



**BROWN
MEMORIAL
PARK AVENUE**

Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)

2023

Annual Report



OUR MISSION

Emboldened by the life and teachings of Jesus Christ, we strive to bear witness to the reconciling love of God by nurturing an inclusive community, wrestling with Scripture and tradition, and working for justice and peace.

Letter to the Congregation

Episcopal priest Alice Updike Scannell in her book, *Building Resilience: When There's No Going Back to the Way Things Were*, names radical resilience as the ability to endure, grow, and thrive through adversity. Rather than thinking about resilience as simply enduring an adverse experience and then returning to the way things were, she speaks of resilience as "coming through" adversity knowing that we are still ourselves even though things are very different for us now.

2023 was that kind of a year for us. We picked up the pieces left in the wake of COVID, Michael Britt's death alongside others, and received enough grace to begin to plant new seeds among us. Recognizing that we could not take on everything that needed to be done, Session organized our life together into three key priorities: 1) community and connection, 2) focusing local mission around actions where we could have the greatest impact and 3) communications. Those seeds have begun to bear significant fruit.

We leaned into building community in this year's all church retreat with 30 individuals who chose to spend the weekend together. Small groups kicked off during Lent with more groups launching in the fall involving upwards of 50 people in five new groups. Our children's Sunday School and post church adult education hour is sustained by a core group of children and adults whose relationships with each other deepen every time we break bread, share prayer, and learn together. And delegations to Cuba and Pejuhutazizi both included individuals and families who had never been before, strengthening the partnerships between and the relationships within communities.

On the local mission front, our relationships with the Afghan Refugee community living just up the road from the church near Druid Hill Park, have deepened significantly. Church members continue to assist with English language support, jobs connections, entrepreneurial assistance, and celebrations of many kinds. Meanwhile, BUILD managed to negotiate a major agreement between the Mayor of Baltimore and the business community (GBC) to address the generations worth of disinvestment from city neighborhoods. The agreement includes a plan to attack vacancy, rebuild, and right size the city using the model developed in east Baltimore where mixed income communities have arisen from the blight, restoring wealth without displacing anyone.

Of course, not every seed that has been planted took root. Some of the small groups didn't take off as planned, there are other mission priority areas that haven't yet regained their leadership or energy, and the communications aspirations were sidelined in order to give a personnel task group time to take a deep dive on our total staff organization and, with the assistance of a consultant make some recommendations in late winter of 2024. These aren't failures, but rather the normal way of the world and the church, according to theologian Richard Rohr who pointed out recently that only one saguaro cactus seed out of a quarter of a million seeds ever makes it even to early maturity, and few reach full growth. "Most of nature seems to totally accept major loss, gross inefficiency, mass extinctions, and short life spans as simply the price of life. Ironically, feeling that sadness, and even its full absurdity, pulls us into the general dance, the unified field, and an unexpected deep gratitude for what is given—with no necessity and so gratuitously."

Indeed the gratitude I feel when surveying 2023 is immense. Gratitude for the incredible staff and volunteers who have helped us through challenging transitional times. Joyanne Amani, Paul Byssainthe, Jr., Adam Scott Graham, Deborah Richardson, and Rob Tracy all walked the choir and congregation through the year without missing a beat while John Walker and Tom Hall continued to freely share their immense talent whenever it has been needed. Rachel Cunningham used her sabbatical time to rekindle her deep love for ministry and return with renewed understanding of what is needed to protect and preserve that love through the sometimes rough waters of ministry. And Michele Ward closed out her chapter with us as Associate Pastor and planted her own

seeds that have helped us through the transitions. Those seeds include connecting us with Michael Cuppett and Eva Hendrix-Shovlin who are teaching our confirmands and restarting our youth program with incredible energy and creativity. And finally, Gretchen van Utt, brought her mature faith, and well honed pastoral craft toward our worship and communal life together. She continues to share that with us as she walks through her own immense loss of her beloved husband George.

The pages of this report couldn't provide enough space for me to name all the members of our community who have given of themselves to plant all the seeds that are needed to give us the chance for life and growth. My heart is especially full for those who have completed their leadership time serving as elders, deacons, and trustees. Their names are marked in these pages and I hope you will share your own words of thanks to them. I'm also incredibly grateful for those who served on the Minister of Music search committee who are bringing Michael Stefanek to us. I can't wait for everyone to share in the energy and enthusiasm that I feel in his talented presence. Finally, my gratitude extends to each of you who have committed a portion of your income toward our work together. In 2023 our total giving was up 7% over 2022. In 2024, pledged giving has risen by more than 10%, the largest percentage increase in the last ten years! I can't wait to see where God will take us together in 2024!

As we look to 2024, I'm incredibly grateful for our resilience that is evidenced in all these actions, in our strong stewardship campaign, and in the prayers and words of gratitude that I've heard from so many of you. And I expect the seeds that we've planted together to continue to bear fruit in times and ways of God's choosing.

Peace, power and love,



Andrew Connors, Senior Pastor

CHURCH LIFE HIGHLIGHTS

JANUARY: At the Annual Meeting we spent time around tables discussing our needs and aspirations for 2023. The ideas generated from these conversations informed the work we did together as a community.

FEBRUARY: Our youth led us once again in worship on February 12.



AFGHAN WOMEN BEYOND HOUSEWORK BAZAAR... DEPOSITING THE PROCEEDS!



EARLY BUNNY EASTER EGG HUNT FOR FAMILIES

LENT: In addition to our typical Lenten traditions -- Shrove Tuesday Pancake Supper, Ash Wednesday Tri-Church Service of Worship, Tri-Church Education Dinner Series, Neighborhood Palm Procession, Maundy Thursday Soup Supper & Contemplative Worship Service -- we formed two small groups using the book *We Make The Road By Walking* by Brian McClaren and also held our first Early Bunny Easter Egg Hunt for families. The small groups met both in person and online. Versions of both small groups continued to meet throughout the year.

MARCH: The Ministry of Welcome committee helped the Afghan Women organize and host their first bazaar selling food and handmade goods in the Assembly Room.

APRIL: We returned to Skycroft Camp & Conference Center for another weekend of community building during the annual All Church Retreat.



ALL CHURCH RETREAT WEEKEND



COURTYARD FELLOWSHIP



EMES CHOIR REHEARSAL

MAY: The closing of Eutaw Marshburn Elementary School also brought an end to the EMES Choir, an outreach program begun in 2012 which featured weekly choir rehearsals along with homework assistance. Over the years the choir regularly sang at neighborhood events and was once the featured choir at a fundraiser for the Upton/Druid Heights Community. In addition to their Winter and Spring school concerts they also gave a yearly concert each May in the sanctuary.

JUNE: We continued our long standing LGBTQ+ advocacy through various activities including participating in the Baltimore Pride Parade and hosting the Faith Communities of Baltimore with Pride Interfaith Service of worship.

JULY: In mid-July, our middle school youth traveled with the Presbytery of Baltimore to the annual Middle School Conference at Massanetta Springs in Harrisonburg, VA. Later in the month our high school youth headed to North Carolina for the Montreat Youth Conference.



ANNUAL PRIDE PARADE





PEJUHUTAZI FAMILY LEARNING CAMP

AUGUST: 2023 marked the 10th year of our partnership with the Pejuhutazizi Presbyterian Church and the Upper Sioux Community in Granite Falls, MN. This year also welcomed a new crew of campers and counselors for the annual summer learning camp.





TUTORING PROGRAM BEGINS ITS 60TH YEAR!

SEPTEMBER: The Brown Memorial Tutoring Program kicked off its 60th year serving Baltimore City Elementary School students! Thanks to our 65 tutors, the Program has enrolled 75 children from our long-standing partner schools: Mt. Royal Elementary, Dorothy I. Height, and Baltimore Montessori Public Charter.

Visit a tutoring session on the 3rd floor of the Fellowship Building and you can find a student happily reading a phonetically decodable story to her tutor while another finishes up her work with a writing exercise. Just as each child's literacy journey is unique, so too are the individualized lesson plans created for our students based on the Orton-Gillingham structured literacy approach.

NOVEMBER: Our Tween Ministry (3rd-6th Grade) returned this fall with Sunday Dinner & Games on the 1st and 3rd Sundays of the month. Thank you to all the congregation members who have provided the delicious meals! Three-legged races, "nailed-it!" style cake decorating, nose ball, sardines, and capture the flag are just a sample of the fun had by all!



TWEEN SUNDAY DINNER & GAMES



BUILD ACTION TO ADDRESS HOUSING PROBLEMS IN BALTIMORE

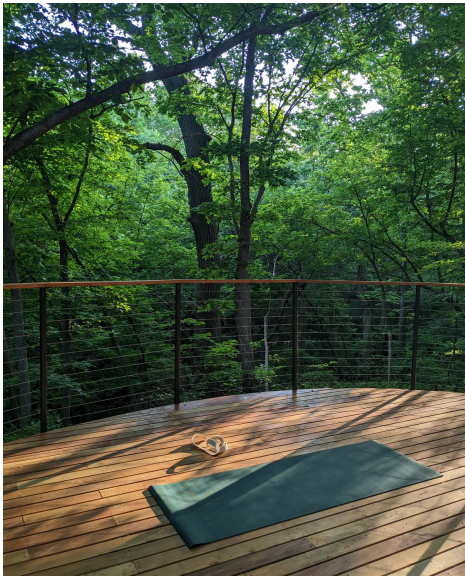
DECEMBER: After a month of worshipping in the Assembly Room while we waited for the new boiler to arrive we returned to the Sanctuary in time for Advent and Christmas. Although delighted to be back, many commented on the surprisingly cozy feeling of the Assembly Room.

December also saw another major milestone in BUILD's community work, announcing an historic agreement between BUILD, Mayor Scott, and the Greater Baltimore Committee (GBC). The agreement outlines the scale of the housing problems in Baltimore City, the pathway toward securing \$3 billion in public investment, and the steps that all parties need to take in order to set the stage for a 15 year rebuild of the city, guided by the principles of community-led development and no displacement. Governor Moore's proposed budget responded to the plan with new revenues that serve as a downpayment toward the plan.



ANNUAL CHRISTMAS PAGEANT

SABBATICAL HIGHLIGHTS



YOGA IN THE WOODS



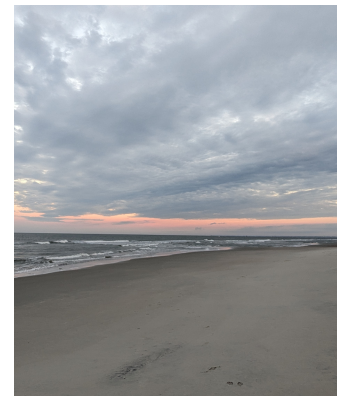
BICYCLING WITH THE FAMILY



WALKWAY OVER THE HUDSON



FLORIDA MOON



BEACH SUNRISE



ALMERIA, SPAIN



WINDSOR, CASTLE WITH FRIENDS



On October 1st our Christian Educator, Rachel Cunningham returned refreshed and rejuvenated from her 4 month sabbatical. She remains incredibly grateful for the time away for renewal and reflection.

SESSION NOTES

The Session is the governing body of our church, responsible for the mission, vision, and direction of our church, overseeing its programs, facilities, and staff.

In addition to dealing with the big challenges in personnel and budgeting, in 2023 Session addressed several issues of safety and outreach which are particular to historic churches in urban areas.

In particular, we:

- Addressed the critical issue of boiler replacement
- Assisted an unhoused woman in obtaining prerequisite documents to apply for access to housing
- Facilitated and welcomed the return of small groups to engage and connect members around common interests
- Worked with the Trustees to create a budget to address the restoration/repair of structural issues to the North Tower and other sites within our historic edifice
- Addressed several challenging Personnel issues and Search Committee processes since the untimely death of our beloved Minister of Music and the departure of our Associate Pastor, as well as approving a Personnel request to hire a consultant to address current staffing needs, and addressed the pay of our much-appreciated staff choir soloists
- Began the daunting task of preparing our congregation to act appropriately in the event of an active shooter, including approval of new Safety Committee
- Addressed background checks for Safe Church policy
- Welcomed the return of the Newsletter
- Addressed issues surrounding a new 5 year fiscal plan; and
- Welcomed new members to the congregation and new elders to Session as we continue to navigate our way out of pandemic time

Because 2024 promises to be a year full of challenging but meaningful work, we ask your prayers of support, your fresh perspectives and ideas on growth and community involvement and expressions of love and support for our congregation and beyond.

Questions may be directed to either Susan Stroupe or Vi Thorpe, co-chairs.



THE OLD BOILER HAD TO BE REMOVED IN PIECES



INSTALLING THE NEW

TRUSTEE NOTES

The trustees' main function is to act on behalf of the congregation to ensure that the Sanctuary, Fellowship Hall and Church House structures are safe, secure and in good working order. Keith Moore, our facilities manager works closely with church staff, the trustees and session to bring important structural issues to our attention for evaluation.

2023 was a busy year. We made the following improvements to the church processes and structures:

- Keith has been working diligently to review all the church's service agreements. He has made improvements for the church by negotiating better service agreements to help save money and improve services for our community.
- The trustees are members of the Community Purchasing Alliance. This has brought significant savings to the church for energy usage, copier usage and Brown's comprehensive insurance package.
- Upgrades/Repairs in 2023
 - Sanctuary
 - Stained, resurfaced and refinished all the exterior doors to the sanctuary and church house to protect from weathering.
 - New Boiler installed and operational in December 2023
 - Tree trimming in the alley to prevent tree damage to the sanctuary roof.
 - Church House
 - Restored Front of the Church House stonework – Cleaned and re-pointed.
 - Restored and repaired Parapet at top of roof (safety issue)
 - Improvements made to windows for easy access in case of fire.
 - New Air Conditioning for entire church house – removed A/C units that caused water damage and mortar damage to church house
 - Repaired 3rd floor rooms.
 - Rebuilt and improved accessibility ramp
 - Fellowship Hall
 - Repaired roof and leaking on third floor of Fellowship Hall

The trustees presented a five-year repair/maintenance plan to session in 2023 for all church structures (Sanctuary, Church House and Fellowship Hall). This five-year plan was based on a reserve study completed for the church in 2019 (pre-Covid). The reserve study acts as a comprehensive guide for maintenance projects that will need the trustees and church's attention over a 20-year time horizon.

The trustees took the most critical components of the reserve study and presented a concise 5-year plan to Session. Session approved the 5-year plan. The start of the plan is on hold until the appropriate funding is secured. Some of the major projects we will be tackling are as follows:

- Repair and Restore North Tower
- Continued Restoration of the Stonework and Cleaning for all sides of Sanctuary and Church House
- Repair and Restore the Cork Floor to the Sanctuary
- Ensure proper maintenance work on the stained-glass windows that will help protect these windows in perpetuity

Questions may be directed to Joe Brandli or Charles Reichelt, co-chairs.

DEACON NOTES

The ministry of deacon is one of compassion and service, reaching out to the sick, the hungry, the poor, and others in need in the congregation and community. At Brown Memorial we have nine deacons serving the congregation based on alphabetical groupings. The list of current deacons and their associated alphabetical group can be found on the last page of this report.

Throughout 2023, deacons responded to members and friends of our congregation in need... those experiencing illness, grief, and other life challenges. In addition to this ministry of care, deacons also worked to formalize their operating procedures to ensure that the responsibilities of all deacons are fulfilled in a consistent and efficacious manner. Other aspects of service the deacons provide are:

- Communicating monthly with their Deacon Group
- Coordinating meals of support as needed
- Visiting homebound members
- Leading the Prayers of the People monthly
- Assisting with communion including taking it to homebound members
- Coordinate and serve as Ushers,
- Assist the Nominating Committee in recruiting new deacons
- New this fall, deacons worked with the Education Hour Lunch Coordinator to recruit and organize volunteers to serve our weekly luncheons.

Deacon goals for 2024 include: coordinating the new Concierge role in conjunction with the Usher role for worship, working to expand community connections with those who worship virtually, participating in the Weekly Prayer Service, and promoting awareness and honoring of those resting in our Columbarium.

Your deacon is ready to serve should you find yourself in need. For general questions regarding the deacons and their ministry contact David Lascu, chair.

BUDGET SUMMARY

2023 BUDGET

Income

In 2023, we received \$663,136 in giving, 98% of the \$680,000 budget. We needed to draw \$458,815 from the Endowment to cover the remainder of the 2023 expenses. The \$458,815 draw was equal to 7.3% of the end-of-year Endowment value.

Expenses

2023 reported total expenses were \$1,149,318, under the \$1,179,636 budget. At \$362,236, Building expenses were about \$70,000 over budget, mostly due to the need to replace the boiler. We used the balance of the Building Reserve, \$42,989, to fund most of the boiler replacement. Personnel costs were about \$40,000 below budget due to the open Minister of Music and Associate Pastor positions.

2024 BUDGET

Income

2024 Pledges were over 10% over 2023 which resulted in a Giving budget of \$755,000. This leaves \$530,000 that is budgeted to be funded by the Endowment.

Expenses

Total budget expenses are \$1,340,409, 12% over the 2023 actual expenses. The increase is primarily from the budgeted increase in Personnel expenses, driven by filling the two open positions and the addition of a part-time Communications manager.

OPERATING BUDGET

Approved by Session 1/10/24

	2024 Budget	2023 Actual	2023 Budget
REVENUE			
General Fund - Pledged & Plate Income	755,000	663,136	680,000
Rental, Use, & Misc. Income	16,186	27,367	15,321
Last Mile Campaign Remainder	38,361		
Endowment Income & Draws*	530,862	458,815	484,315
Total Revenue	\$1,340,409	\$1,149,318	\$1,179,636
EXPENSES			
Personnel	746,887	638,625	679,147
Salaries & Housing Allowances	543,366	470,220	494,780
Benefits - Medical, D&D, & Retirement	150,678	121,626	136,797
Payroll Taxes & Workers Comp	34,300	28,686	34,300
Professional & Recruitment	18,543	18,093	13,270
Education	29,479	23,910	28,670
Children & Family	3,087	1,499	2,940
Junior & Senior High Youth	15,474	4,987	14,975
Christian Education	8,087	15,968	7,940
Adult Education	2,831	1,456	2,815
Congregation	52,660	31,166	31,830
Worship	19,330	5,479	6,200
Membership	7,700	6,484	3,500
Music Program	11,760	9,136	11,760
Diversity	4,000	272	500
Transportation	9,870	9,795	9,870
Mission	88,432	86,367	90,672
Brown Memorial Tutoring Program	38,632	38,632	38,632
General Mission	23,100	23,140	23,140
Global Mission	8,500	6,466	7,500
Urban Mission	18,200	18,128	21,400
Operations	422,951	369,250	349,317
Session		464	
Communications	16,000	10,480	20,000
Office	38,500	39,058	38,500
Building/Facilities	368,451	362,236	290,817
<i>Minus Draws from Bldg Reserve Fund</i>		<i>(42,989)</i>	
Total Expenses	\$1,340,409	\$1,149,318	\$1,179,636
Balance	0	0	0

*Endowment Draw of \$25,487 exceeding 2023 balanced budget carried forward to 2024 Revenue

MEMBER ANNIVERSARIES 2023

50+ YEARS

- John Burton
- Lynda Burton
- Juliette M. Hanks
- Hilda Imhoff
- Margaret (Peggy) Obrecht
- J. Courtland Robinson
- Sally S. Robinson

40 YEARS

- Ann Holland
- Charles O. Holland
- Sarah E. Kelly Reiman
- Melissa M. Mock Riorda

35 YEARS

- Charles F. Obrecht

30 YEARS

- Taylor F. Branch
- Rain Sterling Hall
- Christina H. Macy
- Jean Savina

25 YEARS

- Douglas Adams
- Andrew J. Imparato
- Matthew McNabney
- Betsy Nix
- Grace Peng
- Andrew L. Ross
- Dianne C. Ross
- Caitlin Anne Schneider
- John T. Warmath

20 YEARS

- Miranda Rose Hall
- Anne Wilson Heuisler
- Linnea Kristine Cheseldine

15 YEARS

- Roger Fink
- Graham Richardson

10 YEARS

- Jonathan Bradford Hensley
- Nadia Blakemore Hensley
- Katherine Hinckley Jenkins
- McKay Bradley Jenkins

5 YEARS

- Josh Boak
- China Boak Terrell
- Brian D. Boles
- Whitney Washington Boles
- Rachael Edgin
- Samuel Edgin
- Joyce Edington
- Allen Fisher
- Ellen Fisher
- Ed Hambleton
- Gail Hambleton
- Diane L. Hodges
- Judy F. Jones
- Maureen Kelly
- Morgana Kinlan
- Matthew Mickel
- Margaret Phenicie
- Amanda Rae
- Kyle Rae
- William M. Sheridan
- Lucy Sorensen - affiliate member
- Carole Tayman
- Ally Vitale
- Ted Vitale
- Andrew Williams
- Miranda P. Williams
- Andrea Zumbrum



ACOLYTING



TIME WITH CHILDREN YOUTH SUNDAY

BMPA BY THE NUMBERS

BAPTISMS

- September 24, Lillian Mae Stewart, daughter of Taylor and Tom Stewart
- November 26, Tyler Dezso McPherson-Gyarmathy

DEATH OF MEMBERS

- January 7, Ann E. Thens (Donna Senft's sister)
- January 14, Lanita Helen Ward (Michele Ward's grandmother)
- February 15, Gwendolyn E. Jones (Friend of the church.)
- March 11, Mary Jane Sokol (member)
- May 8, Doris Moore (Keith Moore, Sr.'s grandmother)
- May 17, Matt Mahony (Paul & Mary Mahony's son/stepson)
- May 30, William Mitchell (Mary Mahony's nephew)
- June 4, Peter Waldron (Tom Waldron's brother)
- June 13, Carolyn Baillie (Joanne Baillie's mother)
- June 17, Gayle Ward (Matt McNabney's mother)
- August 3, Robert Gorham (member)
- August 11, James Wallace Wilson, Jr. (Anne Wilson Heuisler's brother)
- August 21, Margaret Love (Kelly Knock's grandmother)
- September 4, Joy Price (member)
- September 19, Lynn Clippinger (member)
- October 10, Sandra Worthing (Nancyellen Brennan's sister)
- November 27, George Fisher (Gretchen van Utt's husband, friend and former member of Brown Memorial Park Avenue.)



CHRISTMAS EVE WORSHIP

NEW MEMBERS

On August 13, Carol Myford, David Myford, Robert Pownall, Karen Stokes, Cliff Trent. On November 8, Deborah (Debbie) Bowers, Sarah Lane Cochrane-Payne, Betty Dickie, Gregory (Greg) Dickie, Will Kuethe, Olufunmilayo (Funmi) Owolabi, Will Payne, Mark Shifflett.

MARRIAGES

Stacey Marie Arnold and Rafael Nieto (non-members, officiated by Rev. Andrew Connors).

Margarethe (Greta) Augusta Finney (inactive member) and Michael Alfred Fahey (non-member, officiated in Bar Harbor, Maine by Rev. Andrew Connors) Greta is the daughter of members Cheryl and Stewart Finney.

NEWLY ELECTED OFFICERS

Elders: Joanne Bailey, Rebecca Crew, Dan Hale, Tyler McPherson (youth), Karen Nelson, Ella Palmer (youth)

Deacons: Brent Bellinger

Trustees: Kathy Arnold, Kathy Graning



1316 Park Avenue,
Baltimore, MD, 21217, 410.523.1542

*Alive in the City
and the World*

Staff

Ministry

Andrew Connors: Senior Pastor
Gretchen van Utt: Pastoral Associate
Rachel Cunningham: Christian Educator
Michael Cuppett: Confirmation Coordinator
Eva Hendrix-Shovlin: Interim Youth Director
John Walker: Minister of Music Emeritus

Admin & Worship Support

Sharon Holley: Administrative Assistant
Sharon Lucas: Financial Administrator
Keith Moore Sr: Facilities Manager
Henry Owens: Custodian
Masrora Ariaye: Nursery Caregiver
Anastasia Kupstas: Media Specialist
Kazi Rayhan: Nursery Caregiver

Tutoring Program

Martha Socolar: Director
Karlin Scudder: Assistant Director
Tracy Cerrato: Development Director

2023 Officers

Elders (Session)

Judson Arnold, *Amy Bonitz Palmer*, Barbara Cook, *Rose Glorioso*, Judy Jones, *Michael Reed*, *Cecelia Reichelt* (youth elder), Court Robinson, Andy Ross, Bill Sheridan, Susan Stroupe, and Vi Thorpe

Deacons

Ed Hambleton (O-R); Nadia Hensley (S-T); *Kathy Kaneda*, (D-F); David Lascu, chair (G-H); Jonna Lazarus (C); Matt McNabney (A-B); Grace Peng (M-N); Deborah Richardson (I-L); and Dianne Ross (U-Z)

Trustees

Barbara Christen, Bruce Curtis, Dave Urban, Charles Reichelt, *Christine Calderon*, *Beth Gregory*, Jayne Mauric, Joe Brandli and Carole Tayman

Italicized names indicate individuals whose term ended in 2022.

Stay Connected

Websites

Public: browndowntown.org
CCB: browndowntown.ccbchurch.com

Newsletters

(Sign up at browndowntown.org).
Weekly E-Newsletter: *This Week @ Brown*
Bi-Monthly Print Newsletter: *Tidings*

Social Media

Public Facebook Page

[facebook/BrowndowntownBaltimore](https://facebook.com/BrowndowntownBaltimore)
Brown Memorial Facebook Group: email rachel@browndowntown.org to be added.

