bow their heads in prayer. Danielle’s plea was to make sure everyone knows that nothing has been resolved, and there are still answers that are needed. It was not just for Jaylen, but “for all the mothers who have lost their child.”

When she gets her answers -- when she sees the steps being taken to change -- when she sees young people are better off than how she left her son -- Danielle will leave her tent (or the temporary apartment she hopes to have). She’ll say goodbye to those who have stood with her. She’ll have some of the Summer foods that she has been craving, but she’ll stand with mothers everywhere who want justice and safety for all children.

Lenore Williams





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The Pittsburgh Chapter of NBPC is happy to announce that Ralph Lowe is the new Director of Justice Ministries for The Pittsburgh Presbytery.



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

Carlos A. Rodriguez

**Pittsburgh Chapter of the NBPC Officers:**

**Moderator—Lenore Williams**

**Vice Moderator—Rozalia Jordan**

**Treasurer— Alan Perry**

**Secretary—Milea Perry**

*The Voice* will be issued quarterly. Articles are encouraged. Submit articles to Milea Perry at [nbpcthevoice2020@gmail.com](mailto:nbpcthevoice2020@gmail.com)

**The deadline to submit articles for the December issue is November 1, 2020.**

**Editor of *The Voice*: Milea Perry**

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**





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