



**BROWN
MEMORIAL
PARK AVENUE**

Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)

2024

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

"Pleasure and action make the time seem short." -Shakespeare

It's 2025, and I can't believe everything that happened in 2024. Plenty of bad stuff happened - an election that's revealed the depth of our divisions and the fears that come with it. The deaths of cherished ones within our congregation. Unwanted diagnoses, financial stressors, and conflicts in important relationships. Yet, 2024 also produced some incredible outcomes that we'd be remiss not to celebrate to the hilt.

The BUILD organization successfully aligned Baltimore's business, faith, and governmental sectors, securing the Governor and Mayor's support for a \$1.3 billion downpayment to rebuild the city without displacing residents. Our church implemented our new staffing plan with the expectation that God has given us what we need to fully overcome the pandemic and embrace our call to grow as a congregation spiritually and numerically—a revival to match the one coming in the city itself.

When the North Tower's repair could no longer be deferred with a price tag well beyond our annual budgeted funds, several Brown Memorial members joined together to contribute more than \$300,000 to meet the repair cost fully. And as you all honored me with a celebration of my twentieth pastoral anniversary as your Senior Pastor, we all celebrated a partnership of ministry that has borne so many fruits in our work together, from mission partnerships that have deepened and multiplied to immigrants that have been welcomed, peace that has been achieved, equalities that have been expanded, programs and mission for children that have taken off.

Shakespeare was right in Othello when he wrote that "pleasure and action make the time seem short." Twenty years hardly seem like 20 years, mostly because of all the joy we have shared working together as a church. Indeed, one of the great joys of being part of a church is the creative experience of birthing many things from ideas into action. We will need to keep this good mix of pleasure and action in mind as we continue to experience growing pains in the New Year.

After all, new staff can mean new tensions as we adapt to people who are different from others who have previously served on the staff. New programs can mean disappointment as we grieve the ones we may have left behind. And new members bring with them all sorts of ideas and hopes that may differ from the ones each of us personally has in mind. Add to these transitions the yet-to-be-revealed transitions in our nation and the death machines at work in the world's wars, and it's enough to fill anyone with anxiety over the future, which can spoil the present. According to the Gospel, joy is present and available whenever we keep our eyes trained on God's actions and activities in our lives and the world.

It's easier to see God at work when we look back. Harder to see when we are in the thick of it. So, I hope you will relish the 2024 good news that is present on these pages. Receive this "annual report" less as a business statement and more as testimony that God's word can be trusted in the challenging days to come. Faith is given to us not as a prize but as fuel so that, enduring the rough days, we can see all the good God can do with people who learn to trust in God's neighbor-loving ways.

Peace, power and love,



Andrew Connors, Senior Pastor

ALIVE IN THE CITY

BROWN MEMORIAL TUTORING PROGRAM by Tracy Cerato

- **The Numbers:** Brown Memorial Tutoring Program is fortunate to have 67 tutors this year, seven of whom are members of the Brown Church Community. Thanks to those volunteers (including some who tutor across multiple sessions), BMTP was able to enroll 80 children from our three partner schools.
- **60th Anniversary:** The Tutoring Program celebrated its 60th anniversary in May 2024. BMTP is blessed to have had so many tutors and supporters over the last six decades that have enabled its success and longevity!
- **Passing the Torch:** 2024 also saw the retirement of long-serving director Martha Socolar, who was succeeded by Assistant Director Karlin Scudder.



B.U.I.L.D. by Rachael Edgin

Brown Memorial has been agitated, excited and activated with BUILD in 2024. We look forward to the work ahead in 2025 and hope you will join us!

- **Legislative Sessions, Public Actions, and Press Conferences:** After an engaging couple of “Education Hours” early in the year focused on the state of BUILD’s strategy for the vacant housing crisis, we had 15 members travel to Annapolis to represent BUILD during last year’s legislative session. Our congregation also showed up in a big way with dozens of members joining for two public actions and a press conference.
- **Public Investment and Reinvest Baltimore:** This persistent and consistent presence of BUILD leaders in organizations across Baltimore culminated in the power to unlock \$1.3 billion in public investment commitments. In addition, this year saw the signing of an executive order from Governor Moore establishing Reinvest Baltimore, a coordinated effort between the State of Maryland, Baltimore City, BUILD, the Greater Baltimore Committee, and others to eliminate concentrations of vacant properties, revitalize neighborhoods and maximize the economic potential and quality of life for residents in Baltimore City.
- **Commitment to Donations:** To finish out the year, 23 Brown Memorial individuals and families collectively donated over \$78,000 to BUILD.





MINISTRY OF WELCOME by Barbara Cook
The Brown Ministry of Welcome continued its work with Afghan refugees and Hispanic immigrants during 2024. In addition to assisting with transportation, school enrollment, recertification for SNAP and Medicaid benefits, we accomplished the following:

- English classes provided for 10 Afghan women from 3/7-5/31 at Brown Memorial. Judy Jones and Karen Stokes were teachers and Chrystie Adams and Julie Hanks provided childcare while the women were in class. The students made great progress.
- Successfully enrolled Masrora Ariaey at Poly and assisted Fariha Shefa and Zahid Noori in obtaining jobs at Johns Hopkins.
- Employed Afghan teens to work in the nursery at Brown Memorial and Second Presbyterian and helped the Afghan youth connect with BMPA youth on skating and bowling outings.
- Enjoyed a lunch prepared for us by the Afghan women on 2/18 and coordinated a church-wide effort to house the Sahir family on Reservoir Hill and furnish their apartment.

*Shout-out to Robbie Heath and Sharon Krum for managing transportation for Aisha Ulfat to attend three-hour appointments at Wilmer Eye Institute every two months.

ALIVE IN THE WORLD

EL SALVADOR PARTNERSHIP

by Barbara Cook

After six long years, a BMPA delegation of 12 members and friends went to El Salvador to visit our friends at Maria Madre de los Pobres. Among the highlights of our trip were:

- **Espiritu Santo Island:** We visited the island of Espiritu Santo for the first time and connected with women whose husbands were wrongly imprisoned by the government.
- **Peace Center and El Volcan:** We visited Sister Peggy at the Center in Suchitoto and took outings to El Volcan with parish youth and Termas del Rio.
- **St. Romero:** We visited Divina Providencia where St. Romero was assassinated and the University of Central America where Jesuit faculty were murdered, which were unforgettable experiences.



PEJUHUTAZIZI FAMILY LEARNING CAMP by Christie Adams

**PFLC 2024 was a great success in so many ways!
Here are some reflections from the Baltimore
staff and campers:**



- **Morning Devotions:** Morning Devotions helped us get to know each other in a deeper Way, with our Opening Circle each day with Rev. Fern Cloud helping us smudge and sing Dakota #21 (Morning Song) being particularly moving.
- **Recess and Activities:** We were grateful for non-screen time and extra outside time at expanded recess – a great way to build relationships while playing together. Four Square was a huge hit, plus there were many fun learning stations during other activity periods.
- **The Wacipi and Extra Support:** The annual Upper Sioux Wacipi where we got to watch our PFLC campers dance in their amazingly beautiful regalia, in addition to the support we received from the Upper Sioux Board of Trustees with hotel room for the NAMAS (Non Air-Mattress Adults) and extra funds for camp food.



CUBA PARTNERSHIP by Morgana Mickel

- **Vacation Bible School:** This July, the Brown Memorial's Cuba Team co-led Vacation Bible School (VBS) with our partner church in Camajuaní for ~50 children.
- **Fellowship Visits:** The Cuba Team travelled to visit our partners in Camajuaní three times in 2024. During these trips, the team was able to visit congregants, share meals, and participate in worship services and community celebrations, such as the Feast of the Epiphany, during which team members dressed as the Three Kings and prepared gift bags for the children of the church.
- **Medicines, Supplies, and Meals Donated:** Through generous monetary and in-kind donations from the community, Brown Memorial transported six 50-pound suitcases full of medicines, medical supplies, VBS supplies, and Christmas toys to Camajuaní. Additionally, in response to food shortages and power outages in Cuba, Brown sent several orders of food to our partners by using local grocery platforms.



MINISTRY & MUSIC

CONGREGATIONAL LIFE by Rachel Cunningham

- **Annual All Church Retreat:** In April, more than 50 children, youth, and adults, ages 3 months to 70+ gathered at Skycroft Conference Center for a weekend of intergenerational community building. Many said it was our best retreat weekend to date! Join us April 4-6 for this year's retreat. Visit our website to register.
- **Sunday Lunch & Faith Explorations:** Community lunch followed by the Faith Exploration education program has become part of Brown Memorial's DNA. Join us weekly for this time of fellowship and learning.
- **Sunday School:** Following the Time With Children each week children PreK-2nd grade and 3rd-6th grade engage with volunteer teachers to learn more about God and each other.



YOUTH MINISTRY by Eva Hendrix-Shovlin

As a person of faith, I feel the purpose of life is to glorify God through making the world a more kind, just, or beautiful place.

- **Kindness:** In 2024 my work in partnership with youth and families at Brown included emphasizing compassion, gratitude, and empathy. It was a joy for me to witness the kindness extended to one another across cultural boundaries during several outings with highschoolers from BMPA youth and youth members of the Afghan Immigrant Partnership including bowling and roller skate adventures.
- **Justice:** The Matthew 25 initiative is a movement in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) that encourages churches and individuals to work toward building congregational vitality and advocating to break down systems that perpetuate discrimination, bias, and oppression. In 2024 I loved partnering with In The Loop Churches Ministry Group of Baltimore Presbytery on several initiatives from ending voter suppression with voter postcards, Multicultural Friend-Giving, and preparing for the Rev. Dr. MLK Jr. Oratory Celebration among other service projects with the Middlers.
- **Beauty:** Youth and families at Brown also had several opportunities to center around a deep connection with creation. The river tubing trip helped me refocus on interconnectedness with all living things. The sun, water, and laughter of attendants ages 7 to 70+ helped me appreciate the beauty of creation.



MUSIC MINISTRY by Michael Stefanek

- **Easter:** We had a joyful Easter Sunday filled with powerful music provided by the chancel choir, handbell choir, brass, and timpani.
- **“All Call” Choir:** We had a successful "all call" choir Sunday during the summer in which people showed up with their instruments and voices the morning of worship to practice music together and share uplifting selections in worship.
- **Christmas Eve:** We closed the year with a meaningful Lessons and Carols service on Christmas Eve filled with glorious music provided by soloists, handbell choir, and the chancel choir.



WORSHIP COMMITTEE by Janine Zabriskie

- **Worship Committee Return:** The Worship Committee returned in 2024 after several years without a formal committee. In addition to being a think tank for worship ideas such as the casual “come as you are” services we had this summer they also help steward our worship experience. They pay attention to details like making sure the candles have oil in them or the paraments have been changed. The committee is always looking for others to join them in their work. Speak with Janine Zabriskie (chair) to learn more.
- **Casual Summer Worship:** Casual worship this summer saw us move forward in the pews in “come as you are” dress, share refreshments in the back of the sanctuary, and welcome two “pick up” choirs all in an effort to better support connection and community.
- **The Rev. Zina Jacque:** We welcomed Rev. Zina Jacque to preach at Brown in October. Her message on balancing our gifts, recognizing what God has already put in our hands, with the immense needs of our nation and world were impactful and timely.

HELLOS & GOODBYES

STAFFING UPDATE

In 2023, Session charged a task group, established by the personnel committee, to realign Brown's staff in a post-Covid world to better meet the strategic objectives that Session had established. Those objectives included 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.

Those plans were put in place in 2024. We also welcomed a new Media Specialist in December. If you've noticed the church working at a new, exciting pace, you'll want to learn (and relearn!) about the staff members behind-the-scenes making it happen.

Be sure to check out the updated staff bios page on our website under the "About" section.

RETIREMENTS & CELEBRATIONS

Brown had many things to celebrate in 2024, including the retirements of Henry Owens after 12 years of service and Sharon Holley after 36 years of service. Both of those occasions were followed by Andrew's 20th anniversary leading our congregation. In the deep, loving style of our community we honored the folks who've helped make our church such a wonderful place with special recognition, gifts, lunch receptions, BBQ parties, and in Andrew's case, even a "Roast and Toast."



STEWARDING OUR RESOURCES

SESSION NOTES by Susan Stroupe

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. Here are the Top 3 Session highlights of 2024:

- Worked with Trustees in a joint task group to create a document of policies and procedures for capital projects moving forward, as well as a clearer chain of communications for how capital projects are managed.
- Approved a new staffing structure brought by the personnel committee based on the recommendations of the consulting group hired to assess staffing needs.
- Worked with Trustees to plan, authorize, and complete "century-lasting" repairs of the North Tower!

TRUSTEE NOTES by Charles Reichelt

The trustee committee has created a highly functioning team where every voice is heard, and expertise is tapped to best serve the needs of the Brown Memorial community. This year we established formal operating policies and procedures resulting in sound decisions that benefit all in our worshipping community. Here are the Top 3 Trustee highlights of 2024:

- North Tower and Steeple – completing the project with quality personnel and craftsmanship under budget.
- Asbestos remediation of basement. The entire basement was remediated so that all future work in the basement can happen safely without further cost to the church.
- Noise abatement issue with the HVAC system was resolved.





Crawl space under the Sanctuary after abatement.



Courtyard noise abatement

BUDGET SUMMARY by Bill Sheridan

2024 Budget

Income

In 2024, we received \$742,075 in Giving (General Fund), up 8% from 2023, 98% of the \$755,000 budget. We needed to draw \$500,909 from the Endowment to cover the remainder of the 2024 expenses. The \$500,909 draw was equal to 7.8% of the end-of-year Endowment value which was \$6,406,555. We had additional, one-time income of \$329,878 transferred from the Building Reserve, used to cover the additional Capital expenses from the North Tower repair. The majority of these funds were raised in December through the North Tower Repair Campaign.

Total Income was \$1,592,746.

Expenses

2024 total expenses were \$1,592,746, \$252,337 over budget. At \$352,093, Capital expenses (part of Building) were about \$220,000 over budget, due to the unexpected additional repairs of the North Tower. The funds raised in December through the North Tower Repair campaign covered these added costs.

Congregation/Worship expenses were over budget by about \$14,000 due to the purchase of audio equipment.

Personnel expenses were \$32,836 under budget, Christian Education was \$11,582 under budget. Total expenses, without the Capital overrun, were 3% higher than in 2023.

2025 Budget

Income

2025 Pledges were similar to 2024 which resulted in a Giving budget of \$736,600. This leaves \$550,00 that is budgeted to be funded by the Endowment. If the Endowment value at the end of the year is equal to the \$6,406,555 value at the end of 2024, the 2025 Endowment Draw Percentage will be 8.6%.

Expenses

Total budget expenses are \$1,339,307, 16% under the 2024 actual expenses. Without the Capital overrun, 2025 total expenses would be 3% over the 2024 total expenses.

OPERATING BUDGET

Approved by Session 1/15/25

	2025 Budget	2024 Actual	2024 Budget
REVENUE			
General Fund - Pledged & Plate Income	736,600	742,075	755,000
Rental, Use, & Misc. Income	16,506	19,884	16,186
Last Mile Campaign Remainder		39,863	38,361
North Tower Income	35,000	290,015	
Endowment Income & Draws*	551,201	500,909	530,862
Total Revenue	\$1,339,307	\$1,592,746	\$1,340,409
EXPENSES			
Personnel	874,492	714,051	746,887
Salaries & Housing Allowances	656,024	537,056	543,366
Benefits - Medical, D&D, & Retirement	146,864	125,625	150,678
Payroll Taxes & Workers Comp	42,000	35,140	34,300
Professional & Recruitment	29,605	16,231	18,543
Education	29,650	17,897	29,479
Children & Family	2,300	1,794	3,087
Junior & Senior High Youth	13,500	4,775	15,474
Christian Education	11,000	10,409	8,087
Adult Education	2,850	920	2,831
Congregation	50,325	66,575	52,660
Worship	21,130	37,817	19,330
Membership	7,700	6,628	7,700
Music Program	10,630	11,265	11,760
Diversity	500	500	4,000
Transportation	10,365	10,365	9,870
Mission	87,190	84,887	88,432
Brown Memorial Tutoring Program	38,632	38,632	38,632
General Mission	24,158	23,100	23,100
Global Mission	9,500	8,500	8,500
Urban Mission	14,900	14,655	18,200
Operations	297,650	709,336	422,951
Session		455	
Communications	37,200	15,320	16,000
Office	35,300	41,556	38,500
Building/Facilities	225,150	874,262	368,451
Minus Draws from Bldg Reserve Fund		(222,257)	
Total Expenses	\$1,339,307	\$1,592,746	\$1,340,409
Balance	0	0	0

*Endowment Draw of \$29,935 exceeding 2024 balanced budget carried forward to 2025 Revenue



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*Alive in the City
and the World*

Staff

Ministry & Music

[Rev. Andrew Connors](#) – Senior Pastor
[Rev. Gretchen van Utt](#) – Pastoral Care Minister
[Rachel Cunningham](#) – Congregational Life Minister
[Eva Hendrix-Shovlin](#) – Youth Director
[Michael Stefanek](#) – Minister of Music
[Deborah Richardson](#) – Director of Hand Bells

Operations & Support

[Sharon Lucas](#) – Financial Administrator
[Camille Sherriffe](#) – Administrative Assistant
[Angie Alt](#) – Communications Manager
[Keith Moore, Sr.](#) – Facilities Manager
[Sharon Holley](#) – Wedding & Funeral Coordinator
[Aaron Zimmer](#) – Media Specialist (bio coming soon!)
[Kazi Rayhan](#) – Nursery Caregiver

Tutoring Program

[Karlin Scudder](#) – Director
[Liam Lockett](#) – Assistant Director
[Tracy Cerrato](#) – Development Director

2024 Officers

Elders (Session)

Judson Arnold, Joanne Baillie, *Barbara Cook*, Rebecca Crew, Dan Hale, Judy Jones, *Tyler McPherson* (youth elder), Karen Nelson, *Ella Palmer* (youth elder), Court Robinson, Andy Ross, Bill Sheridan, *Susan Stroupe* (co-clerk), and *Vi Thorpe* (co-clerk)

Deacons

Brent Bellinger, (D-F); Ed Hambleton (O-R); Nadia Hensley (S-T); 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

Kathy Arnold, Joe Brandli (co-chair), Barbara Christen, Bruce Curtis, Kathy Graning, Jayne Mauric, Charles Reichelt (co-chair), Carole Tayman, and *Dave Urban*

Italicized names indicate individuals whose term ended in 2024.

Stay Connected

Websites

Public: browndowntown.org
CCB Login:
<https://browndowntown.ccbchurch.com/goto/login>
Giving: <https://pushpay.com/g/browndowntown>

Church Communications

- **Community Needs:** our weekly email to learn about ways to sign up and serve the Brown community
- **Passing the Peace:** Brown's digital connection, our bi-weekly e-newsletter
- **Tidings:** our quarterly publication highlighting reflections from our pastor, church members, and other committees and groups

Find past newsletters and link to signup for all three publications under the **“Events, News, & Media”** section on our website.

Social Media

Facebook:

<https://www.facebook.com/BrowndowntownBaltimore/>

YouTube:

<https://www.youtube.com/@brownmemorialparkavenuepre7312>