



## Midweek Musings

March 1, 2017 edition

Published the second and fourth Wednesday of the month

*"I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me." ~John 14:6*



## Upcoming Events

3/3-4, 2017 – BEACH RETREAT

3/4/2017 – 835<sup>th</sup> Stated

Meeting of Presbytery

View Presbytery calendar:

<http://www.ncpresbytery.org/news/calendar>

The March 1<sup>st</sup> edition of the Midweek Musings is an abbreviated version as a result of the annual Beach Retreat being held Friday, March 3<sup>rd</sup> through March 4<sup>th</sup>.

**PLEASE NOTE:** The 835<sup>th</sup> Stated Meeting of Presbytery will commence at 9:00 a.m., Saturday, March 4<sup>th</sup>. View the docket and associated materials [here](#).

The "full edition" will be back on track as of March 15<sup>th</sup>.

Thank you for your understanding!

# New Castle Presbytery



## A Black History Month Reflection

By Interfaith Peacemaker,  
Rev. Tom Davis

With a sanctuary packed with jubilant worshipers Hanover Street Presbyterian Church held its annual Gospel Vespers service last week, a highlight of their observance of African American History Month. That national tradition, scheduled in February to coincide with the birthdays of Abraham Lincoln and Frederick Douglas, grew out of African American History week,



started by black historian, [Carter G. Woodson](#), in 1926. Now African American History month is celebrated in the U.S. and Canada in February, and the U.K. in October.

Several years ago Alice and I had the wonderful opportunity to visit Cape Town, South Africa, where our Pittsburgh seminary friends, Kay Robert and Desire Volkwijn, were raised. We visited a black church there, and heard rich, familiar harmonies and an antiphonal style of singing which African slaves eventually carried to the "new world". Slaves heard the good news about Savior Jesus with different ears than their masters, so African spiritual DNA evolved into Gospel music, a deeply inspiring and often irresistibly foot tapping, hand clapping celebration of overcoming. This side of the Emancipation Proclamation, gospel music is still about overcoming, overcoming any obstacle to freedom, either external or internal, and reliance on Holy Spirit to guide us on that difficult way. As poet James Weldon Johnson wrote, and as the Gospel Vespers congregation sang this February:



Stony the road we trod,

Bitter the chast'ning rod,  
Felt in the days when hope unborn had died;  
Yet with a steady beat,  
Have not our weary feet  
Come to the place for which our fathers sighed?  
We have come over a way that with tears has been  
watered.  
We have come, treading our path through the blood of  
the slaughtered,  
Out from the gloomy past,  
Till now we stand at last  
Where the white gleam of our bright star is cast.

God of our weary years,  
God of our silent tears,  
Thou who hast brought us thus far on the way;  
Thou who hast by Thy might,  
Led us into the light,  
Keep us forever in the path, we pray.  
Lest our feet stray from the places, our God, where we  
met Thee,  
Lest our hearts, drunk with the wine of the world, we  
forget Thee;  
Shadowed beneath Thy hand,  
May we forever stand,  
True to our God,  
True to our native land.



Overcoming, overcoming! America, we are still overcoming our insular perspectives; and this isn't accountable anymore to vast oceans dividing us from outsiders, but rather to stubborn tribal behaviors within, to prejudices born of the fear of walking in another's moccasins. Why should the message, "black lives matter", be heard as a threat rather than a call to act justly, to love kindness, and to walk humbly (acknowledging our own complicity in the way things still are)?

The way I see it, Hanover's Gospel Vespers isn't just for remembering black suffering and praising those who championed abolition. Just as importantly, if not moreso, it's a call to recognize the obstacles that still remain for all the citizens of this self-proclaimed democracy, obstacles both internal and external; and as my contemporaries used to say in the 60s, to "keep on keepin' on", overcoming.

Peace, *Tom*



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*Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by this some have entertained angels without knowing it.*

*~ Hebrews 13:2*