



TIDINGS

JUNE 2024

Good News from Brown Memorial Park Avenue

Upcoming Events

The Brown Memorial Tutoring Program Celebration

Sunday, June 9

Location: Brown Memorial

Did you know that the BM Tutoring Program is the church's largest and longest running mission? This year marked its 60th anniversary—and the retirement of Martha Socolar, its director. Please join us for a celebration following worship on June 9, honoring Martha, the program and current and past tutors.

See page 14 for details.



What's most hopeful to me... is the recognition that church today is perhaps more needed than it's ever been.

ANDREW'S MESSAGE

Doing church differently as we move forward...

In the Fall of 2024, the personnel committee led an effort to review our staff structure to consider how we could best use our resources to meet our current congregational and missional needs.

The “what” of the redesigned staffing structure can be found in a recent email to the congregation and on page 3 of this Tidings. I want to take this opportunity to talk about the “why.”

In a recent Atlantic article reviewing The Great Dechurching, a book about declining religious life in America, the author points to research showing that while a lot of focus has been given to Americans who have left church because of abuse in churches and/or a crisis of faith, for most people, the process was gradual. “In many cases they didn't realize it was even happening until it already had.” The author describes well the paradox of a society desperate for community marked by love, sharing, eating together regularly, a generous serving of neighbors, and the investment of time required to create it from people whose lives are stretched so thin that “church attendance ends up feeling like an item on a checklist that's already too long.”

Continued pg. 2 →



For links to join hybrid events virtually, please visit the church calendar at www.browndowntown.org

Sharon Holley is retiring after 36 years as secretary at Brown, a place she loved working because “Brown stands for Justice for everyone.”

See page 4 for details.

The purpose for which God calls us into being is very clear. How we live into that calling is the issue at hand. The article matches my personal experience both within and beyond the church. People are hungry for the kind of community the church provides—open and curious about the sorts of questions about God and life that the church is skilled at exploring, and particularly intrigued by a community like ours that doesn't overtly exclude people based on the categories of exclusion that the church is sadly known for.

We just have to figure out how to make church work for those of us whose “lives are stretched like a rubber band ...” by creating alternative ways of living together.

To do that, we need a church that facilitates more engagement, more shared ownership over our life together, and more transparent ways of engaging ministry, mission, and life. Our new structure eliminates the Associate Pastor position, redistributing those resources among

- a Community Life Minister whose job is to connect and equip members and visitors for opportunities for service, participation, and belonging
- a part-time Pastoral Care Minister
- a part-time communications manager
- a part-time youth director, and
- a full-time Administrative Assistant to help us in making those connections and in sharing our story with the wider community.

This new structure is going to contribute toward some short-term growing pains. Chief among them is learning to live without Sharon Holley, who will retire effective August 31. We are thankful, though, that Sharon will not depart from us completely, as we are working on a plan for her to continue to extend her generous hospitality and grace to our community by serving as a coordinator for weddings and funerals.

The transition is also going to prompt us to do church differently. One of the limitations of our current structure has left the pastor in the center of too much decision making. While I'm very appreciative that some have expressed concern about my ability to juggle all the responsibilities of the call the way it is currently structured, the deeper issue is the limitations it places on the growth and expansion of our membership, activities, and engagement. I need to get out of the center of all things so that a more decentralized, team-oriented structure can enable us to grow. I need to deepen my engagement in membership care, growth, and development so that we

can grow—spiritually and numerically—in some of the new ways required of us in the world today.

To do that, we've created the position of a Community Life Minister to be occupied by Rachel Cunningham. In some ways, the creation of this role simply recognizes the work that Rachel already does well beyond her current job description as Christian Educator. However, the position is designed to encourage and enable deeper membership engagement, not substitute for it. Part of our challenge through the transition will be to keep this goal in mind as we determine together how staff can facilitate deeper engagement rather than get in the way of it.

A great example of these efforts will effect some changes in worship this summer. A new worship committee has come together and, with support from staff, made some very strong suggestions about summer worship that can better support connection and community. Smaller summer numbers can make some of these proposed innovations possible:

- Roping off a portion of the pews at the back to encourage the congregation to sit closer to each other,
- More informal liturgy, including sharing prayer concerns more often from the floor, expanded use of the piano, and other opportunities to encourage community and connection,
- Encouraging a more relaxed atmosphere through “come as you are” dress and a temporary break from worship attire for the clergy,
- Offering drinks and cookies before and after worship and encouraging coffee and tea drinkers to get comfortable with their beverages in church (with closed lid mugs!),
- A “pop-up” choir once a month or so that those who are present can show up at 9 a.m. on a Sunday morning and participate in choral singing at 10:30 a.m.

I'm excited about the months and years ahead of us. We've come out of a multi-year slog with new clarity about the community that we desire and are now taking some important steps to prioritize it now and into the future.

Should you have questions about the changes or wish to talk them through with me or a member of the personnel team that helped establish the plan, you can contact any of the members, including Amy Bonitz Palmer and Laura Urban (co-chairs), Andy Ross, Elizabeth Reichelt, and Ann Teaff.

NEW STAFFING STRUCTURE: AN OVERVIEW

*Laura Urban and Amy Bonitz Palmer, co-chairs,
Staffing Realignment Task Force*

As explained by Andrew in the Pastor's Column on page 1, the Session has approved the following positions for church staff.

Pastoral Care Minister

Gretchen van Utt will serve as the Pastoral Care Minister, providing pastoral care, leadership, and support to the Deacons and assistance in worship. This is a part-time position and is similar to the role Gretchen has been filling on a contract basis since September 2023.

Congregational Life Minister

Rachel Cunningham, now serving as Christian Educator, will move into a new position, the full-time Congregational Life Minister, starting this spring. She will be responsible for connecting and including members of all ages in the life of the congregation. She will focus on recruiting, training, and connecting volunteers. She will lead the overall vision for Christian formation and education from birth to adulthood and coordinate Inquirers' Classes (with the Senior Pastor). She also will serve as the primary liaison and decision-maker for building use by community groups and church programming, avoiding or resolving calendar conflicts. While this position includes portions of the current Christian Educator role, it has expanded duties, responsibility, and authority not held in any current position.

Administrative Assistant

This new, full-time position (target start date of 9/1) will give critical support to staff and volunteers in serving the congregation and community to fulfill our mission. In addition to helping to contact, schedule, and enlist congregants to volunteer in church programs and activities, the Administrative Assistant will manage the church database and train volunteers to use it and to help with other technology and office tasks. Although the job description includes portions of the current Church Secretary role, it also includes expanded duties, responsibility, and authority not held in any current position. (Sharon Holley plans to retire at the end of the summer. See story on the next page about her countless contributions as Church Secretary.)



Communications Manager

This new, part-time position will be responsible for developing and implementing a church- and community-wide communications strategy. Working closely with the Communications Committee, Congregational Life Minister, and Administrative Assistant, the Communications Manager will be responsible for all BMPA print and electronic communications and publications, including the website and social media. The Communications Manager also will consider advertising or other means to heighten Brown's profile in the community. This position will be advertised this spring with the goal of filling it by early summer.

Youth Director

The part-time Youth Director will be responsible for envisioning, planning, promoting, and implementing programming for Tweens and Middle and High School youth. The Youth Director will build upon existing programming to create and deepen opportunities for spiritual formation, peer and mentor relationships, fellowship, and Christian mission. This position is similar to the one now held by Eva Hendrix-Shovlin, who will move into this expanded role.

Other Positions

The church relies also on many other talented staff members to support the life and ministry of the congregation. These positions will not be changing: Minister of Music, Finance Manager, Media Specialist, Facilities Manager, Nursery Caregivers, and Choir soloists.

SHARON HOLLEY*Christy Macy**“She is so much more...”*

For the past 36 years the first person most people see when they come to Brown Memorial is Sharon Holley sitting in the front office. Sharon’s official title is Administrative Assistant, but she is so much more than that, being helpful to everyone in the church community with their needs large and small.

Finding her way to Brown was no easy journey. Her family was often on the move, so Sharon had to keep changing schools. Eventually, burdened with multiple family crises, she dropped out of school. Later, as she began to raise her own family, including twin girls, she needed to find a way to earn a living. With support from her mother, Sharon was able to earn her GED. She then completed a clerk-typing and word-processing course. The next hurdle: finding a job.

When she heard that Brown Memorial had a job opening, she applied. She interviewed with Pastor David Malone and was hired. At first, she admits, she was a bit nervous. “Some people thought I wouldn’t last, that I was too quiet,” Sharon recalls. “But I loved working at Brown,” she says, “because it stood for justice for everyone.” Sharon said she had been raised in the Baptist church tradition, which was a “place where being gay and lesbian was a sin, and men talked down to women.” At Brown, however, “you can be who you are and love who you want to love.” She also appreciated that the church fought for fair wages and helped children through its after-school Child First program.

“I was so happy to be at Brown and see all that it did in the community from the ground up.”

One of Sharon’s early responsibilities at Brown was to help supervise the families living in the church basement as part of the Bethany Project, an initiative led by the Episcopal Social Ministry to support homeless families in Baltimore. This was at times difficult, but Sharon was particularly pleased with one mother who turned her life around as a result of the program. “She went back to school, her boys got straight A’s in school, and she became a counselor at



Recognizing the 36 years of Sharon’s service, the personnel committee is organizing a farewell committee to help us all give her a sendoff that adequately expresses our gratitude. That celebration will take place on Sunday, September 29, during and after worship.

Job Corps,” Sharon remembers. “She was a real success story thanks to Brown giving her a second chance.”

Sharon appreciates Brown’s ongoing leadership in promoting social justice initiatives around the city. Over the years she has brought her own children to community demonstrations organized by Brown and other churches to promote causes such as marriage equality. “I stood outside the church during that election, asking people to support the initiative,” she says.

Sharon continues to love being part of Brown Memorial, calling it “my family away from family.” When she can’t come to church, she joins the services on Zoom where “I see some of my favorite people and I feel so happy.”

Sharon plans to retire on August 31, and all of us wish her the best. But all is not lost! Sharon would like to continue offering her services for weddings and other celebrations, so we will surely see her warm, welcoming smile again.

**JULIE HANKS: FROM WWII IMPRISONMENT TO BMPA** • *Anne Heuvelser*

Born in a leper colony, imprisoned there by the Japanese during World War II, Julie Hanks eventually landed at BMPA, where she has made untold contributions. From taking care of infants to dancing with the Cameroon choir to arranging Easter lilies, Julie has been a vital presence in the BMPA congregation for almost sixty years.

Julie served two terms as leader of the deacons and two terms as an elder. She taught Sunday School (preschoolers) and is now assisting other teachers. She sang in the choir (alto) and rang the bells. She helped with the Eutaw-Marshburn Elementary School children’s choir summer camps.

Julie chaired the Global Mission group for many years and has gone on mission trips to our sister congregations in El Salvador, Cameroon, and the Upper Sioux Reservation (Pejuhutazizi) in Minnesota. She participated in the Pejuhutazizi project thirteen years.

Julie has traveled to Africa four times, twice to Cameroon to our sister congregation there. She is sometimes seen wearing one of the three dresses presented to her by the Cameroon congregation; her favorite is black, embroidered with many colorful threads. Andrew occasionally wears a shawl brought to him by Julie as a gift from the Cameroon congregation. On World Communion Sunday, Julie brings out artifacts such as Communion chalices from our missions – El Salvador, Cameroon, and Pejuhutazizi – to grace the Communion table. She is eagerly anticipating some additions from Cuba.

Julie once arranged for a memorable experience stemming from our Cameroon connection. An all-Cameroon choir from Silver Spring Presbyterian Church (which has a sizeable African community of students at George Washington or American Universities) visited a BMPA Sunday worship service. Their participation included dancing down the center aisle in praise. Julie in her ceremonial dress joined the troupe.

Most of us know that Julie is the leader of the group who dresses up the sanctuary for Christmas and Easter with the glorious poinsettias and lilies. She has been doing this for over thirty years, first as helper and then as leader for the past fifteen. “It’s something that I




Snap Shots

Julie Hanks wearing one of her dresses from Cameroon.

absolutely love,” she said, “—to decorate the beautiful sanctuary for Christmas and Easter and any special occasion.”

Julie was born in the Philippines, where her father was a microbiologist doing research on leprosy. Her whole family – mother, father, two brothers, and her infant self – were imprisoned by the Japanese before and during World War II. They were under a sort of house-arrest, as the Japanese were so fearful of leprosy that they stayed fifteen miles off the island of Culion, the site of the leper colony. Julie’s family were imprisoned in their house for three years before World War II and for three years during the war. They were rescued by the U. S. Air Force when Julie was fifteen months old.

Retiring as assistant principal from her career as an elementary-school teacher, Julie finds herself almost busier than during her working years. She extends her love for the sanctuary these days by volunteering at the church on Wednesday afternoons to show visitors the labyrinth and the gorgeous Tiffany windows. On Thursdays she has drawn upon her teaching experience to care for Afghan babies and toddlers, aged fifteen months to three years (twelve of them!) while their mothers learned English.

With her ready smile and generous spirit, Julie continues to be a shining light in a congregation of many such lights, welcoming all comers and opportunities to nurture the spirit of our community.

FAITH IN ADVENTURE GROUP • Louise Wagner

If reading in community gives you comfort and enjoyment, consider joining the Faith in Adventure Group.

Each Monday before we meet, we read one chapter in *We Make the Road by Walking* by Brian McLaren and his suggested scripture readings for that particular chapter. These readings are a springboard and/or guide to our discussions which can be free-form and cover a



wide variety of topics: religion, human nature, politics, music, personal challenges and successes, and more.

The group which began during Lent 2023, **meets every Monday evening on Zoom from 7:30-8:30.** Members include Louise Wagner, Henry Taylor, Susan Haugh, Rachel Clark & Barbara Cates. Please call any one of us if you'd like to sit in or join.

WALKING BROWN'S LABYRINTH: LOVE THE PEACE • Ashton Worley

In Greek mythology, a labyrinth was an elaborate, confusing structure designed and built by the legendary Daedalus for King Minos of Crete. Its function was to hold the Minotaur, the monster eventually killed by Theseus. Labyrinths were also used in Egyptian temples, cathedrals of the Middle Ages, the most famous of which is Chartres, and so on. As they evolved, they became less like a maze and developed more of a contemplative purpose. Nowadays, they have become increasingly popular and can be found in churches, schools, hospitals, parks, and in homes.

Brown's maze was part of the renovation in the 90's. It was given by Jim Schuman in memory of his son and daughter-in-law, Eric, and Kristine Schuman after their untimely death. It is an original design, fashioned



out of dark and light cork, by The Labyrinth Company of Baltimore. It consists of a seven-circuit pathway, arcing through seven circles to reach a central space.

There is no right or wrong way to walk the labyrinth.

Most agree, however, it is most useful to follow the design to the center and then back out, meditating or praying on the way or in the center.

The labyrinth is currently open to the public on Wednesdays from 12 to 3 pm, with volunteers to facilitate.

Being transgender can make it somewhat intimidating to join a church choir, but everyone has been incredibly welcoming, respectful, and kind. I feel very comfortable here and find it very refreshing to see a church community that doesn't just talk about being inclusive, but actually makes an effort to see that people of all genders and orientations feel at home. I really enjoy singing in the choir and making music at Brown, and a big part of that enjoyment comes from being in a congregation who genuinely care about making a positive difference in the world.

As a choir member since September 2023, I am planning to continue singing next fall as well! Since graduating, I've been working as a private voice teacher."

YOUNG VOICES ENRICH BROWNS' CHOIR

The church choir at Brown Memorial has been enriched over the years by many talented musicians from the community and by trained students from Peabody. One such student is Ashton Worley:

"Singing with the choir at Brown this past year has been such a wonderful experience. Despite the challenge of adjusting to different directors, the choir has remained cheerful and dedicated to creating a meaningful worship experience through music. It's inspiring to see a choir that has formed such deep and long-lasting relationships among members and such a strong commitment to service.

GRADUATING SENIORS

Karoon Armand

Hello, my name is Karoon Armand.

I am a senior and high school student who will attend UMD in the fall. I have attended, been baptized, and confirmed at Brown Memorial, so I would have to say that this church has been a major part of my life.

Through the opportunities provided by Brown, I have met many friends in the church and throughout the country. These opportunities have allowed me to broaden my horizons and knowledge by talking and living with people I would have otherwise frankly not have cared about.

That is why I feel Brown Memorial's power, at least for the youth of the church, is its ability to continue to provide opportunities through the Presbyterian church.

Even though I am no longer as religious as I once was, I still feel a strong connection with the community at Brown and am very thankful for the opportunities and friendships that this church and the people of this church have provided me.

Cecelia Reichelt

Hello! My name is Cecelia Reichelt

I have grown up going to Brown Memorial. I was baptized at Brown, and have many fond memories going to Wednesday Nights at Brown, Sunday school, and other church activities.

Brown has given me a space to grow, ask questions, and build life-long friendships, and I am grateful for the loving and welcoming church community that I grew up in.

My last year at Brown has been one of my favorites because I have been working closely with the youth group, and have loved spending time with the younger kids. Through play and community, we've been growing as individuals and as a group.

I've also grown up going on the church retreats, and this year's was no exception. The church retreat is always one of my favorite parts of Brown Memorial. It gives me an opportunity to build closer relationships with the rest of the community, while spending time in nature and participating in unique and enriching activities.

After graduation, I will be attending Florida State University to study biology on a marine biology track. I am going to miss seeing everyone's faces on Sunday, but I'll always come back to visit!

graduates

DEACONS

Al Fisher



Brent Bellinger

My grandfather was a Presbyterian minister who moved his family in 1963 from a sleepy suburb of Pittsburgh to a redlined neighborhood in Philadelphia to get involved with the civil rights movement. That family story of activism serves as a cornerstone of my faith.

My own story also starts in a sleepy suburb - this time outside Philadelphia, where I grew up in the Presbyterian Church where my parents were members. I went to college at the University of Pittsburgh in 2002 with a desire to get a historical perspective of Christianity. Yet, when I graduated with a bachelor's degree in English and History (with a concentration in Jewish-Christian Relations), I realized much of my own church experience was more conservative than I was and less active in social justice than I wanted to be. In 2007, I moved to Baltimore to teach English at Patapsco High School in Dundalk, a position I hold to this day.

When I found Brown Memorial in 2008, I felt as though I had found a spiritual home. I was most drawn to its social justice mission and to the way fostered critical thought in its youth. You can frequently find me in the back of the sanctuary waiting with bated breath for what my daughter, Rowan, will say next during the Time With The Children.

I appreciate being nominated to serve as a Deacon. It is my first position at Brown, and I hope to serve the congregation (and my grandfather's memory) with grace and humility.



Ed Hambleton

Raised in a large family, I lived in New York City and then in Timonium on the weekends. The family business was the theater, where my father managed the Phoenix Theater, producing shows on and off-Broadway. We attended the Episcopal Church, but listening to my father read lessons from the Bible and praying together at home with my family had the greatest impact on me.

My early career was acting; I trained professionally and found work at Center Stage in Baltimore. I then transitioned to the business side of the theater, managing productions on tour and off Broadway. After the birth of my daughter, and faced with a scarcity of theater jobs, I joined the business world, working in sales for many years. Recently I have been fortunate to work with Meals On Wheels as a Site Coordinator in Dundalk.

My volunteer work has been as a Court Appointed Special Advocate, or CASA. I am an avid tennis player. I enjoy traveling with my wife Gail and spending time with our children and our large extended family.

In 2013 as Gail and I were looking for a church where we would marry, we discovered Brown Memorial. We were drawn by the congregation's energy and welcoming spirit and their commitment to beautiful music, and by Andrew's leadership. Since joining the church in 2019 I have joined the choir, a joyful, uplifting experience, thanks to Michael Britt's loving guidance.

I believe my faith is nurtured by a sense of community, and my participation with the Brown congregation has allowed it to grow. It is for that reason that I accepted the position of Deacon when asked. I have enjoyed the spirit of camaraderie working with the other Deacons. The opportunity to offer support to members of this congregation has been deeply rewarding, and I look forward to growing those relationships in the future.

Nadia B. Hensley

As a child in the rural South, I grew up surrounded by family, community, nature, and church. My religious background was in the Southern Baptist Church, which was deeply conservative and patriarchal. Women were not allowed to be leaders in the church, including deacons or ministers.



I am a practicing cardiac anesthesiologist at Johns Hopkins Hospital, and I take care of patients who need heart surgery, lung surgery, vascular surgery, or treatment of problems with electrical conduction of the heart. While I enjoy the complexity of clinical care, I also find purpose in providing quality, safety, and service for the Department of Anesthesiology and Critical Care Medicine, as well as in conducting research, and teaching residents and fellows.

Outside of my career, I love being a mom to my 8-year-old Beverly and 10-year-old Clementine and being a wife to Jonathan. I also find joy in my lifelong love of running and my new pursuit of cycling. This past fall I was truly grateful to volunteer as the soccer coach for my youngest daughter, Beverly. Although I had to learn the rules of soccer very quickly, since I had never played it, it was rewarding to see the spirit, joy, and growth of the 8-year-old girls as they developed their skills and worked as a team.

What I find most meaningful in my work as Deacon is reaching out to those who are experiencing a health issue, the death of someone close to them, and other challenging circumstances. I am grateful to have this opportunity and enjoy getting to know others in the church community.



Currently David is in his fourth term as a Deacon and has served as chair and co-chair of that board during parts of his tenure.

David Lascu

A graduate of Central Michigan University with a degree in Psychology and Computer Science, David started his career in higher education and worked in a variety of administrative positions, including Assistant Dean of Students and eventually Academic Dean at several colleges and universities. David has also taught at the college level in Business/Management, Marketing, and Human Resources. For a number of years he taught Adult Basic Education courses at Baltimore City Community College, preparing students to earn their high school diploma through the Maryland GED Program. After earning a Master's degree in Social Work at the University of Maryland, he worked as a Psychiatric Rehabilitation Counselor before retiring.

When he first moved to Baltimore from Michigan, he chose Light Street Presbyterian Church as his new spiritual home and then began worshipping at Brown Memorial over six years ago. During his time at Brown he has participated

in weekly Bible study, monthly Theology on Tap gatherings, adult Christian education, and volunteered in Brown's tutoring program. He has also served on the Worship, Diversity, Anti-Racism and Nominating committees. He also enjoys being part of the Handbell Choir. He has been excited to play a role in the ministry of congregational care and continues to provide support to anyone seeking assistance in their spiritual journey. In addition to his many activities at Brown Memorial, in August 2023 David was selected as a Justice Fellow at the Institute of Islamic, Christian, and Jewish Studies (ICJS), and he will be participating in this interfaith fellowship experience through 2024.



Jonna Gane Lazarus

My husband Fred and I joined Brown Memorial about 40 years ago, at a time when we wanted to expose our children to some religious education. Thankfully, this congregation turned out to be a perfect choice for us.

I grew up in Jamestown, in western New York, and then went away to college at the Rochester Institute of Technology, where I majored in business and design. After graduation, I accepted a position in Chicago at Carson Pirie Scott and Company as a junior executive in training. After six stimulating years of working in home furnishings, I met and married Fred Lazarus in 1970, and we moved to Washington, D.C., where he was working. After some years of active museum volunteer work, I returned to school and earned a certificate in Landscape Architecture, which is the field I worked in until I retired ten years ago.

Our two children, Anna and Fritz, are now grown and living in northern Virginia and Rhode Island, respectively, and we have one grandson, Boone, in Rhode Island.

I have served as an elder for three terms, and a trustee for two terms, and I am honored to be serving currently as a Deacon.

Our church life at Brown Memorial has continued to be a very satisfying and rich part of our lives.



Matt McNabney

I am originally from Kansas City. I grew up and went to college and medical school there. I am 61 years old and blessed with a wonderful family. My wife Laura and I have four children and raised them all in Bolton Hill – just around the corner from Brown Memorial! We love our neighborhood and the church community. We are all big supporters of Baltimore, and we embrace everything about this great city. We take the good with the challenging and always defend Baltimore.

As a geriatrician – a doctor who specializes in the care of older adults – I love what I do and consider it an honor to become so involved with very interesting people in the later decades of life. I have spent many years of my career working with John Burton, another member of Brown Memorial. He has been a great mentor to me.

I have enjoyed attending Brown Memorial since the mid-1990s. All of our children were baptized here. For the past two years, I have been a Deacon and take that role very seriously. I also consider it a great honor, yet am always looking for direction on how to be more effective as a deacon and, thus, welcome input from others in the congregation.



Grace Peng

Grace has been a member of Brown Memorial since 1998, after she and her husband Mehran were married in the church by Rev. Roger Gench (along with significant assistance from Jim Schuman and Gene Belt!). Grace first served as a Deacon in the early 2000's and then served as an Elder. Now she has returned to serve as a Deacon.

Born in Chicago and raised Presbyterian, she is a biomedical engineer by training and has worked at the National Institutes of Health since 2002, supporting technology research for improving medicine.

Grace and Mehran have two sons, Yari, 21, and Karoon 17. As a family, they enjoyed partnering with the Native American community in Minnesota as one of the inaugural families participating in the Pejuhutazizi Baltimore-Dakota Family Learning Camp (when planning for that program began in 2012). Mehran and Grace taught robotics, and Yari and Karoon went from being campers to counselors over the next 9 years. During the pandemic the family adopted Remi, their fur child (a dog rescued from Louisiana). Nowadays, the family enjoys taking Remi on new adventures in nature, cooking with Karoon, and watching football (both American style and soccer).

What Grace enjoys most as a Deacon is listening to stories from the church community. Grace is assigned to the church families with last names starting with M and N and always looks forward to hearing from them!



Deborah Richardson

I previously served as a Deacon at Riverdale Presbyterian Church, in University Park, Maryland. And, as a lifelong Presbyterian, I have also served in the music ministry in churches of many other denominations. It has been a special honor to lift up God in music and a pleasure to also serve in that ministry with my husband, Rees. We have two adult sons, Hoyt and Stephen.

Throughout my life, I have stayed busy with writing, directing and acting in plays at Riverdale Presbyterian. I have also worked hard for more effective mental health services and gun control policies. For the past six years I have been working with Afghan immigrants, teaching them English, tutoring their children, and helping them with other basic skills such as making budgets and getting jobs.

Now that I have retired from work both as a church music director and as an office manager of a geriatric psychiatric practice, I have the time to enjoy taking college classes through senior programs. These classes have given me the chance to take English for Speakers of Other Languages training that I needed, as well as classes in art, music, computers, women in history, and current events. I enjoy Bible study at Brown on Zoom and encourage others to join. I was very happy to participate in the final year of learning and music camps with the Eutaw Marshburn Elementary School students.

Brown is a wonderful church community with so many great opportunities to participate.



Dianne Ross

I was born in Indiana, Pennsylvania, a college town of 10,000 people, about an hour from Pittsburgh and grew up as an active Lutheran. As an adult, however, I lived in Cleveland, Ohio; Council Bluffs, Iowa; and Baltimore and became an active participant in Episcopal, Lutheran, and United Church of Christ congregations. For the past 30 years, I've been a member of Brown Memorial.

My first job after college was as an English teacher. Later I became a clinical social worker and worked with older adults, and then with teenagers in a correctional setting, in schools, in a hospital, and with people with HIV and AIDS. My final job was supervising a foster care treatment program with The Arc in Harford County.

A highlight of my life is having a teen-aged foster son, with whom my husband and I are still in regular contact after 50 years. My husband and I also have two daughters. You may know Emily Brown and her family, members of Brown. My husband and I have travelled through Europe, Asia, Northern Africa, and most of the United States.

Being a Deacon is rewarding and demands thoughtful consideration. I want to respect people's privacy, yet offer support and assistance as needed.

It is an honor to participate in this program and a joy getting to know more people in the congregation.



TEACHING OUR CHILDREN

Betty Dickie



This year, for a change, the children leave after the pastor's time with them, and go to their classrooms—pre-kindergarten-2nd grade, and 3rd through 6th graders. Each class is led by a teacher with an assistant. Class begins with a welcome song calling everyone's name, and then the lesson. The curriculum focuses on foundational understanding of the Bible stories and Christian traditions. It also offers choices of lesson styles—acting out, puppets, games, etc.

Each class includes two teams of five teachers and assistants which allows a teacher to miss only one church service a month. While that's good, it does take away a bit of continuity—but so far no one's complaining.

Assistant Theresa Veatch has been teaching for about 10 years and enjoys “watching the children grow and learn.”

Katie Shaw is a first-time teacher working with her own children.

Julie Hanks came back to teaching when Rachel was going on sabbatical and “wanted to help and it has been great fun. The kids are great!”

Laura Urban loves studying and learning about the lessons. “It's nice getting to know which child goes with which parent. Putting people together.”

A nursery program attracts one or two. **Kazi Rayhan** and **Masrora** enjoy looking after the toddlers. Kazi loves children and volunteers in art classes. “I hope to have my own someday.”

Brown Memorial offers many ways to involve our children in the life of the church. And one of the most important is growing their faith.



Current Teacher Roster

Teacher	Assistant
Brent Bellinger	Natalie Kelly
Darrel Glaser	Elizabeth Nash
Katie Shaw	Julie Hanks
Jonathon Hensley	Sarah Egan
Rachael Edgin	Eloise Crew
Laura Urban	Ella Palmer
Nancy Yeadon	Gillian Rainey
Dianne Ross	Ann Babinsky
Rachell Cunningham	Theresa Veatch
Jim Veatch	Rebecca Crew

Martha Socolar, 2024



“Between working with incredibly inspiring, talented and dedicated staff and tutors; supportive and grateful principals and teachers; and so many wonderful children, my job at the Brown Memorial Tutoring Program has exceeded my expectations and filled my heart with joy. Witnessing a child read for the first time or finally making sense of the reading code NEVER gets old.”



Clark Mock, Tutor 1973-1975



Former Director Sally Robinson from 1973-82 (right) and a parent



Join tutors past and present, old friends of the program, new friends and lots of supporters to celebrate Martha and this momentous sixty-year anniversary Wednesday, June 12, 5-7pm at the Brown Fellowship Room.

BROWN MEMORIAL TUTORING PROGRAM CELEBRATES 60TH YEAR AND SAYS GOODBYE TO LONG-SERVING PROGRAM DIRECTOR • Tracy Cerrato

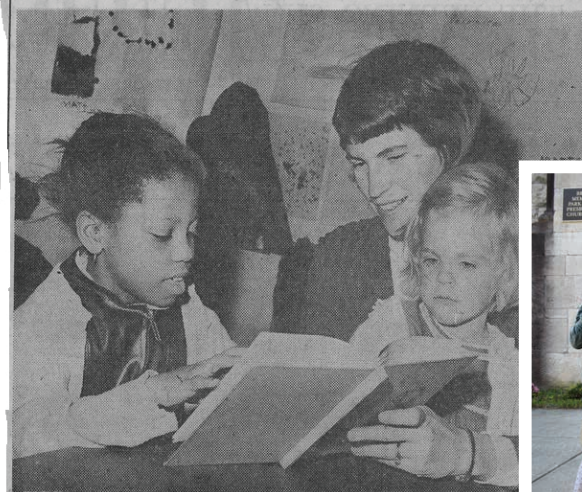
60 years ago, Brown Memorial Church member Mary Taylor held a firm belief in the power of education and the human encounter to help children in Baltimore City. She met with other concerned Brown Memorial members and Associate Pastor Reverend Hoover, and together they decided to develop a tutoring program in reading for select children who attended nearby Mt. Royal Elementary School. With support from the school's principal, Saturday morning tutoring sessions began during the 1963-64 school year with ten students and ten tutors. (Karen Nelson, Tutorial: A 50-Year History).

Since that time, the Brown Memorial Tutoring Program has grown in both scope and mission. For the 2023-2024 year, we have enrolled seventy-six children from our three school partners, trained sixty-three tutors, and are operating with a budget of over \$215,000.

Martha Socolar, who is retiring at the end of this school year, has played a pivotal role in this growth.

Martha assumed the role of Director in 2008 after serving seven years as Assistant Director (and before that as a tutor for four years!). As the tenth Program Director, Martha saw the establishment of the Tutoring Commission, a major renovation to the tutoring space, the professionalization and expansion of the tutor training, and an 85% tutor retention rate. Throughout her tenure, at least 90% of enrolled students made measurable progress every year.

Over the last six decades, the Brown Memorial Tutoring Program has served nearly 3,000 Baltimore City elementary school students, helping struggling readers increase proficiency and discover the joy of books. Now, as we look ahead to the next sixty years, we remain committed to the Science of Reading and to continuing our legacy of transforming lives through helping students build their skills, gain confidence, and awaken the love of reading!



READING TUTOR—Mrs. Sherry Jelsma, holding daughter Rebecca, helps Corina with her reading as part of a tutorial project.



Volunteer Tutorial Projects Help Slow Readers From Eutaw School

By John Papperheimer

A volunteer tutorial project is giving slow readers from the Eutaw Elementary School individual attention and an added boost. Since the fall some 25 youngsters have been coming of their own volition to the tutorial project Wednesday and Thursday afternoons in the Brown Memorial Presbyterian Church in the 1300 block Park avenue. Many of them are shy in a big classroom, explained Mrs. Sherry Jelsma, a young Radcliffe College graduate who is heading the tutorial project, now in its fifth year. "They are the ones you expect to find in the back row of a classroom and not saying anything," she said. "We try to draw the children out of themselves, get them to talk about themselves. They have almost no span and we try to get interested in anything for five minutes," Mrs. Jelsma said. The project appears to be working at the table the...

1969 Baltimore Sun article about the Tutoring Program



Tutors and Students, 1983



Tutors and Students circa 1970's



Brown members joined 130 leaders for Tuesday's press conference on May 28 celebrating the end of parole fees in Maryland and the new Turnaround Tuesday location in Franklin Square at Greater Harvest Baptist Church!

BUILD ADVOCACY SUCCEEDS

Erika Brockman

While the work of BUILD can sometimes seem abstract and slow moving, this past legislative session reminds us that people-power really can move the needle on complex, seemingly intractable problems. Many BMPA members traveled to Annapolis this year. Each person's participation in BUILD advocacy efforts makes change possible. We can all celebrate the following legislative accomplishments:

Brown's BUILD team helped push legislators to include in this year's state budget Governor Moore's historic commitment to address vacant and abandoned housing. The bill includes \$50 million for Project CORE this year.

Your advocacy also convinced our representatives to extend Project CORE beyond this year. They ensured an annual minimum allocation of \$50 million, which will produce at least \$750 million for Baltimore over the next 15 years.

Your efforts helped make Project CORE a more flexible policy, permitting it to be used as a credit enhancement. The funds now may be leveraged further to address Baltimore's vacant houses.

The House and Senate both passed a bill that will end parole fees in Maryland. Our state had been the only state in the DMV to charge former inmates for their own parole. This bill moved at lightning speed, thanks to the efforts of Turnaround Tuesday and our very own Cheryl Finney and Patti Flowers-Coulson.

PROJECT C.O.R.E

Project C.O.R.E., or Creating Opportunities for Revitalization and Equity, means a new canvas for Baltimore, clearing the way for new green space, new affordable and mixed use housing, new and greater opportunities for small business owners to innovate and grow. The initiative will generate jobs, strengthen the partnership between the City of Baltimore and the State of Maryland and lead to safer, healthier and more attractive spaces for families to live and put down roots.

The goals of Project C.O.R.E. are to

- support community growth in Baltimore City
- eliminate in a strategic manner as many full blocks of blight as possible
- encourage investment in Project C.O.R.E. communities through attractive financing and other incentives.

BROWN MEMORIAL MINISTRY OF WELCOME

Barbara Cook

Our Ministry of Welcome has continued its important work with the immigrant communities here in Baltimore. Among the highlights were the following:

In February, Jessica Santos (below) and her four children presented to Brown Memorial with a request to assist them with rent and food. They had recently immigrated from Honduras, asking for asylum. Our generous congregation was able to pay their rent for a month and collected two cars full of food and household supplies along with \$750 in cash. Thanks especially to Chrystie Adams who took the whole family shopping for clothes. They are now settled in a good neighborhood in Dundalk and Jessica has been able to find work.

Also in February, we were treated to lunch prepared by our Afghan neighbors. All who attended will testify to how delicious the meal was. We are hoping that they will provide an encore feast. We are also happy to report that we have found part-time jobs for some of the women - cooking for a family on Bolton Hill, preparing a weekly lunch for a member at Beth Am Synagogue who shares it with folks in her neighborhood, and baby-sitting for some of the teens.

Our biggest project this quarter has been providing ESL classes for the Afghan women. Premier teachers Judy Jones, Liz Smith and Karen Stokes have been meeting weekly at Brown since mid-March. Then there are the incredible nursery workers who have provided a wonderful experience for the 15 toddlers while their moms are in class - Chrystie Adams, Shakila Ariaey, Jo Funk and Julie Hanks. The women are so happy with their classes.



"Our biggest project this quarter has been providing ESL classes for the Afghan women. ...there are the incredible nursery workers who have provided a wonderful experience for the 15 toddlers while their moms are in class."

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BROWN'S LONG COMMITMENT PROVIDING MEALS FOR THE HUNGRY AT OUR DAILY BREAD

Karen Stokes, Gayle Barney

Brown Memorial has long been a devoted supporter of Our Daily Bread (ODB), contributing at least 3,500 casseroles over the past 15 years. Participation began as part of a response to the financial recession in 2009, and Brown's first organizers were Cheryl Finney, Karen Nelson and Rachel Cunningham.

Our Daily Bread (ODB) describes itself as a Catholic Charities hot-meal program nested in a package of available services of the sort needed by many of its users: employment services, drug treatment, housing needs, translation/interpretation, help with applications and medical referrals. People may come initially for the food and end up using other services. Hot meals have been provided every day for over 40 years, although during the pandemic they were provided on a pick-up basis.

Begun June 1, 1981, ODB has never missed a day of lunch service to individuals experiencing hunger in Baltimore and, in the past 10 years, has tallied some pretty impressive stats in the process:

- Serving 2.6 million meals, on average 228,000 meals per year
- Placing 2,000 people in jobs
- Helping 500 people find housing
- Serving between 600 and 800 people daily—anyone in need of a meal, even if the need is just due to a temporary emergency.

Donated casseroles from churches across the city form the backbone of the meals, supplemented by donated produce and baked goods from local growers, bakeries, and food stores, prepared as needed by staff.

Brown commits to provide 20 casseroles a month to ODB which has 13 approved casserole recipes (including vegan and vegetarian options). All are available on their website and through Brown Memorial.

The ODB Committee at Brown chooses a recipe-of-the month and provides the recipe and pans (from ODB) available in the Narthex.

If you'd like to help with a casserole: your prepared casseroles should be placed in the ODB-labelled section of the kitchen freezer and will be picked up and delivered to ODB the 3rd Sunday of each month. If you miss the 3rd Sunday pick-up, just place your labeled casserole in the freezer and it will be delivered the next month. If you don't have time to cook one month, Stauffer's Family-size Mac and Cheese casseroles are accepted.

OTHER VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

ODB is usually looking for volunteers. You must be at least 14 (accompanied by an adult). Volunteers 15 and over can come alone and may receive community service credits.

If you have questions about ODB at Brown or are interested in helping with other aspects of the program such as delivery or notifications, contact Gayle Barney at traveltwins@aol.com.

If you are interested in volunteering at the dining room, located at 725 Fallsway in downtown Baltimore, fill out the volunteer form on their web site or contact Brown member, Karen Stokes at karen.stokes2@gmail.com

“It’s not just a meals program—it’s a moment, a movement to not only feed the hungry, but to give those who struggle an opportunity to regain their lives. That’s living the gospel.”

Bill McCarthy, Executive Director of Catholic Charities



Many “regulars” at the ODB table are isolated, living in substandard housing, often elderly, with no supportive family members. They often come into the ODB dining room and find a table with old friends from the program, making it the closest thing they have to a family meal. They are treated with great respect by the volunteers who serve them.

BALTIMORE DAKOTA LEARNING CAMPS: WHAT ARE THEY AND HOW CAN I GET INVOLVED?

Christy Adams

Have you ever considered becoming a part of one of Baltimore Dakota Learning Camps?

This partnership between the Baltimore and Dakota Presbyteries has been a source of spiritual growth, joy and renewed and new friendships within our Presbytery of Baltimore and with our friends in the Dakota Presbytery since 2003. Our partnership was formalized in 2010 and renewed in 2015 and 2020.

Since this is one of the three Baltimore Presbytery partnerships—BDLC, Cuba and Guatemala—all the churches in our Presbytery can take part in the summer camps of our BDLC partnership. Brown Memorial was one of the very first partner churches along with Govans Presbyterian, Perry Hall Presbyterian and Kenwood Presbyterian. To date, 26 Baltimore Presbytery churches have been a part of the BDLC.

Brown members have volunteered for the following camps:

- Makasan Pre-School, Elementary and Teen Camps (Pine Ridge Reservation)
- Pine Ridge Learning Camp (Pine Ridge Reservation)
- Porcupine Learning Camp (Pine Ridge Reservation)
- Sisseton Learning Camp (Lake Traverse Reservation)
- Ihanktonwan Learning Camp (Yankton Sioux Reservation)
- Pejuhutazizi Family Learning Camp (Upper Sioux Community)

The BDLC is all about getting to know the community — both the children and their families, and build lasting relationships with the communities where the camps are held. During full days at camp, Baltimore participants experience cultural activities in the community like the annual Wacipi(Powwow) and weekend Family Night where everyone gathers for a potluck and camp sharing. It’s a blast!

Our mission: To follow the teachings of Jesus Christ by honoring and nurturing the lives of children, youth, and adults through educational partnerships with the ministries of the Native American churches which comprise the Dakota Presbytery

Brown members and their friends (you don't have to be Presbyterian to volunteer!) of all ages and backgrounds (kindergarten through 80+) have been a strong support for the BDLC partnership over the past 22 years. There is a place for all who wish to be a part of BDLC.

Brown Memorial came up with the idea for the Pejuhutazizi Family Learning Camp where parents and children and youth can all be a part of the summer learning camp experience. Parents and teens (going into Grade 10) are trained as staff members and the children (Kindergarten through 10th Grade) are campers and join the Dakota children and youth from the Upper Sioux Community.

Camp applications are available starting at the end of January with an application due date of April 1st. New staff interviews are held in April and all staff attend two staff training sessions which include Mandatory Child Protection and Cultural Sensitivity Training.

For more information check out the BDLC website: baltimoredakotalearningcamps.org.



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Thank you!



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MEMORIAL
PARK AVENUE**

TIDINGS

browndowntown.org