



# TIDINGS

OCTOBER 2024

Good News from Brown Memorial Park Avenue

## Upcoming Events

See Inside Back Cover for mid-October through December 2024 Brown Memorial events.

For links to join hybrid events virtually, please visit the church calendar at [www.browndowntown.org](http://www.browndowntown.org).



You may have been noticing new faces around Brown or hearing new voices on the other end of the phone if you've recently called the church offices. There's been a big staffing update at Brown, and we're introducing everyone in this issue of Tidings. Be sure to check out everyone's bios!

See page 4 for details.



*We're here to facilitate the discipleship work of the entire church, most of which is carried out by many of you.*

## ANDREW'S MESSAGE

*Doing church differently as we move forward...*

During a recent lunchtime conversation about hospitality, many of you were asked, *"What are the things we do well that serve as a strong welcome to all persons who come to Brown Memorial?"*

The conversation was rich and included examples such as the genuine way the peace is passed, a meal every Sunday after church, nametags, and wearing whatever you want to wear to church. A new member offered, *"This is a very outgoing congregation—people come and find you, greet you and say welcome."* A visiting family chimed in that they noticed that, *"You welcome people from all places in their Christian journey, all talents are welcome, and all parts of the person."* They went on to say that they appreciated that we are a More Light Church, explicitly welcoming LGBTQ members.

Additionally, members value the welcome offered by members at the front door, the ministry of the deacons, and the choir. **The conversation was a solid reminder for me that the most important things that we do to serve as a strong welcome are not things that happen "from the front" but rather an extension of welcome that occurs through the efforts of many of you.**

*Continued pg. 2 →*

That strong welcome is one of the many reasons that the Session and I have discerned together that Brown Memorial Church has a resonant message to share at this point in the history of our community and the larger world. That message is rooted deeply in the history of our community, which has sought to live out the Gospel in relevant ways that are as generous and just as God's grace.

**Thankfully, we now have a staff aligned with that primary objective.**

To refresh your memory, last year, the Session charged a task group, established by the personnel committee, to realign our staff in a post-Covid world to better meet the strategic objectives that Session had established.

Those objectives include deepening and expanding our relational culture, centering the church's missional identity in worship and education, and growing the congregation. We hired a consultant who helped us design a staff structure accordingly, and we implemented that plan, which included a new Congregational Life Minister, Administrative Assistant, and part-time Communications Managers while also formalizing the Youth Director and Pastoral Care Minister positions.

Communications Manager Angie Alt was hired in July, and she's hit the ground running, updating our website with staff photos, bios, office hours, and some redesign. Administrative Assistant Camille Sherriffe started in September, and she's quickly and tactfully improved the way the staff communicates with each other, streamlined some internal processes, and is getting educated more quickly than I thought possible in CCB, our internal database so that she can get more of our congregants using its features for our joint work together.

These are just a couple of examples of the work staff is beginning to take on. As we continue this transition, the staff understands that our primary mission is an equipping one.

We're here to facilitate the discipleship work of the entire church, most of which is carried out by many of you.

As we make those opportunities for participation and leadership more transparent in the days ahead, I encourage you to welcome our new staff members (*we're introducing and reintroducing them on the following pages*). The best thing you can do to support them is get involved! The joy of hospitality—engaging with each other whether we are welcoming new friends or being welcomed into this community of faith—is the blessing that often happens in the encounter.



*I can't wait to see what God will do with all of us as this year continues to unfold!*





# Brown Memorial

tu|toring pro|gram

## TUTORING UPDATE

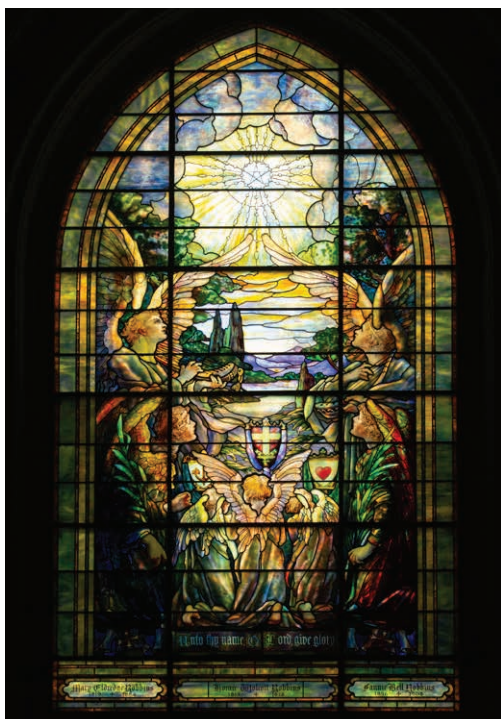
by Tracy Cerrato

The Brown Memorial Tutoring Program is ushering in its 61st year of service with a new Program Director and logo! Karlin Scudder assumed the leadership role after Martha Socolar retired in June. We have also welcomed a new Assistant Director, Liam Luckett, to the tutoring team.

*“I am looking at the new year ahead of us with passion and excitement as we push the Tutoring Program forward into its seventh decade. With the support and hard work of our veteran tutors plus many new faces, we’re proud to be helping elementary school students in their journeys to becoming independent readers and writers.” ~ Karlin Scudder*

We are again partnering with Mt. Royal Elementary School, Dorothy I Height Elementary School, and the Baltimore Montessori Public Charter School. We have 56 returning tutors and 19 new volunteers working individually with 85 students (up from 75 last year!) in weekly 75-minute sessions from October through May. We are happy to report that eight of our tutors this year are members of the Brown Memorial Church!

This past summer was a busy one preparing for the new Tutoring Year. One major project completed was the overhaul of our June Carr Lending Library to make it more appealing and accessible for both students and tutors. First, we organized our bookshelves, removed outdated and severely damaged materials, and identified areas where we could use new titles. More exciting, though, was implementing a new online library management system, Libib, through which we digitally cataloged nearly 4,000 volumes. With this software, the Tutoring Program now has a searchable (by title, author, topic, etc.) database of all library resources, and tutors can more easily search for books that will interest their students and get them checked out with just one scan on a smartphone.



## THE TIFFANY SERIES RETURNS

by Karen Stokes

A committee has been formed under the leadership of Brown Memorial’s Minister of Music, Michael Stefanek, to bring back The Tiffany Series, which was first established in 2005 and directed by Shirley Parry.

Over the years, the series has presented a wide variety of concerts in various musical styles, including recitals utilizing the church’s 1930 Skinner organ, handbell and brass festivals, choral performances, and even Appalachian bluegrass artists. Speakers included actor, singer, and political activist Harry Belafonte, Marian Wright Edelman, founder and president of the Children’s Defense Fund, and Congressman Elijah Cummings.

**The working committee is hoping to include both music and speaking events and is open to suggestions from the congregation about the people and music you’d like to hear.** You can contact Karen Stokes with your suggestions. They are planning four events as part of The Tiffany Series in 2025.

*Andrew Connors (he/him)*

**SENIOR PASTOR**

*Joined in 2004*

**EMAIL:** andrew@browndowntown.org

**PHONE:** 410-523-1542 Ext. 104

**IN OFFICE:** Sun-Thu, 9 AM-5 PM\*

*\*This represents a typical schedule; however, pastoral duties range widely outside these times. Due to this, meetings with Andrew, except for pastoral emergencies, occur by appointment.*

Andrew believes God is alive and active in the world. Our great joy and challenge is to notice when and where God is present, calling us to join in the healing work of loving our neighbors and transforming the world together in more just and generous ways. Convinced that the Gospel really does mean “good news,” Andrew strives to nurture ample servings of creativity, humor, joy, and generosity in the life and mission of Brown Memorial. He brings more than two decades of pastoral leadership experience into Brown, a church that continues to stretch itself toward greater inclusion of all people in church and society.

Andrew’s passion for community transformation has been profoundly shaped by the discipline of community organizing, rooted in the proven conviction that diverse groups of people can change the world when they organize their power together. From 2010 through June 2021, he served as clergy co-chair of Baltimoreans United in Leadership Development (BUILD), a local affiliate of the Industrial Areas Foundation (IAF) and Maryland’s largest citizens power organization. In 2016, Andrew shared a *Baltimore Sun* “Marylander of the Year–Honorable Mention” with two colleagues for their leadership in negotiating the most significant community benefits agreement in Baltimore history. He continues to serve on BUILD’s vision-setting Strategy Team.



From 2023-2024, Andrew served as the Moderator of the Presbytery of Baltimore and currently chairs the Presbytery Cabinet. Believing that faith calls us to expand our knowledge and understanding through engaging many disciplines, he is pursuing a Certificate in Psychoanalytic Studies at the Washington Baltimore Center for Psychoanalysis.

Andrew is a native of Raleigh, NC. He attended Duke University as a B.N. Duke Scholar, where he received a B.A. in History with a focus on contemporary social movements. He holds a Master of Divinity from Columbia Theological Seminary in Decatur, GA. Andrew was the 2001 recipient of the prestigious David H.C. Read Preaching Award and has preached at numerous conferences and events nationwide. A resident of Baltimore City, he serves on several non-profit boards and is a frequent contributor to scholarly journals.

Andrew is also the proud father of two children, Anna and Aidan.

**Must-know info about Andrew:**

He has driven fire trucks and flown airplanes, and he currently rides a motorcycle. One of his favorite pastimes is working on his 1929 Ford Model A.

*Andrew’s passion for community transformation has been profoundly shaped by the discipline of community organizing, rooted in the proven conviction that diverse groups of people can change the world when they organize their power together.*

*Gretchen van Utt (she/her)*  
**PASTORAL CARE MINISTER**

*Joined in 2019*

**EMAIL:** gretchen@browndowntown.org

**PHONE:** 410-523-1542 Ext. 110

**IN OFFICE:** Sun, 9:30 AM-1:30 PM; Mon, Tue, and  
 Fri, 9:30 AM-12:00 PM

**REMOTE:** Mon-Tue, 1 PM-3:30 PM;  
 Wed, 9:30 AM-12 PM

In early 2019, Gretchen received a call from Pastor Andrew asking if she could help out at Brown Memorial while he was on sabbatical. She knew immediately that was the only offer to lure her out of retirement for the third time. After years as a solo pastor, the opportunity to work with an extraordinary team of colleagues in a church committed to an inclusive urban ministry was irresistible.

Soon after arriving, Gretchen knew that she would want Brown to become her church home, so she returned later that year to worship with her new friends and affiliate with Brown as a (non-staff) Parish Associate. When a need arose in September 2023, she returned to the ministry team in a part-time transitional position, which was formalized in mid-2024.

As her job title reflects, the most essential part of Gretchen's work is helping the Pastor and Deacons provide pastoral care for the congregation which, as she has gotten older, has become one of the most enriching and replenishing aspects of ministry. But Gretchen also loves liturgy and teaching and is grateful to be preparing the liturgies for Sunday worship, sharing in the leadership of the Wednesday Bible Study, and helping as needed with Faith Exploration, the Sunday afternoon adult education program.

Gretchen received her M.Div. from Harvard in 1976, then moved to Baltimore and spent seven years as Chaplain and a lecturer in the Department of Philosophy and Religion at Goucher College and nine years as University Chaplain at Johns Hopkins. She then decided to try parish ministry. However, few churches were calling women at that time, so she became certified in interim ministry and began serving congregations in that capacity. After completing three interims, she received a call to serve as Pastor of Springfield PC, so she and her husband, George, left the city and moved to Sykesville.

Gretchen loved that church deeply but, in time, realized that she missed the city and that her gift was in interim ministry, helping congregations to navigate often difficult transitions and prepare to receive a new pastor. She and George moved back to Baltimore, where she served two more churches as Interim Minister before retiring and, then, two more churches in brief "bridge" positions before retiring again and becoming a yoga teacher (which now continually shapes her understanding of ministry). Then there was Brown. Gretchen is home.

**Must-know info about Gretchen:** She prefers not to inflict her singing voice on others, but if she had to try karaoke, her go-to song would be a Motown hit from the 60's – probably Mary Wells' "My Guy." She's also eaten crickets – apparently the sustainable solution to feeding our crowded planet. Gretchen determined they were "OK," but she decided to enjoy their presence in her yard rather than her stomach.



*As her job title reflects, the most essential part of Gretchen's work is helping the Pastor and Deacons to provide pastoral care for the congregation which, as she has gotten older, has become one of the most enriching and replenishing aspects of ministry.*

*Rachel Cunningham (she/her)*  
**CONGREGATIONAL LIFE MINISTER**

*Joined in 2005*

**EMAIL:** rachel@browndowntown.org

**PHONE:** 410-523-1542 Ext. 106

**IN OFFICE:** Sun, 9 AM-1 PM; Mon-Thu, 9 AM-5 PM

*Rachel loves being part of a team that works to bring people from all walks of life together in community. She is dedicated to helping Brown Memorial members and friends connect with their passions, connect with the community, and connect more deeply with God.*

With a background in Interior Design, Rachel never dreamed she'd work for a church but has found her time at Brown extremely rewarding personally and professionally. She began her tenure quite by accident shortly after Andrew Connors became the Senior Pastor. She remembers distinctly the Sunday afternoon she got the call asking her to serve as the Interim Christian Educator. Surprised, she responded with something like, "You know I'm an interior designer. I don't have any experience with this."

This, of course, was not entirely true. She had served as a Sunday School teacher and on the Christian Education committee. During a period of personal discernment and feeling a nudge toward work with more spiritual purpose and meaning, Rachel took the position.

It wasn't long before that interim position became permanent and led Rachel back to school to complete her master's degree in church ministry with a religious education focus at the Ecumenical Institute of Theology at St. Mary's Seminary. Now, in addition to the connection and inclusion she helps foster for all members at Brown, she manages volunteer recruitment, training, and engagement while also leading the overall vision of Christian Formation in our congregation from birth to adulthood.



Rachel's commute is a breeze; she and her husband live just two blocks away. Their adult children, who grew up at Brown, are still close enough to make the occasional Sunday morning visit. Recently, she became a great auntie, which brings her much joy!

**Must-know info about Rachel:** Although she's a die-hard country music fan, her favorite karaoke song is "Don't Stop Believin'" by Journey.

*ministry*

*Eva Hendrix-Shovlin (she/her)*  
**YOUTH DIRECTOR**

*Joined in 2023*

**EMAIL:** [eva@browndowntown.org](mailto:eva@browndowntown.org)

**PHONE:** 410-523-1542 Ext. 105

**IN OFFICE:** Sun-Tue, 9 AM-5 PM

As Brown Memorial's Youth Director, Eva believes recognizing the agency and personhood of young people while helping them learn and grow is central to her role. She finds the warmth of a queer-affirming, social justice-oriented community like Brown makes it easy to reach her goal of embodying and imparting to grade 3-12 youth the values of justice, mercy, and humility described in Micah 6:8.

Eva coordinates monthly meetups and leadership opportunities where youth can engage in service projects, spiritual enrichment, and radical Christian hospitality while building community with peers and intergenerational mentors. She also helps lead Sunday school, sings in Brown's musical ensembles, and plans and coordinates family activities such as river tubing, winter ski weekends, and service projects, like the annual fundraiser carwash.

*The kindness, creativity, and sheer joy of the young folks make her "job" more fun than work.*

Eva studied violin at the Baltimore School for the Arts, completing her Bachelor of Music Education in Voice at the College of Wooster. She also studied Arts and Culture in the Volta region of Ghana. Previously, she worked in the social work field, partnering with unhoused persons and families in accessing housing and community resources. She also currently serves as a therapeutic musician to the geriatric population.

Eva lives with her mother, the retired pastor, Rev. Dr. Anita Hendrix, and one adorable Yorkshire terrier, Fluffy. She's also a newly minted aunt with a life goal to become "The Best Auntie Ever."



*She finds the warmth of a queer-affirming, social justice-oriented community like Brown makes it easy to reach her goal of embodying and imparting to grade 3-12 youth the values of justice, mercy, and humility described in Micah 6:8.*

**Must-know info about Eva:** She's always singing, even mid-conversation, usually the lyrics from the Pointer Sisters' "I'm So Excited" or Abba's "Super Trouper," but her go-to karaoke song is "Wannabe" by the Spice Girls (and nobody can ever convince her that the 1997 Spice World film is less than a cinematic masterpiece! Girl Power!).



**Camille Sherriffe (she/her)**  
**ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT**  
 Joined in 2024

**EMAIL:** [camille@browndowntown.org](mailto:camille@browndowntown.org)  
**PHONE:** 410-523-1542 Ext. 101  
**IN OFFICE:** Mon-Fri, 9 AM-5 PM

Camille is excited and passionate about her new role as Brown Memorial’s Administrative Assistant. Camille thrives on keeping things running smoothly. She’s always looking for ways to improve office operations and support her team.

With two years of experience in customer service and hospitality, Camille ensures Brown always has a friendly face to greet those in and out of the Bolton Hill community.

Originally from New Jersey, Camille graduated with a B.A. in English with a double minor in Psychology and African American Studies from The College of New Jersey. Since the spring of 2023, she has made her home here in Baltimore.

**Must-know info about Camille:** Her go-to karaoke song is “One and Only” by Adele.



**Angie Alt (she/her)**  
**COMMUNICATIONS MANAGER**  
 Joined in 2024

**EMAIL:** [angie@browndowntown.org](mailto:angie@browndowntown.org)  
**PHONE:** 410-523-1542 Ext. 109  
**IN OFFICE:** Mon-Tue, 9 AM-5 PM  
**REMOTE:** Wed, 9 AM-1 PM

Angie brings her passion for community care and social justice to her role as Communications Manager at Brown Memorial. With a shared commitment to fostering access and belonging, she is dedicated to telling the story of Brown to those who don’t yet know the community while also enhancing connections among current members. Angie ensures that Brown’s virtual presence reflects the warmth and welcome found in our in-person gatherings.

With a background in Organizational Communications, health and wellness writing, podcasting, and marketing, Angie has a diverse skill set. She previously ran a successful health coaching business, where she authored two award-winning books, contributed to medical research, and managed a popular website and social media platforms. Currently, she is pursuing a Philosophy degree and is enrolled in a certificate program with The Center for Prophetic Imagination. Angie believes that health and wellness are a group project with spirituality at its core, and she is excited to share her expertise and insights with the Brown community.

Residing in Columbia, Maryland, Angie enjoys life with her husband, Dave, and their beloved princess pup, Izzy. They have an adult daughter and have recently become grandparents, a development that may be met with mixed feelings from Izzy.

**Must-know info about Angie:** Her go-to karaoke song is “Sloop John B” from The Beach Boys’ Pet Sounds album.



**Sharon Lucas (she/her)**  
**FINANCIAL ADMINISTRATOR**

*Joined in 2010*

**EMAIL:** slucas@browndowntown.org

**PHONE:** 410-523-1542 Ext. 102

**HYBRID:** Mon-Fri, part-time hours vary

Sharon loves working for an organization that plays such a vital role in the community. She especially appreciates the welcoming atmosphere and empowering workplace environment that Brown Memorial provides.

Working behind the scenes, Sharon helps to ensure operational consistency while supervising all financial activities and keeping pace with modern systems and practices. Her responsibilities include ensuring all approved invoices are paid, tracking pledges and contributions, implementing payroll and benefits, reconciling accounts, setting up the annual budget, engaging with investment advisors, and assisting committee leaders in fulfilling their missions.

Sharon has gained a wealth of business and accounting experience from her various roles, beginning with her family's Scrap Iron & Metal recycling business, continuing as a photographer at an advertising agency, and in her husband's commercial photography studio. In addition to her work at Brown, she is a partner in a commercial real estate operation, where she provides financial oversight. Her experience, integrity, and respect for confidentiality make her a perfect fit for her Financial Administrator role. In 2016, Sharon graduated summa cum laude from the University of Baltimore, earning a B.S. in Business Administration with an Accounting Specialization.



Sharon and her husband love the vitality of city life and raised their kids in the Baltimore public school system. They found balance through their many travels and camping adventures with each other. Now that their kids are adults, they still cherish family time together. In their spare time, she and her husband escape to the mountains to experience the mysteries of nature. They find joy in fly fishing and hiking and the surprise encounters with wildlife that invariably result when exploring the wilderness.

**Must-know info about Sharon:** Her favorite sing-along (with no one else listening) is Queen's "Bohemian Rhapsody."



**Keith Moore, Sr. (he/him)**  
**FACILITIES MANAGER**

*Joined in 2020*

**EMAIL:** keith@browndowntown.org

**PHONE:** 410-523-1542 Ext. 111

**IN OFFICE:** Mon-Fri, 6 AM-2 PM

Keith joined the Brown Memorial staff in 2020 in a part-time capacity and has recently transitioned to a full-time role. In this role, he has been pivotal in managing capital improvement projects and coordinating repairs and maintenance for the recently renovated Fellowship Building, Church House, and Brown’s historic 150-year-old sanctuary. His contributions have ensured that these facilities are well-maintained and continue to serve the community effectively.



With a wealth of experience in facilities management, Keith was the previous Facilities Manager for Health Care for the Homeless in Baltimore, overseeing facilities staff across five sites. Extensive technical skills in wood framing, metal fabrication, and electrical work complement his expertise as a project manager. He also holds Maryland state apprentice licenses in heating, ventilation, and air conditioning (HVAC), contracting, and plumbing.

Keith’s practical skills were honed from a young age in his family’s construction business. He has gained substantial experience working on historic structures, including the State House complex in Annapolis, Spring Grove Hospital Center, and Baltimore City Detention Center for the State of Maryland. Notably, he has had the unique opportunity to explore the cupola of the nearly 250-year-old Maryland State House, an experience he cherishes.

A proud Baltimore native, Keith is married to Lacey Moore, who works at NASA. Together, they have three children. Their family is completed by two lively Jack Russell terriers, who add joy during their beach and camping trips—an activity they particularly enjoy.

**Must-know info about Keith:** He’s eaten gator, chocolate grasshoppers, shark, and bear, and if he absolutely had to win a karaoke contest, he’d belt out “The Real Slim Shady” by Eminem.



**Michael Stefanek (he/him)**  
**MINISTER OF MUSIC**

*Joined in 2024*

**EMAIL:** [mstefanek@browndowntown.org](mailto:mstefanek@browndowntown.org)

**PHONE:** 410-523-1542 Ext. 107

**IN OFFICE:** Sun–Thu, full-time hours vary

Michael is thrilled to share his deep love of music at Brown Memorial by shepherding the vibrant music program as Minister of Music. His primary duties include serving as organist and chancel choir director, planning meaningful music for worship, and working with the Tiffany Series Committee. Michael is honored to continue the lineage of impressive musicians who have served this warm, inclusive faith community that embraces all people and supports social justice.

Before Brown, Michael served nearly eight years as Director of Music Ministries at Asbury United Methodist Church in Salisbury, MD. He continues to serve on the Board of Directors for the Salisbury Children’s Choir. As an organist, Michael has performed in solo and collaborative recitals across the US. He is also a member of the American Guild of Organists and the Organ Historical Society.

Michael’s love of choral music began when he became a member of the Green Bay Boy Choir and has continued throughout his life as a choral music conductor and vocalist.

Michael earned his Doctor of Musical Arts and Master of Music degrees at the University of Michigan. He received his Bachelor of Music degree from Oberlin College Conservatory of Music. You can learn more about his musical background and career on his website: [michaelstefanek.com](http://michaelstefanek.com).

Michael is originally from Green Bay, WI. He and his partner, Chris, have a spoiled rotten dog named Jelly Bean and now reside in the Baltimore area. In his free time, Michael enjoys travel, bike riding, watching movies, attending concerts, musical theater, jazz clubs, and hanging with friends.

**Must-know info about Michael:** The most unusual food he has tried are gator bites, and while he and Chris are making dinner, they love listening to the Willy Wonka soundtrack.



**Deborah Richardson (she/her)**  
**DIRECTOR OF HANDBELLS** *Joined in 2022*

**EMAIL:** [deborah\\_richardson@verizon.net](mailto:deborah_richardson@verizon.net)

**IN OFFICE:** Thu, 7-9 PM & Sun, 9 AM-1 PM\*

*\*This represents a typical schedule, but Deborah is always reachable and responsive via email, where phone contact can be made available for handbell needs as necessary.*

Deborah originally came to Brown Memorial as the alto soloist and then years later returned as the Director of Handbells. The warm community and especially her love of all the members of both the bell and chancel choirs drew her back to Brown.

Deborah graduated from Duquesne University School of Music and has served several churches in the Washington, DC area as Music Director since the mid-1980s. She has experience directing chancel choirs, handbell choirs, and instrumental ensembles and has also served as a paid chorister and soloist. In addition to directing the handbells, she sings in the chancel choir and serves as a Deacon.

Deborah is married to Rees, who is a professional trumpet player. They have two adult sons, Hoyt and Stephen. She also teaches English as a second language to Afghan immigrants and takes senior classes online.

**Must-know info about Deborah:** She has written over twenty plays and a musical, which have been performed in the DC area, but it doesn’t end there...she has also composed music for choirs, soloists, and even the trumpet!



**Kazi Rayhan (she/her)**  
**NURSERY CAREGIVER**

*Joined in 2023*

**EMAIL:** adishakti1994@gmail.com

**IN OFFICE:** Sun, 10 AM-12 PM

Kazi's love for children and spiritual community brings her to work at Brown Memorial as the principal Nursery Caregiver, predominantly during Sunday morning service. She works to ensure that the children, usually ages 2-5, have a nurturing, fun, and engaging environment to play and socialize with each other. At the same time, she provides parents and guardians with peace of mind, knowing their children are safe and well cared for while they get a little spiritual replenishment.

Though Kazi's primary career is as a 3D computer graphics artist, she also has a background in youth arts and tech education, working with K-12 students. Through this experience, she learned to appreciate how open and eager children are to learn, grow, and creatively express themselves when provided with the right opportunities. Coupled with her desire to raise a family someday, her experience as a youth educator inspired her to seek out more opportunities to play a positive role in the lives of youth.



For Kazi, there are few things in this world more precious than seeing a timid, shy child blossom into an engaged social being in playful communion with others, and she considers having the opportunity to play a role in that process, however small, to be a true blessing.

As a deeply spiritual person and practicing Buddhist who values religious pluralism and interfaith coexistence, Kazi is grateful to be counted as a member of the Brown community, where she can bring together her love for children, spiritual community, and reverence for the divine into a single meaningful occupation.

Kazi resides in Baltimore, Maryland, with her roommate Anastasia and her adorable little tabby-cat friend, Lana.

**Must-know info about Kazi:** Her go-to karaoke song is "Halo" by Beyoncé.

support



**Anastasia Kupstas (she/her)**  
**MEDIA SPECIALIST**

*Joined in 2020*

**EMAIL:** akupstas5@gmail.com

**IN OFFICE:** Sun, 9:30 AM-12:30 PM\*

*\*This represents a typical schedule, but Anastasia is reachable and responsive to email, where phone contact can be made available for media needs as necessary.*

Anastasia cherishes the accepting and caring community found at Brown Memorial and, through her work providing virtual worship connections, shares that community with churchgoers far and wide.

Anastasia can be found in the sanctuary balcony, running the audio systems during worship services. She has a background in audio engineering, earning her degree in Recording Arts & Sciences from Peabody Conservatory in 2019.

In her free time, Anastasia enjoys gardening, crafting, and perusing art museums. She lives in the Barclay neighborhood of Baltimore City with her roommate and fellow Brown employee, Kazi Rayhan, and their cat, Lana.

**Must-know info about Anastasia:** The most interesting food she's ever tried is haggis – and she thought it was pretty good!



**Sharon Holley (she/her)**  
**WEDDING AND FUNERAL  
 COORDINATOR**

*Joined in 1987*

**EMAIL:** sharon@browndowntown.org

**IN OFFICE:** As needed basis\*

*\*Sharon is available on an as-needed basis but is always reachable and responsive via email, where phone contact can be made available for events needs as necessary.*

Sharon retired in 2024 after 36 years as the Administrative Assistant at Brown Memorial. During that time, she was recruited by Jim Schuman, an active member, former wedding coordinator, and former Clerk of Session, to take on the responsibilities of representing the church for weddings upon his move out of the area.

One day, the church needed an extra greeter for a memorial service, and Sharon pitched in to help greet visitors. Although not an extroverted person, she soon realized that she enjoyed welcoming visitors to Brown and had a calling to make everyone who walked through the sanctuary doors feel welcome. Now, after many years of honoring that call through administrative work, she is continuing her service as a Wedding and Funeral Coordinator.

Sharon lives in West Baltimore County and enjoys spending time with her children, grandchildren, pup, Autumn, and grand pups, Kobe and Pepper.

**Must-know info about Sharon:** She loves watching British television shows and singing and dancing when no one is watching.



***Karlin Scudder (they/them)***  
**TUTORING PROGRAM DIRECTOR**

*Joined in 2022*

**EMAIL:** karlin@browntutoring.org

**PHONE:** 410-523-1542 Ext. 108

**IN OFFICE:** Mon-Thu, 9 AM-5 PM

Karlin came to Brown Memorial with a drive to create more independent readers and writers. The Tutoring Program was the perfect place to make a tangible impact in their community outside of the commotion of the school building.

With a background in literacy education both from their time as a Peace Corps Volunteer in Liberia pre-pandemic and work at a local Baltimore charter school, Karlin loves developing materials, training tutors, and working with students. They started at the Tutoring Program as the Assistant Director to a long-serving Director. Immediately, they hit the ground running and contributed to formalizing the tutoring program's training methods and offerings for tutor support. When it was time for their predecessor to retire, Karlin was ready to advance to Program Director.

Currently, Karlin is working to build on 60 years of program success and bring it into the 21st century. They are also pursuing their certification in the Orton-Gillingham reading instruction methodology, which is utilized by the tutoring program.

Residing just a few blocks from the church, Karlin lives with their wife, Grace, and their elderly cat, Ma'am. The two were recently married and are enjoying newlywed life. Karlin has convinced Grace to volunteer as a tutor and is in awe of how much work Grace puts into tutoring.

**Must-know info about Karlin:** While they have never sung real karaoke, if they had to choose a song to perform, it would be "Pink Pony Club" by Chappell Roan.



***Tracy Cerrato (she/her)***  
**DEVELOPMENT DIRECTOR, BROWN  
 MEMORIAL TUTORING PROGRAM**

*Joined in 2021*

**EMAIL:** tracy@browndowntown.org

**PHONE:** 410-523-1542 Ext. 108

**IN OFFICE:** Mon-Thu, 10:30 AM-2:30 PM

Tracy brings her passion for literacy and commitment to working with under-resourced communities to her role at Brown Memorial. She helps raise money for the Tutoring Program from various sources, including foundations and individuals. Tracy enjoys sharing students' successes and the joy experienced during tutoring sessions with the greater community.

Tracy has been involved in nonprofit fundraising in Baltimore City for over 25 years. Previous experience includes Loyola University (where she also earned her BA) and South Baltimore Learning Center, a Baltimore City adult literacy organization. She has a Master's in Social Work from the University of Maryland, Baltimore (UMB).

Tracy has been married to Bill, who is also in education, since 1998. They share their love of reading and writing with their sons, Caden and Conlan.

**Must-know info about Tracy:** She has never performed karaoke out of fear of damaging others' eardrums. However, always eager to dance, her favorite request is "It Takes Two" by Rob Bass.



**Liam Luckett (he/him)**  
**ASSISTANT DIRECTOR, BROWN  
 MEMORIAL TUTORING PROGRAM**  
*Joined in 2024*

**EMAIL:** [liam@browntutoring.org](mailto:liam@browntutoring.org)

**PHONE:** 410-523-1542 Ext. 108

**IN OFFICE:** Mon-Thu, 9 AM-5 PM

Liam possesses a deep-seated passion for facilitating children's education, driven by a genuine commitment to fostering young minds and nurturing their potential as burgeoning readers. With a keen understanding of each child's unique needs, Liam excels at creating engaging and supportive learning environments that encourage exploration and growth. This unwavering dedication to educational excellence reflects his belief in the transformative power of individualized attention and the importance of preparing youth for a lifetime of reading.

Liam aids in the direction of the tutoring program, working to train and equip tutors, manage program materials, liaise with school staff, and, most importantly, deliver the best possible outcomes for students.



With a background in education and behavioral health, Liam has experience working with neurodiverse students. He has worked in New York and Connecticut schools and holds a Master's in Philosophy and Bachelor's in Psychology. Liam is also a Research Program Assistant for the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health.

Liam enjoys the company of a supportive partner, Aayushma, and two affectionate cats, Hanabi and Tampopo. In his leisure time, Liam enjoys reading, rock climbing, and caring for his many aquariums. His other passions include travel, community service, and friends and family.

**Must-know info about Liam:** In his travels, he's tried many different foods, from chapulines (Mexican fried crickets) to escargot (snails) to haggis (Scottish sheep's offal pudding) and more.

*tutoring*

## REKINDLING A 38-YEAR RELATIONSHIP WITH MARIA MADRE DE LOS POBRES

by Angie Alt & Barbara Cook

Recently, an intergenerational delegation of Brown Memorial community members traveled to El Salvador, rekindling our 38-year relationship with Catholic parish members of Maria Madre De Los Pobres.

In 1986, right in the middle of the 12-year-long Salvadoran Civil War, Brown began sending delegations to San Salvador. They've continued every two years since, supporting, witnessing, and accompanying parish members. After the 2018 delegation, though, the pandemic interrupted this regular touchpoint between our congregations.

On June 22, Brown members were able to reunite with our Salvadoran friends, spending a week in and around the parish neighborhood, plus traveling to other areas of El Salvador. The 12-member delegation included five young people on their first trips to the country and seven older adults, Barbara Cook among them. Barbara, who has been on five delegations, shared visit details and moving insights from the first trip back in six years.

### Visit Details and Insights

One of the most important parts of delegation trips is connecting with the children sponsored through Brown's "God Parent" program. Members commit \$350 annually to Maria Madre parish children, which provides for school tuition and books, uniforms, shoes, and medical exams. Delegates visited Brown's 17 "godchildren" in their homes, shared letters and gifts brought from their "godparents," and spent time with them in the community. Barbara noted that it's always impactful to witness their day-to-day lives.

This year's delegation also focused on the plight of prisoners in El Salvador's vast prisons. Barbara was greatly inspired while meeting with the women of Holy Spirit Island just off the coast, as they find strength daily to advocate for their innocent husbands. Brown delegates are petitioning US Embassy representatives for help in these unjust cases.

When asked if there was a moment on the trip where Barbara felt a particular closeness to God, she remarked, "Yes, when we visited the chapel where Oscar Romero was assassinated." Catholic Archbishop Romero, now a saint, was a vocal critic of violent government forces during the Salvadoran civil war. Barbara said she felt sadness but also an overwhelming gratitude for the sacrifice he made.



### Passing The Torch

Barbara's respect for Romero is reflected in her and other community members' dedication to the Brown Memorial-Maria Madre relationship over the last 38 years. She emphasized several times that Brown delegations are not missionary acts but accompaniment.

The continuity of that accompaniment relationship is now dependent on "passing the torch," as Barbara says. A new generation of Brown community members must take the lead, connecting with new generations of Maria Madre parishioners and continuing Brown's work of "... taking every opportunity to respond...to the places of pain and injustice in our...world where God is already at work."

Members will soon be able to learn more about the trip through a film being prepared by a delegation member. If you're inspired to get involved or want to become a godparent, please contact any member of our 2024 delegation—George Brown, Rosa Brown, Aidan Connors, Andrew Connors, Barbara Cook, Matt Cook, Eloise Crew, or Ed or Karen Stokes.



## SHARING A MISSION WITH OUR PARTNERS IN CUBA

by Matt Mickel

This July, members of the Brown Memorial Cuba Partnership Team—Sarah Ramirez-Cross, Morgana Kinlan, and myself—traveled to Camajuaní, Cuba, to co-lead a vacation Bible school (VBS) with our partner church, Iglesia Presbiteriana de Camajuaní. VBS was a joint effort: Brown Memorial provided a teacher-of-the-year quality curriculum (created by Sarah), while our partners adapted and translated it for the children and the congregants who helped. **This year's theme was “Having hope when you are afraid.”**

VBS took place in the morning over three days, with attendance increasing each day. On the first day, we had approximately 30 attendees. **But, by the final day, the number of attendees had doubled in size to 60 children! We were told this was partly because the children had spread the word about the VBS and were bringing their friends.** In addition to a well-deserved (and much relished!) snack time, each day, the children made crafts, sang songs, did LOTS of drawing, and, of course, learned about what the Bible teaches about hope in the face of fear.

Our partner church has a vibrant youth program, and like us, they are continually looking for ways to attract more children. VBS is one way that the church does this. Attendance is open to not only youth congregants but also to the community at large. Since each day of VBS includes a meal, this can be especially beneficial to children from homes with fewer resources.

On the afternoon of the last day of VBS, the staff walked to a local swimming pool to celebrate a successful event and experience some much-needed R&R. **During the walk, I recognized several children who had been at the VBS playing outdoors. As we passed them, I realized that although I'd been to Cuba several times before, this visit had allowed me to experience a new aspect of the Camajuaní community.**

When visiting in the past, we primarily spent time with the adult members of the congregation, particularly the more senior members, several of whom had come to watch their grandchildren at VBS. Our interactions with the community's youth were typically in the context of Sunday school, the worship service, or coincidental encounters with children of church employees. The VBS allowed us not only to get to know the youth but also to witness and participate in the church's youth ministry as a whole.

*One of the cornerstones of Brown Memorial's mission is engagement in the community and the world. The VBS illustrated another way our partners in Cuba share and live the same mission.*

*As we deepen our partnership with the church, we deepen our partnership with the community of Camajuaní. As that deepens, we see more and more of Christ's presence and our siblinghood with not only our partners but all the Cuban people.*



## YELLOW MEDICINE FOR THE FAMILY

by Emily Brown



This year marks our family's second visit of a week-long stay below the massive blue sky amongst the wind-swept prairie of indigenous land in Granite Falls, MN. At the Pejuhutazizi Family Learning Camp (PFLC). A spiritual/cultural exchange concept that the Dakotas initiated in the late 1990s. To me, it is reparation work.

Pejuhutazizi translates as "Yellow Medicine." Many lost the definition when their aural culture disappeared. Through listening, connection, trust, and healing happen here.

Our children grow excited to see their PFLC friends weeks before we leave. One might assume it is the preparatory meetings that organizers Chrystie Adams and Julie Hanks conducted months prior where we learn the Dakota language, the history of their half-millennium holocaust, and recollect their values from *The Lakota Way*. But our kids invest in the relationships created the year before through technology—a text thread, Snapchat photos, and Facetime calls—all year.

*Like summer-long camp, the youth are expected to take on leadership roles and participate in self-sufficiency. After a five-hour travel adventure, PFLC inaugurates at the Upper Sioux Community Center. With the start of our daily roses-and-thorns session, a community-building process designed to embrace constructive positivity from every voice.*

After attending church across the road, the following day is devoted to camp preparation. We unload and organize books, science experiments, movement activities, Dakota art, robotics kits, and games. Upon completion, the campers and junior counselors play outdoors, hoping the Upper Sioux neighbors will join them on the basketball court.



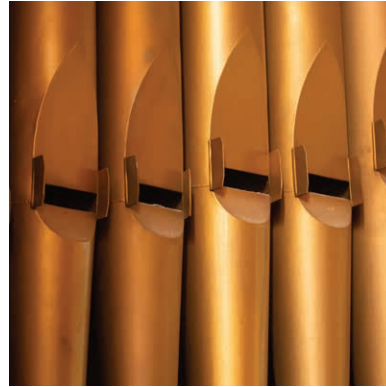
We unplug from technology and interact according to our camp-assigned roles. For the next four mornings, Minister Fern Cloud administers each person a smudging of sage. We spread the cleansing herb around our bodies and pray for mental health. We sing Hanhanna Wayuhice Kta, Isaiah 50:4 from Dakota Odowan (Dakota Hymns), a document missionaries of the 1800s created to preserve the disappearing Dakota language.

Baltimore counselors lead the age-specific sessions. Some feel at home with the comfortable silence their fellow campers provide. Unseen connections grow visible with the juxtaposition of Dakota art alongside the reading, science, and STEM activities. Eureka moments abound.

Upper Sioux is connected to the Dakota War of 1862 when the US government abandoned its treaty to provide food in exchange for indigenous land. Together, tribal members and Baltimore staff provide comfort food for the campers throughout the week.

PFLC creates a safe space. The Baltimore campers have a nightly slumber party. Some of the children in the community ask to stay longer than camp. Kickball night is filled with pizza, friendly rivalry, and new and unexpected friends.

The weekends at the Wacipi—the PowWow—are filled with the pulsing beat of drums and sporadic singing in the air. Our friends are meticulously dressed in their intricate and meaningful regalia, prepared to celebrate their culture and history. Some from our group are invited to dance. We run into friends. We let our children go off with their own friends as though we would in our neighborhoods at home. We feel integral to the community.



**TUE, OCT 15, NOV 19, DEC 17 6:30-8:30 PM**  
*Theology on Tap*

Theology is just a fancy word for “God-talk:” how we think and talk about our religious beliefs. What happens when we take that conversation out of the church and into a bar? Join us at Guilford Hall Brewery at the chef’s table for an informal check-in and discussion of theology. Have a drink (or not) and talk about God, the universe, and everything in between. Contact Sam Edgin or Elizabeth Tatum for more information.

**SUN, OCT 20, NOV 3,17, DEC 1,15-5:30-7:30 PM**  
*Middlers (3rd-7th Grade) Sunday Supper and Games*

Bring a friend for fellowship, games, and fun on first and third Sundays! Youth, 8th grade and older, are encouraged to join for upcoming guest speakers and leadership opportunities! Reach out to Youth Director Eva Hendrix-Shovlin for more information.

**SUN, DEC 1-11:30 AM (FOLLOWING WORSHIP)**  
*Advent Wreath Making*

Join us in the Assembly Room for this annual tradition. All supplies are provided. Please make only one wreath per family. A \$15 donation is appreciated. Light snacks will be served in lieu of lunch. There will be no Faith Exploration class this Sunday.

**SUN, DEC 22 10:30 AM**  
*Christmas Pageant*

Join us at our regular worship time for this time-honored tradition, or use the regular worship link to join virtually.

**SAT, DEC 22-11:30 AM (FOLLOWING WORSHIP)**  
*Christmas Decorating*

Plan to stay for some Christmas cookies and cider and then help us adorn the sanctuary with greens and poinsettias for Christmas. Many hands make light work. All ages are welcome! Contact Julie Hanks for more information.

**TUE, DEC 24-5:30 PM (PRELUDE BEGINS AT 5PM)**  
*Lessons & Carols Candlelight Service*

A candlelight service retelling the Christmas story interspersed with favorite carols sung by the Chancel Choir, Soloists, and Congregation. Use the regular worship link to join virtually.

**SUN, DEC 29-10:30 AM**  
*Christmastide Worship*

Join us for an informal worship service. Sunday School, lunch, and Faith Exploration will not take place this Sunday but will return on January 5, the first Sunday of the new year. Use the regular worship link to join virtually.

**TUE, DEC 24 (NOON)-SUN, JAN 5**  
*Holiday Office Hours*

The church office closes at noon on Christmas Eve in observance of the Christmas holiday. Regular office hours resume on Monday, January 6. Check the worship bulletin and weekly email for who to contact for pastoral emergencies.

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PARK AVENUE**

**TIDINGS**

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