

# FORT WASHINGTON COLLEGIATE CHURCH

**Annual Report  
2018-2019**





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## Staff

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Rev. Dr. Damaris D. Whittaker  
*Senior Minister*  
Rev. Michael Vanacore  
*Associate Minister for Congregational Life*  
Zachary Stevens Walter  
*Interim Director for Children and Youth*  
Allison Dilyard  
*Associate for Children and Youth Ministries*  
Chris Whittaker  
*Director of Music*  
David Ford  
*Business Manager*  
Dinean Davis  
*Communications and Ministry Coordinator*  
Laurrinda Hatcher  
*Bookkeeper*  
Hilda Cash McCrillis  
*Nursery Attendant*  
Lazaro Rodriguez  
*Sexton*  
Wilfredo Serrano  
*Sexton*  
Carlos Rodriguez  
*Evening Receptionist*  
James Admans  
*Ministerial Intern*

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## Consistory

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Beverley Sheares  
*Elder, Chair of Consistory*  
Victoria Dillard  
*Elder*  
Johanna Garcia  
*Elder*  
Brian Plane  
*Elder*  
Phil Callen  
*Deacon*  
Zenía Dacio-Mesina  
*Deacon*  
Delana Glenn  
*Deacon*  
Lisa Kline  
*Deacon*  
Andrew Lancot  
*Deacon*  
Melissa Thomas-Baum  
*Deacon*  
Devora Jones  
*Intersections Ministry Deacon*  
LaVonne Reimer  
*Intersections Ministry Deacon*



## CONTENTS

3	ABOUT FORT WASHINGTON COLLEGIATE CHURCH
4	SENIOR MINISTER'S REPORT
6	ASSOCIATE MINISTER'S REPORT
8	MUSIC MINISTRY
10	CHILDREN'S MINISTRY
12	BUSINESS MANAGER'S REPORT
13	CONSISTORY REPORT
14	CHURCH LIFE
15	BUDGET
19	PRIORITIES FOR 2020

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## About FWCC

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Fort Washington Collegiate Church is a place of diversity, hospitality and grace. As a church family, we celebrate our diversity and our connection to God. We open our doors to everyone regardless of race, culture, sexual orientation, gender identity, social or economic status. As a faith community, we seek to follow Christ's example and exemplify the love of Christ; therefore, we value grace over judgment. We represent many cultures and points of view, which gives us the opportunity to be enriched by the gifts and leadership of all God's people. Together, by word and deed, we proclaim the good news that there is new life in Christ.

We are a church that focuses on creating community, not just neighbors. Our connection to God is what makes us one. In seeing the humanity in everyone, we seek to fulfill the call of God to love one another and meet the needs of those who have been marginalized, forgotten and vilified. As believers, we actively seek justice for all. Our commitment to the city goes beyond the borders of a town, state or country, but the City is wherever there is a need for love, hope and grace.

*"Now to him who by the power at work within us is able to accomplish abundantly far more than all we can ask or imagine, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen"*  
Ephesians 3:20-21 NRSV

## REV. DR. DAMARIS D. WHITTAKER SENIOR MINISTER



What a year! We have worked hard, prayed hard, resisted hard, and celebrated hard, and may I say again, worked hard! There is not enough space in the Annual Report to document all we have done.

We have certainly been a church with #loveonthemove! I began the summer of 2018 on a mission trip with "the Mission 5," a group of FWCC teens, to Puerto Rico to continue our Hurricane Maria recovery work. Days before homecoming Sunday, I was with more than 25 members of clergy at the border of Mexico and Juarez advocating for immigrant rights.

At The Fort, Homecoming Sunday marked the beginning of our church year, filled with music, food, and community. We held our first all-church retreat in over 25 years in the fall. We are grateful for the lay leadership that has stepped up to give us their time and talents in the planning of the retreat.

We have experienced a year of growth. Our children's ministry is bursting at the seams. I am pleased to report that they are the most consistent attendees in our congregation.

Our work was informed by the priorities we put forth. This year's priorities were:

**Fellowship.** We envisioned moving from a model of "ministries" to small groups. We successfully launched the following groups:

- "La Placita" a multi-cultural, multi-lingual ministry that seeks to engage the wider Washington Heights Community; bringing us together through music, dialogue, food and culture;
- All-In, a parents support group that meets alternating with Single Parents Support Group;
- Brunch and Books, a monthly book club on Saturday mornings
- Social Justice Task Force which works on issues of justice, advocacy and mobilization.
- The Youth Book Club, bringing children and youth together once a month around books and crafts.

Other small groups will be forming this church year as well.

**Membership.** We continue to work to be a church of radical welcome. We open our doors to be a place of inclusivity and welcome new members every first Sunday. This year we welcomed 19 new members (5 through confirmation). I baptized 4 beautiful babies. Our attendance has increased from an average of 110-120 to 140-150 in just 1 year! Our new members mixers serve as a place for fellowship, community and belonging.

**Financials.** We implemented new fundraising initiatives this year. Our stewardship giving increased approximately 33%, and while we still have a long way to achieve financial sustainability, we mark this great achievement with gratitude.

**The Gospel in the World.** We committed to continue to bring a message of inclusion and love to the world. We have done that with our words and deeds. Our work in Puerto Rico continues. We stood in solidarity with those seeking asylum. We waded in solidarity with our LGBTQ+ family and community. We walked together with those seeking affordable housing. We stood with those seeking racial and economic justice. Through my writing I continue to address the issues of injustice in the world and push our work forward. In our own neighborhood, a child born while her parents are in Sanctuary, became part of our family. Fort Washington you have been so generous and loving!

We are a teaching church. As such, we celebrated the ministries of those who served us. We held the ordination of the now, Rev. Bridget Kelso Anthony. She served as our Associate Minister for over four years and we blessed her as she transitioned to serve our sister church, West End Collegiate as their Associate Minister for Community Engagement. Similarly, we celebrated Mia McClain who began with us as an intern, as she was called to serve as Associate Minister at Myers Park Baptist Church in North Carolina. We look forward to her upcoming ordination.

We ended the year with a medical mission organizing over 31 medical professionals in the Mountains of Orocovis, Puerto Rico and with a celebration of Pride 50—the neighborhood was buzzing!



Fort Washington Church continues to be the place where the Washington Heights Community gathers around worship, music, love, celebration, justice and resistance. More and more I hear in this neighborhood, the excitement about the “life” the community is witnessing in this church.

As we look to the future, I am grateful for the present, but I acknowledge the challenges of the journey ahead. Challenges of financial sustainability as the Collegiate Church appropriations continue to be reduced. Challenges of being a prophetic church with #loveonthemove and what that means as we work to answer to the needs of our community and the world. Challenges to be able to grow at the pace our children are growing.

I continue my dedication and service to the The Collegiate Church. I now serve as Vice-President of the Corporation. I pray that God will continue to lead The Collegiate Church of New York to a new place of transformation.

Finally, I am thankful for the work of a dedicated staff and the leadership of a stellar Consistory. I ask that you take the time to thank them for a job well done.

Adelante!

## MINISTER BRIDGET KELSO ANTHONY ASSOCIATE MINISTER



### A YEAR IN REVIEW – Changes

This has been a successful year of transition, on every level. Our new Senior Minister, the dynamic Rev. Dr. Damaris D. Whittaker, has been with us two years now. We have had meaningful worship moments and made significant contributions to the community.

Our Interfaith relationships continue to be a strength for us and this community. This year we partnered again with the Upper Manhattan Interfaith Leaders Coalition for our Annual Thanksgiving Celebration. After a wonderful program at Hebrew Tabernacle celebrating all that we are thankful for, we returned to Fort Washington for an historic meal. All three floors of the church were used, including the 2nd floor gymnasium which was perfect for youth and families with small children.

This year I was proud to work with 5 young people during our Confirmation classes. Beginning in September 2018 and continuing through June 2019, these young people met with me twice a month immediately after service. During our time together, we explored the Biblical history, Christianity, our RCA

and UCC foundations and polity, scriptures and stories, and the life of Jesus. The Confirmands led the service in June by speaking eloquently and movingly about their faith journeys.

Fort Washington has a variety of Adult Education opportunities. From Noon Day Prayer to God Talk, there is something for everyone. I had the chance to lead a small group Bible Study called “Your Story, Your Voice” in January. For three consecutive Mondays, we explored scripture, current events and personal narratives around the topics of women, neighbors and creativity.

I was also able to begin meeting with parents in a new group called “All In.” While we have a thriving Singles Parent group that meets monthly, I wanted to create a space for adults who are caring for children in a variety of ways. All In will meet monthly, and is for everyone who parents, from foster care or adoption to same-sex couples.

As I have mentioned before, I am deeply grateful for our Senior Minister’s willingness to not only share



the pulpit, but to be creative there as well. This year, she indulged my love of Black Panther, and agreed to preach on the Gospel of Wakanda. We had a great time deciding on sermon threads, significant spiritual points and references, and of course, costumes.

Thanks to the Reformed Association, Rev. Whittaker, the Consistory, staff and congregation, I was blessed to be Ordained as Minister of Word and Sacrament in the United Church of Christ on December 9, 2018. And what a celebration it was! I am still hearing from people about how much joy was in the room on that day.

### GET READY, GET SET, GO

I have transitioned to West End Collegiate Church to become the new Minister of Engagement. As I said in my second to last sermon, all of you are in my thoughts and prayers, and the work that I do, wherever I go will always be shaped by my time here with you. On July 21, 2019, we vowed to release each other so that we can all continue the work. This was necessary so that we can both welcome and be welcomed in new ways, with new people. I am grateful to Jesus for showing me the way forward. I am grateful to God for the Fort Washington Collegiate Church, for always holding us in love and protection, and for constantly opening new pathways.

I hope that the work that I have done here reflects my love for this community and my growth and development. From working with young people in Confirmation classes and Mission trips, to advocating for Social Justice and Interfaith partnerships, I have tried to answer God's call on my life, and uphold the trust put in me by this congregation. Fort Washington gave me a soft place to land, a creative space to grow, and a loving community to call my own.

I go out into the world with confidence and conviction because of who I have become here. Peace to you all. Peace to this house. Go out knowing you are blessed, and be a blessing to others.



*"Make a joyful noise to the Lord, all the earth. Worship the Lord with gladness; come into his presence with singing. Know that the Lord is God." Psalm 100*

## CHRIS WHITTAKER MUSIC DIRECTOR



The 2018-19 season of music at Fort Washington Collegiate Church has been full of exciting new adventures, and the ministry continues to grow into a more vibrant and connected component of church life and life in the Washington Heights community.

We began our new Vocal Scholars internship this year, inviting mezzo-soprano Melanie Dubil and baritone Melvin Rodriguez by competitive audition to become our first ever participants in the program. Sponsored by the J. Harold Raplinger educational fund, Vocal Scholars meet weekly for independent study with the music director, participate in service, and assist the Joyful Voices in learning and preparing music.

This year we began special Jazz Communion services on every first Sunday, inviting world-class special guest soloists and instrumentalists from all over the city to join us. The Joyful Voices continued to add new members and see new congregants volunteer to share their gifts on Sunday mornings. Our Sunday morning choir is deeply committed and leads worship an average of three out of four weeks during the month. The Dance Ministry, under the direction of Victoria Dillard and Margot Fought, continues to meet



quarterly to present dance in worship. The ministry does an excellent job creating a space that is inclusive and inviting to all ages and abilities.

The Fort Washington Community Choir had a notable year. In the fall we participated in an ambitious collaboration with the United Palace of Cultural Arts and the Washington Heights Chamber Orchestra, presenting the jazz-gospel re-imagined Handel's Messiah, "Too Hot to Handel!" Approximately 1,800 listeners





from all over the city attended the performance. In the spring, the choir returned to the more regular pace, presenting a beautiful concert that featured Ola Gjielo's Sunrise Mass. Now in its third year, the Community Choir has become an important source of community for many people in our community.

Our ensemble-in-residence, the Washington Heights Chamber Orchestra performed eight concerts, including a new bi-lingual version of Igor Stravinsky's "A Soldier's Tale," a well-received Japanese-American concert, among others. The WHCO has helped bring visitors from all over the metro area to Fort Washington, garnering regular mentions in The New York Times, TimeOut NY, Gothamist's "Best Things to Do in NYC this Week," and more.

In the new year, we want to encourage more participation from musicians, singers, and actors in the congregation – sharing solos, offertory selections, and special music. We have a lot of untapped talent at FWCC and we want everyone to feel welcome to share his or her gifts on Sunday morning, regardless of experience. We also want children and young people to feel invited to be a part of the arts in worship.

FWCC has a dynamic music program that rivals much larger churches in the city, and we're delighted with its continued growth. There is more work to be done as the ministry matures into an even more vital artistic hub for the neighborhood. Our offerings are accessible to amateurs and professionals alike, and we value our uniquely blended style of worship on Sunday morning. We will continue to water the seeds of creativity so they can bloom and flourish here in new and exciting ways.



## ZACHARY STEVENS-WALTER INTERIM DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN'S MINISTRY



### Program Summary

The children and families of our community are served primarily on Sunday mornings, through dedicated programming in Sunday School during worship, children's sermons in "big church," and our weekly playgroup that meets on Wednesday mornings.

I am grateful to follow the leadership of Mia McClain who ran this program with dexterity and grace. Church school continues to grow consistently.

### New Leadership

During my time here, I have created two youth volunteer positions: Sunday Coordinator and Assistant to the Director. We will also be joined by a dedicated intern from Union Seminary who will be the Intern for Children and Youth. Together with the Director, it is my intention to have all four positions filled every Sunday. We will have two flex volunteers to help with this. James Vaughn is our acting Assistant to the Director. Pastor Bridget encouraged Jaeryn Arias to volunteer, and she has been phenomenal as our Sunday School Coordinator. We are now at the minimum standard for our Sundayschool to meet 'safe-church' standards and it has

allowed us to do more dynamic and involved activities. Some Sundays we are able to split into age-groups for age-appropriate activities. Already the difference in attention and engagement from children at all levels is a dramatically increased.

### On the Horizon

Beginning in September, we will have a dedicated team of four volunteers as well as an intern from Union Seminary. It has been an exciting, gratifying, and swift introduction to this dynamic community and I am excited for the start of our next programming year.







*“Even so, if it does not have works, faith is dead, being by itself.”—James 2:14*

## DAVID FORD BUSINESS MANAGER



Fiscal year 2018-2019 was a successful year with regards to rental income. We were able to cultivate a stable 10-month rental contract with the nearby TEP Charter School, hosting their Physical Education classes and other activities in our spaces. Unfortunately, TEP is using their own facilities for PE classes for the 2019-2020 academic year, so we are working to find other tenants that can replace a portion of that significant consistent monthly income they provided.

We expanded our rental partnership with Tennis World NYC, which develops youth and adults through tennis skills in our Gymnasium. We also renewed external rental contracts with Wooden Button Daycare, Young People's Chorus, UpTheater, Beth Am-The People's Temple, and had several schools and other non-profits come back for events during the 2019-2020 year.

We also were able to take advantage of the popularity of the Washington Heights neighborhood for movie and TV film projects to host approximately 12 “holdings” and catering dates for crews of a variety of production companies. These rentals are great for the church and community, but are impossible to forecast and build a stable budget on.

Notwithstanding the physical and audible disruptions caused by the ongoing renovation project, we are exploring potential rental relationships with other neighborhood organizations for late 2019 into 2020 and beyond.

With regards to building projects, navigated the departure of the Director of Properties from the Collegiate Central Office, and the hire of a replacement during the early months of 2019.

As part of the major renovation project of the external brick façade and replacement of windows and surrounding structures, we saw significant progress on the Nursery and Magaw rooms on the Main Floor, and in Room 205 and the bathrooms on the Second Floor. By the time this report is distributed, the window replacements in those rooms will all be finished and the rooms available for use for our growing children and youth ministries. The Central Office has prioritized this project and has set an aggressive target to finish all work by the end of 2019/beginning of 2020.

Other smaller projects experienced delays due to the Central Office staff change, but were eventually finished by the beginning of July, such as repairs of external building doors and locks as well as internal ones in the Sanctuary, Fellowship Hall, and administrative offices. We also had the Fellowship Hall floor re-finished. Finally, and most visually impressive, we replaced the deteriorated lattice behind the chancel with newly designed and carefully crafted panels!

We continue to intentionally and selectively partner with local organizations whose missions and values align with FWCC's. We hope to improve our ability to serve our congregation through managing our limited staff and financial resources into 2020.



*"Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms.." 1 Peter 4:10*

## BEVERLEY SHEARES ELDER, CHAIR OF FWCC CONSISTORY

CONSISTORY REPORT

This was an amazing year of growth for the Fort Washington Collegiate Church Consistory. We welcomed and ordained three new deacons: Lisa Kline, Delana Glenn, and Philip Callen. Our new deacons have brought new energy, ideas, and skills to our Consistory and church.

In September 2018, the Consistory held a retreat facilitated by Rev. Whittaker. During the retreat we engaged in exercises to identify our gifts and discussed how we could live and serve FWCC more fully using our various gifts. We introduced a new book for discussion throughout the year, "Pursuing God's Will Together". We discussed the role of elders and deacons and a new model for leadership. Deacon Wendy Sealey presented the stewardship proposal for the year and we developed our stewardship theme: "Love on the Move".

In January 2019, seven members of the FWCC Consistory along with former Associate Minister Rev. Bridget Kelso Anthony participated in a Stephen Ministry introductory workshop at Marble Collegiate Church. Stephen Ministers are laypeople trained to provide confidential, one-on-one care to congregants during times of need. The Consistory is planning to develop a Stephen Ministry here at FWCC. We will be seeking members of our congregation who are interested in participating in this ministry.

This year, Consistory members were assigned shepherding lists, groups of members for whom we are responsible for providing congregational care. We will be expanding the practice over the coming year to insure each member is known to Consistory and receives care as needed from the lay leadership of FWCC.

We have also been more actively participating in Sunday worship services and other ministry events

(church retreat, Advent and Lenten services) in the capacity as greeters and liturgists. We have also been inviting congregants to serve as greeters and liturgists for Sunday morning worship services over the last 2 years.

Thanks to the generosity of our congregation and friends, our giving increased! We have doubled our benevolence offering (2nd offering taken on the 1st Sunday of the month). The funds allow us to assist congregants, members of our community, and beyond Washington Heights with small financial grants. Your generous sacrificial giving throughout the year and during our special Easter offering has helped our church expand our Children's and Youth Ministry.

Finally, the FWCC Consistory has been more active in governance of the Collegiate Church of New York representing FWCC on the following committees:

- Audit Committee – Deacon Brian Plane
- Executive Committee – Rev. Dr. Damaris Whittaker, Elder Beverley Sheares
- Investment & Endowment Committee – Deacon Philip Callen
- Financial Planning Committee – Elder Beverley Sheares
- Operations Committee – Rev. Dr. Damaris Whittaker (ministerial liaison), Deacon Lorenzo Alsberry
- Outreach Committee – Deacon Johanna Garcia

We are blessed and grateful for the love and support of our FWCC family. We ask for your prayers as we continue to serve and answer the call to leadership. We appreciate the service of Deacons Wendy Sealey, Zoe Reyes, and Lorenzo Alsberry who ended their Consistory work this year. We are thankful for the support of our senior minister and our creative, hard-working staff. We continue to be the beneficiaries of God's amazing grace and are blessed with the visionary leadership of our senior pastor.

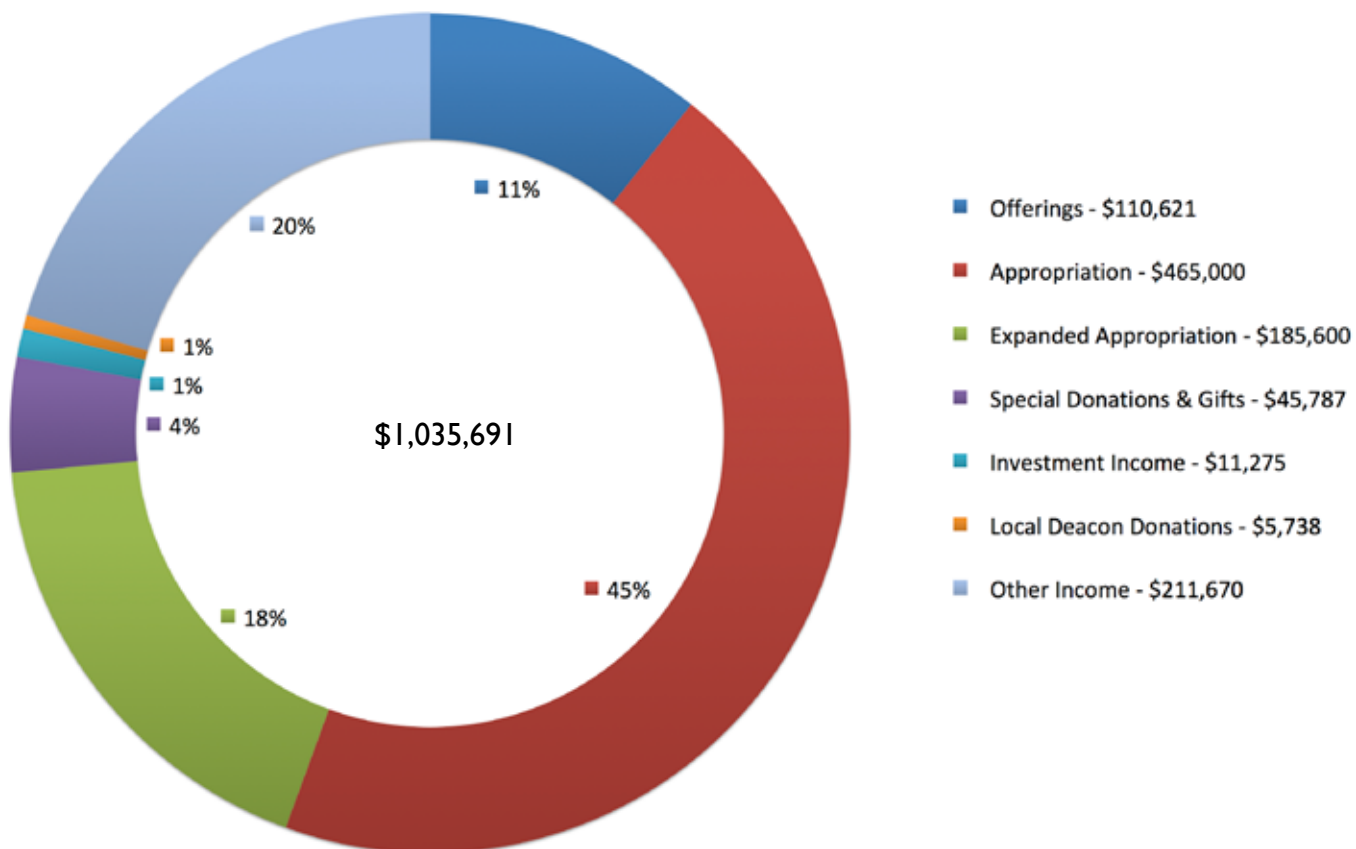






# REVENUE SOURCES

## 2018-2019 Operating Income



The financial support of the Collegiate Church Corporation represent approximately 63% of our operating income in appropriations, expanded appropriations and grants.

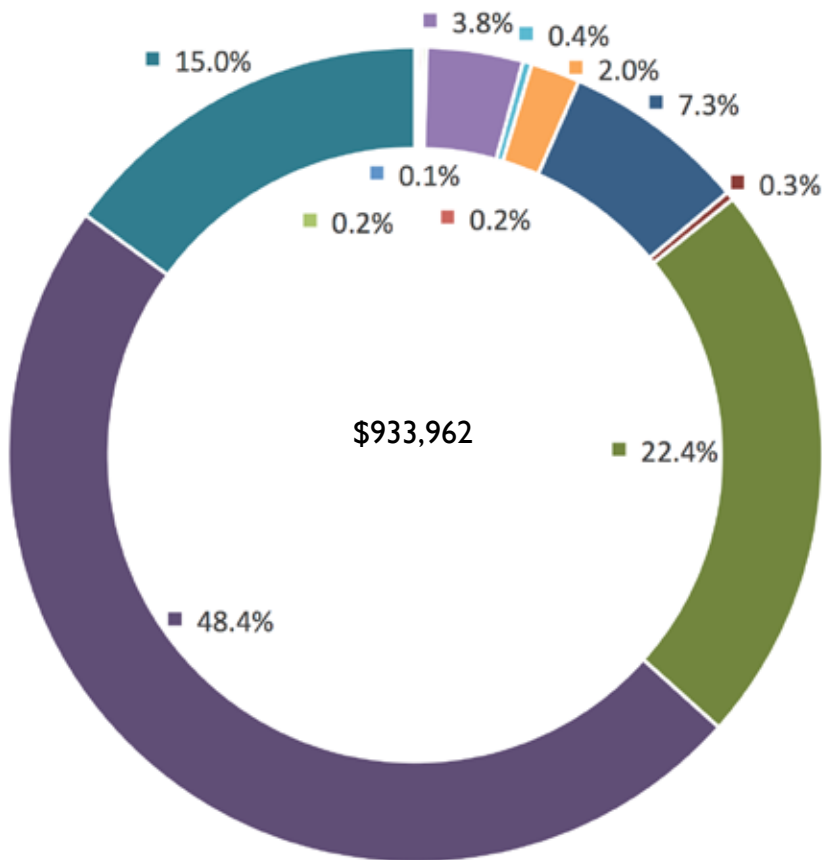
**The congregation's offerings and pledges represent 16% of our annual income.**

Other income includes rentals and special fundraisers. Other income is \$76,670 over budget for FY 2018-2019.



# EXPENSES

## 2018-2019 Actual



- Adult Education - \$1,204
- Children's Ministry - \$1,505
- Youth Ministry - \$1,556
- Church Life - \$35,586
- Social Justice - \$3,316
- Small Groups - \$18,272
- Music - \$68,256
- Worship - \$3,113
- Other Operating Expenses - \$209,235
- Payroll - \$451,856
- Benefits - \$140,064

### Adult Education

<1%

Educational opportunities continue to create faith formation opportunities.

### Children's Ministry

<1%

We are committed to our vibrant children's ministry and plan to allocate more resources and staff to expand the ministry.

### Youth Ministry

<1%

We confirmed 5 youth this year. A new youth group will be in place for year 2019-2020.

### Church Life

4%

We held our first annual all-wide retreat and opened up our doors for amazing programming and community engagement.





# EXPENSES

2018-2019

## Music and Worship

8%

The church music program is growing deeper connections to our community. A new choral scholars initiative has been very successful.



## Small Groups

2%

We successfully began new and exciting small groups.



## Staff Salary and Benefits

63%

Staff salary and benefits are covered by appropriations and extended appropriations.



## Summary

Income: \$1,035,691

Expenses: \$933,962

## Investments

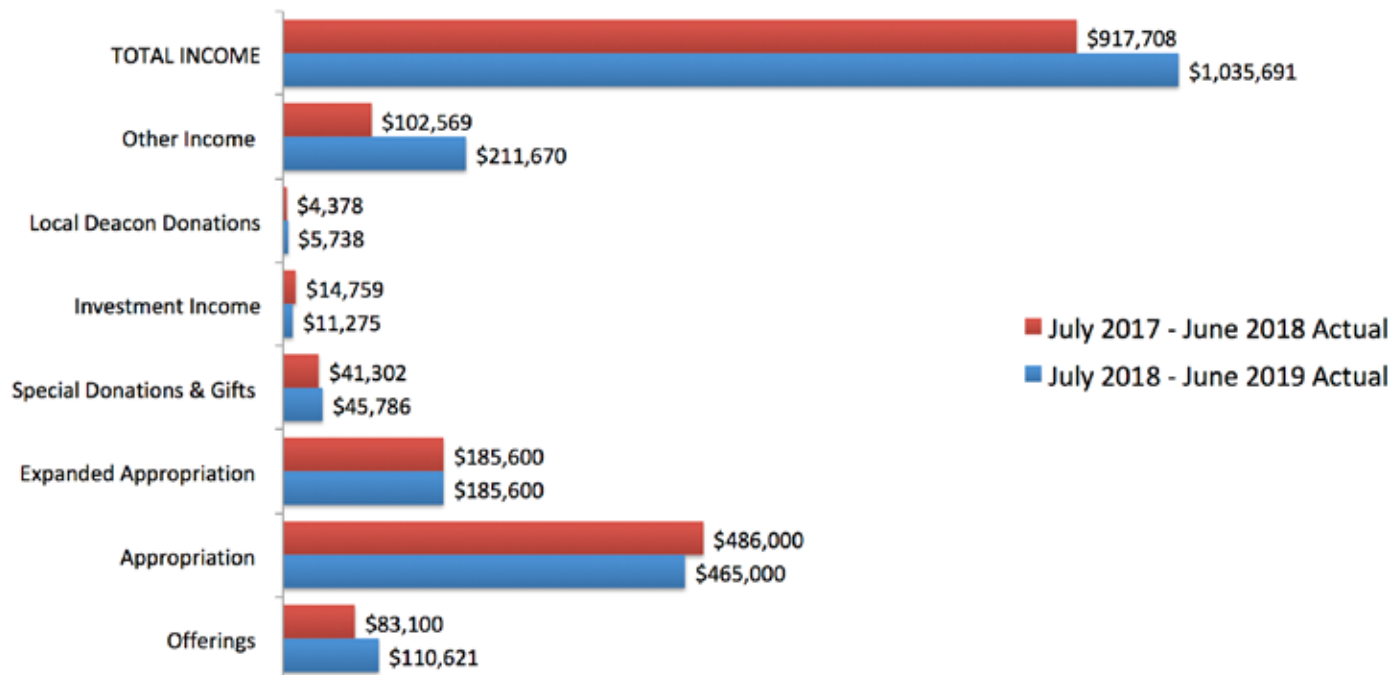
Putnam	\$59,876
Raplinger (Wilmington)	183,892
Raplinger Cash (Wilmington)	19,504
Savings Bond	15,000
Wilmington	265,921
Total Investments (Market Value)	\$544,193





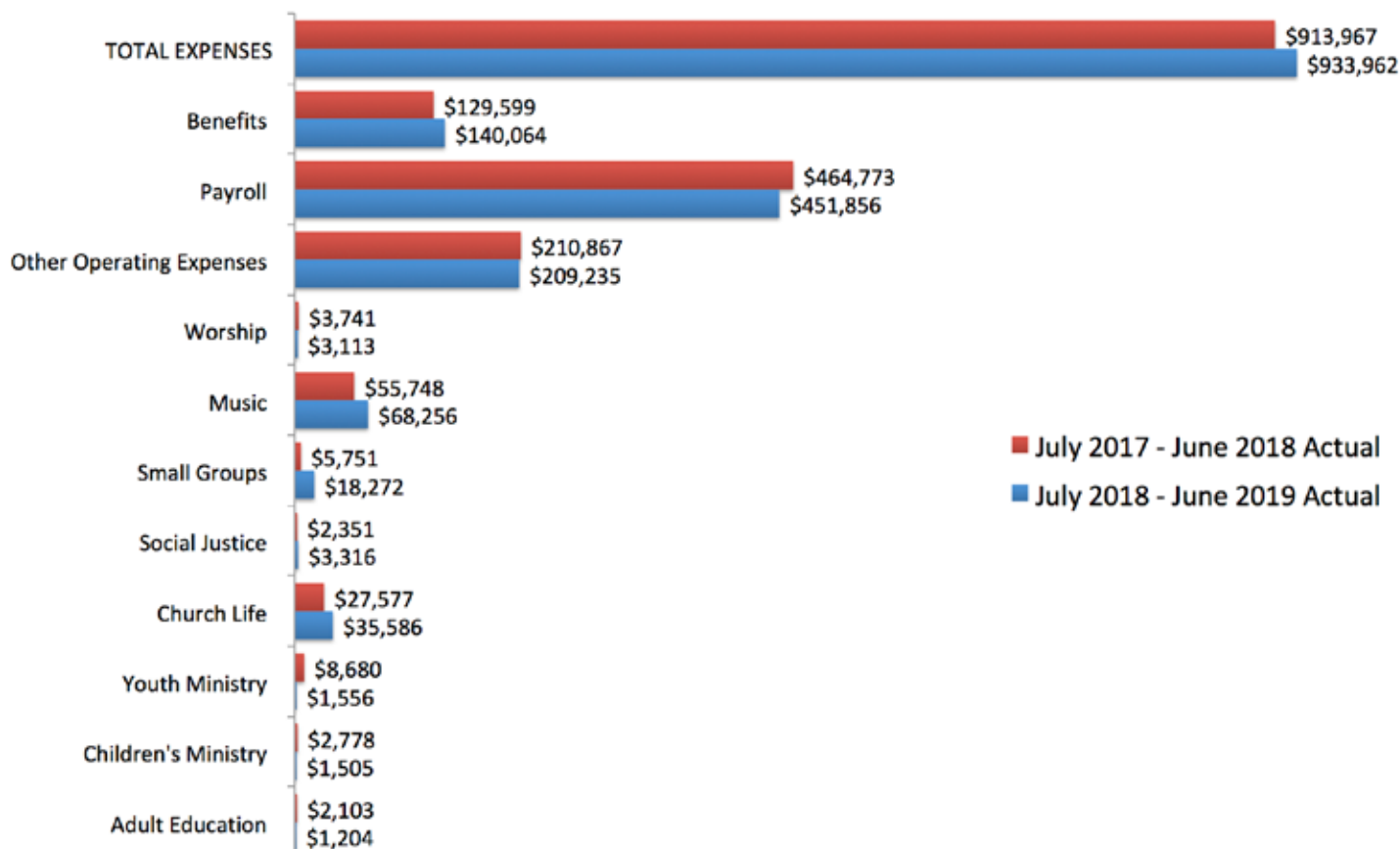
## REVENUE SOURCES COMPARISON

### 2018 vs 2019



## EXPENSES COMPARISON

### 2018 vs 2019



## PRIORITIES FOR 2019-2020

*"I know what I'm doing. I have it all planned out—plans to take care of you, not abandon you, plans to give you the future you hope for."*  
Jeremiah 29:11 (The Message)



Our priorities for the next year incorporate feedback from the congregation and seeks to address the needs of our greater community and our nation.

### MINISTRIES/FAITH-FORMATION/WORSHIP

Continue to strengthen the Children's Ministry. Continue to strengthen our worship with artistic, multi-cultural celebration. Provide more opportunities for faith-formation.

### CHURCH GROWTH

Continue to explore ways in which the community can connect to FWCC through faith-formation, music and arts, justice work. Increase membership by 10%

### FINANCIALS

Increase our giving and stewardship by 25%. Continue to implement strategies to continue to monetize the building. Increase rentals by 10%

### COMMUNICATIONS

Expand our Communications efforts and digital programing.

### JUSTICE and MISSION

Continue to focus our justice work on racial, economic, gender/LGBTQ+, and ecological justice.



**FORT WASHINGTON**  
COLLEGIATE CHURCH  
**GRACE. DIVERSITY. COMMUNITY.**

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