

2023 Annual Report

Catonsville Presbyterian Church



Preface

It has been a full year, not only of ministry, but also of our thoughts, feelings, emotions, and spirits. It is remarkably easy to fill the days with announcements, events, meetings, and the minutiae of Christian service, but it is decidedly less easy to absorb their whole effect. Simply put, it doesn't take a trained theologian to know that we miss the forest for the trees.

This annual report is meant to press the pause button, pull the lens back, and focus our collective mind on what truly matters: the mission and movement of God among us. You'll find within this report highlights of our ministry in 2023, financial figures, and a few statistics. You won't find within this report any comprehensive account of our life together. That is far too big, far too significant to ever fully capture.

As you read the report, you might find yourself curious about a particular ministry or area of our shared life. If something draws your attention—for better or worse—remember that there are plenty of opportunities to serve and get involved in a board, committee, or ministry. The invitation is open, the welcome is wide, and the Spirit runs deep. As you read this report, may you rediscover the forest of God's love and grace, that 10,000-foot view of redemption that is happening among, within, around, and through us. And may it be a companion on the journey ahead, in 2024 and beyond.

Pastors' Report

Dear Saints,

We are reminded of Paul's opening words to the church in Philippi, "I thank my God every time I remember you" (Phil. 1:3). This community known as Catonsville Presbyterian Church is truly a special gathering of God's beloved children, uniquely gifted and equipped by the Holy Spirit to serve the gospel, following in the way of Jesus Christ, and bearing witness to God's grace, justice, and joy. We are grateful to be called your pastors. It is an honor and a privilege to work alongside you and to serve with you, ministering to the needs, hopes, and dreams of the congregation.

As we reflect upon 2023, this is what we see. We are slowly coming out from the impact of the pandemic and discovering what this "new normal" looks and feel like. While there is a sense of returning to things that feel familiar, we also know that things are different. What is clear is that there seems to be more energy available within the congregation to do and try new things. Overall, it's been a very good year and there's much for which to be grateful. Here are some of the highlights:

- The Souper Bowl of Caring Luncheon returned, hosted by our youth and Scouts.
- We hosted the Iftar Dinner with Muslim friends from MARTI (Maryland Turkish American Inhabitants).
- We welcomed Michael Cuppett as our Communications and Office Manager.
- We celebrated Ginger Daiger's service to CPC and wished her well in retirement.
- We welcome Joyce Danzig as our new bookkeeper.
- Our Stephen Ministers were paired with care receivers.
- We had a productive Session retreat led by consultant Roy Howard.
- We had incredible response to many food drives to support CEA and Grace AME.
- The ongoing work of our Dismantling Racism Committee.
- Children's Choir, Youth Ministry and Church School ministries all witnessed increased participation and enthusiasm.
- A new Presbyterian Women's circle was formed.
- Fellowship! People are taking turns hosting on Sunday mornings.
- We're building a deeper sense of community and making more meaningful connections. The night at the O's game was a lot of fun, as was Holiday Trivia Night.
- Sunday adult education offerings are back on a regular rhythm.

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Continued on following page

- The return of the Cookie Walk (!) – which was a huge success.
- Sunday worship attendance continues to grow, welcoming guests most Sundays.
- Worship that is uplifting, comforting, and challenging us step into the future with hope.

What are your highlights from the year?

Jesus said, “To whom much is given, much will be required; and from the one to whom much has been entrusted, even more will be demanded” (Luke 12:48). Much has been given to this congregation. Much has been entrusted to us. Much is required of us. Much is demanded of us. To which we say, “Thanks be to God!” For we get to use our gifts and resources and experiences, we get to share our joys and passions and loves all for the glory of God.

With deep gratitude,

Kenneth Kovacs, *Pastor* | Dorothy Boulton, *Associate Pastor*

Year in Review

Personnel

It has been a significant year for our staff. In June, **Ginger Daiger** shared with Ken her decision to retire. Back in 2018, we recognized and celebrated Ginger's 15 years of service working for both the church and the Child Care Center, though her relationship with the Child Care Center began even earlier, in 1995. After a tenure of nearly thirty years, Ginger left a position to which she brought enormous dedication and careful attention, ensuring all our bills were paid, handling payroll for both the Center and the church, and making sure that our accounts were in order. On September 24, we celebrated Ginger's service during worship with a reception, gifts, and many words of gratitude. Though the time was bittersweet, we rejoice in this new season of Ginger's life.

This year, we welcomed two new members to the staff. After the retirement of Ginger, we were privileged to welcome **Joyce Danzig** as our new bookkeeper. Joyce is a lifelong resident of Maryland. After growing up in Westminster, she attended Frostburg State College, where she received a B.S. degree in Psychology. Following graduation, she settled in Columbia, where she lives with her husband Neil, and where they raised their two children, Lauren and Aaron. She is licensed as a CPA in the State of Maryland and specializes in non-profit accounting. She recently retired from Howard Community College, where she was Foundation Accounting Manager in the Development Office. Joyce is a long-time member of Christ Memorial Presbyterian Church in Howard County and has held many roles, including elder, deacon, finance chair, capital campaign chair, director of the LOGOS youth program, and member of the bell choir.

A graduate of Belmont University and Princeton Theological Seminary, **Michael Cuppett** came to us in January 2023 with considerable experience working with more than half a dozen churches, individuals, and faith-based organizations to streamline and strengthen their communications and operations. Michael's theological training has enabled him to bring spiritual and missional reflection into the work of communications and the operations of the church. As a Minister of Word and Sacrament in the Presbyterian Church, he was active throughout the Presbytery of Baltimore preaching, administering the sacraments, teaching, and ministering in other nearby congregations. On two occasions this past year, he participated in worship alongside our pastoral staff.

Our seasoned staff members have enjoyed an exciting year as well. **Wendy Johnston** embarked on an intensive trip of continuing education and experiential learning. The Peabody Institute Organ Department, led by organ department chair Dr. Daniel Aune, organized a study trip to Paris, France in June. Seven Peabody students and alumni participated in a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to experience not just a few Parisian organs, but ten unique and wonderful historic organs while learning from some of the world's best organists.



Wendy Johnston in the Royal Chapel of Versailles



Dorothy Boulton also participated in continuing education this year, particularly through the conference of the Association of Partners in Christian Education (APCE). APCE is an association made up of those who are serving or have served in educational ministries as ministers, professional or volunteer educators, or students in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), the Reformed Church in America, The Presbyterian Church in Canada, the Moravian Church in America, and the Christian Reformed Church in North America. The 2023 conference centered on the theme “Unforced Rhythms of Grace,” and was held in Birmingham, Alabama during the sixtieth anniversary of the 16th Street Baptist Church bombing. The conference grieved societal losses resulting from illness, fear, convenience, laziness, complacency, workaholicism, and toxic comparison, while focusing on Christ’s invitation to deep rest. John Pavlovitz was the conference’s keynote speaker.

Ken Kovacs stepped down from the Presbytery of Baltimore’s Dismantling Racism Committee after many years of service in order to serve as the Commission on Ministry’s liaison to Dickey Memorial Presbyterian Church while it experiences a time of transition and discernment. He continued his studies at the C.G. Jung Institute in Zurich and hopes to finish this year. Finally, 2023 concluded on a high note with Ken Kovacs marrying Mark Dunham on November 18 in Savannah, Georgia. The intimate ceremony was held outdoors in Lafayette Square, a short distance from the Flannery O’Connor Childhood Home Museum, where the home hosted its very first wedding reception. We toasted the newlyweds during Fellowship Hour on November 26 where they received two gift cards to local restaurants.

Our Connection to Catonsville

Our connection with Catonsville remains as strong as ever. The church building and grounds are actively used every day of the week, and the gymnasium is used each weekday and many weekends. The France Room, Library, and Fellowship Hall continue to see regular use by the Alzheimer’s Association, Al-Anon, Scouts, and the Chinese Boxing Academy. We welcomed the Scottish Country Dancers back to the facilities after a several-year hiatus. Committees also use the facilities for in-person meetings far more often than in years prior. Of course, Catonsville Concerts at 3 is a beloved partner that draws hundreds to our sanctuary each year.

The Dismantling Racism Committee continues to deepen its ministry as a shared committee of Grace AME, Christian Temple, and Catonsville Presbyterian, making it a truly shared ministry in Catonsville. It participated in the Artists4ERA art exhibit at the Catonsville Arts Guild, the Grace AME Fall Festival, and other community events. In 2023, the Dismantling Racism Committee cultivated a strong connection with the Maryland Turkish-American Inhabitants (MARTI) in Columbia, continuing our reciprocal dialogue. The committee excelled at engaged our neighbors in Catonsville and surrounding counties this past year.

Scout Troop 306 and Scout Pack 306 remain extremely active, with the latter group expanding to include approximately 50 children. A separate girls’ troop is expected to be formed in 2024. Each group has a full roster of parents, leaders, and participants who share in enthusiasm for Scouting.



Chinese Boxing Academy

Membership

Like almost all years, we grieved the loss of several members and friends of the church, including some who died during the most ferocious years of the COVID-19 pandemic. Services were held for Michael Cantwell, Peggy Carr, Mary Childs, Ted Dürr, Lee Van Koten, Hanju Lee, Howard Lutz, Aaron Plymouth, Susan Schroeder, and Rachel Shultise.

In the midst of these losses, we rejoice in the positive transitions of this past year. We welcomed our first new class of members since March 2020. **The Reverend Dr. Barbara Renton**, a retired Presbyterian Minister of Word and Sacrament, joined as an affiliate member of Catonsville Presbyterian Church, a category of membership that identifies her special connection to this church while respecting her full membership as a minister in the Presbytery of Baltimore. We enthusiastically welcomed **Ralph and Lainie Surette** as new members, who transferred from the Presbyterian Church of Chestertown. We have enjoyed their presence in worship and throughout our life together, especially on the Dismantling Racism Committee. These three are only the tip of the proverbial iceberg. We look forward to celebrating additional new members in the spring of 2024.

On April 30 of this past year, we celebrated the baptism of **Dorothea Marie Bender**. As we enter into 2024, we remember our vows to her: to guide and nurture Dorothea by word and deed, with love and prayer; and to encourage her to know and follow Christ and to be faithful members of Christ’s church.

Attendance steadily increased in 2023, with average attendance at in-person services increasing by 32%. Over 240 people attended worship on Easter Sunday this year, more than double the attendance of 2022. But our growth and renewal extended beyond our sanctuary walls. 58 services streamed this year, with anywhere between a dozen and three dozen individuals participating online. There are a number of members and friends who join us almost exclusively online due to mobility challenges, concerns related to COVID-19, geographic separation, or personal preference. We are especially grateful to Keith Glennan, Kathy Glennan, and Vickie Lord for their dedication and service.

Growth in average attendance



Tracy Lantz, a member of the Dismantling Racism Committee, stands with a staffer of Senator Ben Cardin at the Artists4ERA event.

Members of Cub Pack 306

Operations

In 2023, we restructured our staffing model and hired a full-time Communications and Operations Manager. Though this role absorbed the responsibilities of our part-time administrative assistant and communications consultant, it was a wholly new position resulting from the discernment of the Personnel Committee and the Session.

This year, we embarked on a series of administrative changes and modernization. Though these changes may have felt dramatic at times, we completed a significant amount of deferred maintenance to our operational processes and overall church administration. This included:

- Documenting facilities use, accepting fee payments electronically, and adopting an e-signature platform for automated, paperless facilities agreements.
- Establishing an internal planning calendar.
- Consolidating and organizing church files into a single cloud storage solution that safeguards institutional resources while allowing staff to collaborate.
- Adopting the Presbyterian Historical Society's congregational retention policy for church files
- Updating the church's permanent records by preserving and reviewing Session minutes from 2019-2023.
- Building a library of templates in Microsoft Word that includes letterhead, table tents, certificates, and liturgies.
- Building a collection of internal staff resources.
- Rolling out a limited number of "committee hubs" that compile committee files, documents, reminders, and resources.

In 2023, the church office expanded its support services. These onsite, in-house services include:

- Basic IT support and troubleshooting for staff
- Management of Microsoft accounts, distribution lists, and cloud storage
- Management of online giving links
- Clerical services for cloud files
- Building access control
- Graphic design for promotional materials
- Music engraving



Our ministry online

> **4,000 likes, comments, or shares**

On CPC Facebook posts

> **69,400 unique individuals**

Encountered a social media post by CPC

> **8,200 visits**

To the CPC Facebook page

Almost 1,000 clicks

On links shared on Facebook

Communications

The church's communications similarly grew in 2023. Our Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube accounts are considerably more active and engaging. Highlights from this year include:

- A comprehensive audit of the church's communications was received, reviewed, and explored by the Session in April.
- Sermons and music pieces were posted individually on the YouTube channel and can be shared more easily and widely.
- Our Instagram and Facebook accounts posted several times weekly with content that more visibly reflected our congregational life.
- *The Messenger* moved to a seasonal rhythm while its content was refocused on more reflective, personal writing. This transition was first recommended in 2017 by then-Communications Consultant Jennifer Michaels.

897 hours

The total number of hours streamed from the congregation's YouTube channel



430 posts
On Facebook

105 posts
On Instagram

115 stories
On Instagram

▲
Photographs from the church's Instagram account

Mid-Council Service

Our congregation continues to play a significant role in the local, national, and international church. . This year, elders of Catonsville Presbyterian Church were elected to key positions in the Presbytery. **Ken Kovacs** served on the presbytery's Dismantling Racism Committee before being elected to the Commission on Ministry, which oversees congregational affairs and the work of Ministers of Word and Sacrament. **Susan Jaeger** was elected to the Commission on Thriving Congregations, which enlivens and equips congregation's missional work. **Michael Cuppett** was installed as the chair of the Commission on Preparation for Ministry, which is tasked with evaluating and credentialing Commissioned Ruling Elders and Ministers of Word and Sacrament.





Ministry Snapshots ▶

Halal food is served at the *Iftar* dinner

Keeping our Neighbors Warm

The Deacons' continued to support the material needs of Westside Men's Shelter clients. In the winter 2023 campaign, they collected the items listed below.

24

Coats

33

Hats

14

Scarves

31

Sweaters
and shirts

13

Pairs of
pants

41

Pairs of
socks

7

Pairs of
gloves

30

Toiletry
items

\$50

Cash
donations

Iftar Dinner

In March, the Dismantling Racism Committee spearheaded a meaningful opportunity to experience connection with our Muslim neighbors. This event was held during Lent (for Western Christians) and Ramadan (for Muslims). As the sun set, members of the Maryland Turkish-American Inhabitants (MARTI) shared about the season of Ramadan, and Ken Kovacs shared about Easter and the significance of the resurrection of Christ.

MARTI is “a nonprofit and non-politically affiliated organization founded in 2003. MARTI strives to serve the local community’s social, spiritual, cultural, and educational needs through various activities and programs and promote intercultural and interfaith dialogue & friendship. We believe that we can build stronger bridges within our community if we get to know one another.”

The time culminated with a “breaking of the fast” meal—called an *Iftar*—that included a halal dinner. Moffett Churn wrote this: “Hearing the Christian story alongside of the Islamic narrative gave a fresh perspective from which to view not only their beliefs and practices, but also ours... It was a time of real connection and recognition that runs counter to all the ways we, as a society, sort and separate ourselves. And even though everything took place in our building, our MARTI friends prepared and served the meal, set the clock for the evening, took their places at the table and took their mats to the sanctuary for Maghrib prayers. It was one of those rare moments when the roles of Host and Guest were blurred.”

Phyl Lansing connects with a woman from MARTI ▶





Catonsville Family Pride

Our grounds hosted the third annual Catonsville Family Pride, a family-centered celebration of LGBTQIA+ community. Pony rides, a petting zoo, food trucks, local vendors, face painters, nonprofits, and yes—even churches—dotted the property as hundreds of guests leaned into belonging. The open and affirming churches in Catonsville shared a single booth at the event to demonstrate the unified conviction that “no hate lives in 21228.” These churches included Salem Lutheran, St. John’s Grace UCC, and Immanuel UCC.



Creation Care

Care of Creation Sunday was preceded by a very special celebration: the Earth Day Festival at Hillcrest Elementary School. With an invitation from the Hillcrest administration, the Earth Care Team spent time with the children from whom we have borrowed this planet. Those small hands and bright smiles were hard at work during the Earth Day Festival, not only having fun, but also building “seed bombs,” full of native seeds and rich nutrients.

Following worship on Care of Creation Sunday, members and friends built their very own “seed bombs” in the pavilion. These palm-sized, earth-like knots of seeds, twigs, and paper pulp were spread throughout the woodlands, entrusted to the grace of God and wisdom of our friend, this beautiful planet called Earth.

Alongside these observances, we welcomed thirty trees across the church’s property. As part of an initiative by Howard EcoWorks, these trees will sequester 15 metric tons of carbon dioxide emissions and serve as a natural habitat for small wildlife. We are grateful that the vast majority of trees survived the drought of May and June and continue to steadily grow.

◀ A seed “bomb” full of native plants is packed into the earth

Fellowship

In 2023, fellowship took on a new life of its own, especially during the summer months. In July, church members enjoyed an outdoor concert at the Lurman Theatre together, bringing lawn chairs and snacks for a casual time of connection. Around the same time, families took advantage of the church grounds for family play time, replete with slip and slide and water activities. To wrap up the summer, the Fellowship Committee organized Night at the Yard, an outing to Camden Yards. Members and friends of the church enjoyed getting to know one another better while watching the Rockies and Orioles face off. A holiday trivia night put a bow on the year, with the strongest team winning a trophy and candy canes.



Our friends at the Lurman Theatre concert



The Creation Care Team spends time with Hillcrest Elementary students making seed "bombs" and teaching about native plants.

Barbara Rice, Vickie Lord, and Glenda Johnson facilitated card signing while sharing about the Christmas at Sea project.



Mission

In July, the Mission Committee partnered with Church World Service (CWS) and the United Methodist Committee on Relief to support women abroad. Providing sanitary napkins, tampons, soap, and wet wipes supports far more than hygiene, but also gender equity. For example, in 2022, 1 in 4 girls in India did not attend school during menstruation due to inadequate access to hygienic products. Through the Mission Committee's campaign, the congregation raised funds to assemble and ship 230 kits packed with these hygiene products. Our kits directly benefitted women suffering from temporary displacement due to fires, floods, hurricanes, tornados, domestic violence, and other emergencies.

Later in the year, the congregation participated in the "Christmas at Sea" initiative through the Baltimore International Seafarers' Center (BISC). Lee Van Koten, who died in early 2022, was instrumental in forging our involvement with the Baltimore International Seafarers' Center. Lee wrote, "Christmas is always a lonely one" for seafarers, far from their home and loved ones. These bags are a small token of appreciation for their efforts to keep the world economy functioning." The Mission Committee hoped to continue Lee's legacy with a goal of 60 gift bags. Incredibly, the congregation doubled its goal, assembling a total of 135 gift bags and raising \$1,904. Each bag contained a warm hat, scarf, handwarmers, a Baltimore souvenir, and Christmas cards signed by church members.

Food Insecurity

The congregation tackled food insecurity head on this year through a range of programs. Starting in February with the Souper Bowl of Caring, the youth raised \$3,488 to address food insecurity at the Westside Men's Shelter. The Souper Bowl of Caring is a national initiative that pushes organizations to raise money and canned goods for local food programs. The youth served a free lunch of soup and sandwiches in exchange for donations.

From May to November, we supported three local food banks through bi-monthly food collections. A significant portion of the contributions come from local community members and our neighbors, making this project a shared endeavor of "neighbors helping neighbors" (to quote Catonsville Emergency Assistance). This year, the collections resulted in nine full carloads distributed between Westowne Elementary School, Grace AME, and Catonsville Emergency Assistance.

In the fall, we participated in two major initiatives: the "Adopt a Turkey" drive through Grace AME and the "Scouting for Food" drive. The former fed 345 families a complete meal on Thanksgiving, with fifty of those meals contributed by our own congregation in addition to \$2,600 in direct financial assistance. The "Scouting for Food" drive, which benefitted the food banks at Catonsville Emergency Assistance and St. Gabriel's in Woodlawn, raised 1,200 pounds of food.



Jen Lockard and Kristen MacNeal camped out on a few Fridays while waiting for contributions.

Session Retreat

In August, the Session gathered for a daylong retreat that explored leadership, ministry, and this congregation's mission. The retreat was facilitated by Roy Howard, a consultant and coach with decades of pastoral experience (pictured above). Howie Nixon wrote:

"This retreat had a powerful impact on me because I learned from our interactions about how to think more deeply, devoutly, and constructively about the decisions we will be making as members of Session. But the retreat was more than an experience of the mind. Also importantly, it was a chance to get to know the other Session members and to draw us closer together as a group.

The retreat impressed upon me the importance of seeing leadership as a collective experience, of relying on each other's different talents, and moving forward with the assurance that we can take risks together based on our shared faith and commitment. I have learned from the retreat that our church is in good hands, that I can trust others on the Session, and that our church can rely on us to make decisions that reflect our various talents and perspectives and that shared faith and commitment. I have learned, though, that there is not a single right answer and that our answers today may not be the answers we need in the future. With prayerful contemplation, openness, flexibility, and courage, we should be able to adapt as circumstances change and call for creative new answers or solutions. If we make mistakes, we must humbly accept them and move on to try to do better the next time. It is what our church deserves from us."

CPC Family Child Care Center

The Child Care Council has been hard at work over the past year. Along with another fruitful season caring for our neighbors and their families, the Child Care Council has embarked on a journey to revitalize the center's website, logo, and overall visual identity. By working with communications specialists, contractors, and graphic designers, FCCC is setting its sights on the next decade of ministry, care, and education.

Financial Report

Reflecting on the events of 2023, the financial health of CPC is very good. Here are some of the highlights for the year:

Our Operating Budget ended the year with a \$4,189 surplus. Added to 2022's surplus of \$7,173 gives us a total of \$11,362 to carry forward into 2024. Gifts from Members and Friends increased by \$30,195 or 7% over 2022, exceeding the prior five-year total increase of \$11,495 or 2.8%. On the expense side of the equation, maintenance of our facility continues to require our attention and financial resources.

Our combined investment accounts (the Envision Fund and Grace Fund) continue to recover from the devastating market decline caused by rising interest rates. Stocks have recovered fully. Bond performance will improve when interest rates decline. That said, the combined accounts returned \$266,465 or 7.9%. The Investment Budget provided \$188,000 to support Envision Grants, Mission, Buildings and Grounds, and Ministry Expansion. Funds totaling \$167,059, or 89% of the budget, were disbursed by the combined ministries.

Strong responses to Special Offerings (One Great Hour of Sharing, Peace and Global

Witness, Christmas Joy Offering, etc.) have always been part of the CPC DNA. 2023 Special Offerings totaled \$22,767.

We were blessed with two bequests in 2023 totaling \$109,594, bringing the total Bequest and Memorial Funds balance to \$299,054.

Our challenge moving forward continues to be providing sufficient income to support the Operating Budget. In this year's budget of \$626,116, \$187,578 came from sources of income other than giving from Members and Friends. Those sources are the Child Care Center's contribution, cell towers, facility use, interest, savings afforded from PPP loans, and income from our investment accounts supporting maintenance.

We are blessed by strong giving support from members and friends. And we are blessed to have the resources to fund the additional income needed to meet the budget, supporting the mission and ministries of our church.

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Class of 2026

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