



Branch Newsletter

January 2023

By the
Communication, Press & Publicity Committee

NEXT MEMBERSHIP MEETING:

Our regular general membership meeting will be 7 p.m. Thursday, Jan. 26, at the Ricketts Center, 658 Beech Street. Our guest speaker will be Ann Beal, with American Red Cross Blood Services. The branch is partnering with the Ricketts Center to host two blood drives this year – the first in March. (Stay tuned for the date.) Ann is making a special appeal to the NAACP and our community partners to encourage African-American people come out to donate blood to help those with Sickle Cell Disease. The disease affects mainly African-American people, and many patients need regular transfusions to address their symptoms, which can include excruciating joint pain. The closer the genetic match of the blood donor to the patient, the better, which means the Red Cross desperately needs African-American donors.

For those who can't make the meeting, we'll also have a Zoom link:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84995648174?pwd=QlAyaHZkWIJXZWk1T3FWcHNFVnJOQT09>

Meeting ID: 849 9564 8174 Passcode: 937480

New officers sworn in

At our last meeting, we swore in the officers and Executive Committee members. A warm welcome to our new treasurer, Charlotte Charles, and our new membership chair, Chelise Wilkerson!

The entire roster:

- President: Johnny Corson
- First Vice President: Larry Cohen
- Secretary: Olivia Coleman
- Assistant Secretary: Alana Hook
- Treasurer: Charlotte Charles
- Assistant Treasurer: Annette Kobb
- Executive Committee members: All of the above, plus Chelise Wilkerson, Bobby Watson, Rev. Garrison Lockley, Paula Corson, Bob Bauers, Sandy Bauers. The executive committee meets on the second Thursday of each month.

MLK event a huge success

The Mt. Olive Baptist Church was filled near to capacity Monday night for the branch's Martin Luther King Day service. And what a program it was! We're talking speaking, preaching, singing and more.

During the celebration, several members of the NAACP were honored for their service: Pottstown firefighter Mark Gibson; Pastors Carter Lester and Kerry Pidcock-Lester, who recently retired from First Presbyterian Church; Stacey Woodland, CEO of YWCA Tri-County Area; and Nick Chigurupati, Pottstown Pharmacy manager.

A big thanks to Rev. Garrison Lockley, Pastor of Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church and chair of the NAACP's Religious Affairs Committee, for planning the event, aided by Rev. Darrell C. Brown Jr., Pastor of Rhema, "The Word Church," and a member of the NAACP's Religious Affairs Committee.

The Pottstown Mercury's Evan Brandt covered the event. [Click here](#) to read his story. Also, our good friend, Gus Tellis, from PCTV, filmed the event, which you can watch on his YouTube channel: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g34n7K9G_zc Please sign up for his channel to support him.

We asked, you gave

A lot of people who are experiencing homelessness and others without the means to purchase winter clothes are a lot warmer today, thanks to the generosity of numerous people who donated to the winter essentials drive sponsored by the WIN Committee to support Mission First. At one point, large plastic bags absolutely stuffed with coats, hats, mittens, etc., were coming in, six or even bags at a time. The effort also attracted an anonymous \$1,500 donation. It just goes to show how much people care. Thank you one and all.

LET'S TALK BOOKS

The branch's book club, which was a big hit before Covid, has been resurrected. We plan to meet the second Monday of every month at 6 p.m. at the Pottstown Library, 500 E. High Street. Our first meeting will be Feb. 13.

We had, and will continue to have, very few rules -- read the book (or skim it, or whatever), show up, and be prepared to say what you learned from the book, what it meant to you, what you did or didn't like about it ... that kind of thing.

Each month, the group will vote on which book they would like to read and discuss the next month. For February, we have chosen [Toni Morrison's *Recitatif*](#), which is really more of a short story than a novel. (Just in case you're short of time after the holiday celebrations.) It is about two women who meet at a shelter when they are eight years old. Their relationship continues over the years. One is white, and one is Black. But which is which? Morrison doesn't say, and it's up to us to decide. Or not. Does it matter? What does our choice tell us about our assumptions? Should make for an interesting discussion!

Kerry Pidcock-Lester has asked the library to reserve books for us. If you would like one, just tell the librarian at the desk you'd like one of Kerry's books.

Farewell, friend

We were saddened to learn of the passing of Boyertown's longtime mayor, [Marianne Deery](#). She had served on numerous committees and then was mayor for two decades. She was a founder of Building a Better Boyertown.

Branch president Johnny Corson recalled: "The last time I saw her was when we came to Boyertown to protest the defacement of the mural on Rita's Water Ice, apparently a racially-motivated act. During the protest, she and I shared our battle with cancer, along with words of encouragement. I told her, "we've got this" and urged her to go home and get some rest. Even her husband, Frank, had tried to get her to leave.

"But she would not. I remember that she said what happened that night is not what Boyertown stands for, and she was not leaving until every else had left and was safe.

"So when the TV reporters showed up and someone directed them to me to give comments I told them to go see the mayor; it is her town!!! My last memory of her is in front of the TV cameras standing up for her beloved Boyertown."