

FORT WASHINGTON COLLEGIATE CHURCH

Annual Report 2020-2021





Staff

Rev. Dr. Damaris D. Whittaker
Senior Minister
 James Admans
Assistant Minister
 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
 Tyrone Campbell
Facilities Manager
 Julia Hallissey Horner
Seminarian Intern

Consistory

Beverley Sheares
Elder, Chair of Consistory
 Victoria Dillard
Elder
 Johanna Garcia
Elder
 Brian Plane
Elder
 Phil Callen
Deacon
 Zenia Dacio-Mesina
Deacon
 Delana Glenn
Deacon
 Lisa Kline
Deacon
 Andrew Lanctot
Deacon
 Melissa Thomas-Baum
Deacon

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NEW VISION:

Celebrating a world of justice and peace, where
Christ's love embraces all.

NEW MISSION:

Called to action by the breath of God--we are an open
and affirming church. We ignite passion through
Christian love and service. We seek safety and justice
for all.



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

*Though the cherry trees don't blossom
and the strawberries don't ripen,
Though the apples are worm-eaten
and the wheat fields stunted,
Though the sheep pens are sheepless
and the cattle barns empty,
I'm singing joyful praise to God.
I'm turning cartwheels of joy to my Savior God.
Counting on God's Rule to prevail,
I take heart and gain strength.
Habakkuk 3:17-19 (The Message)*



"God is not found in the soul by adding anything but by subtracting.—Meister Eckhart.

It is soul shaking to find myself writing this report to you, my beloved congregation, during a global pandemic for two consecutive years. I had great hopes that before this church year was over (June 2021) we would be on the other side of this virus.

During this challenging time, however, Fort Washington Collegiate Church has not stopped being a church in the world—a church with #loveonthemove. I celebrate that against all odds, we were able to begin new ministries such as the Fort Fridge, #CancelRent and the Garden Ministry. We were also able, with great effort, to open our doors as a vaccination site and serve this community to the best of our ability. We declare to ourselves to be a pro-vax and pro-mask congregation.

While we continue to worship digitally, our reach has expanded across this nation and beyond. We continued to grow in membership receiving eleven (11) new members. *Many thanks to the new members task force for their care and efforts.*

During the warm months, we gathered monthly in Bennett Park for "Pastors at the Park." Together with Rev. Michael, I offered communion in front of the church to anyone who wanted to receive it. Further, we were consistent with our digital programming. I am grateful to our volunteer choir, Joyful Voices, for their willingness to stay engaged, even when we were all suffering from "zoom-fatigue." Needless to say, I look forward with great anticipation to the fall when we will gather in the sanctuary again, for I have missed you deeply. *Many thanks to the re-opening task force for their time, talents and guidance during this difficult time.*

Family, we are not exempt to change, and change has been constant during this year. Rev. Michael Vanacore and his wife, Rosa, welcomed into their families a beautiful baby boy, and he changed their lives. They decided to move out of state to raise their family this summer. While we rejoice with them, we have felt their departure keenly. At the time of this report, we are preparing to embark on a search process for a new Associate Minister for Congregational Life. We will also be searching for new Director of Children and Youth Ministers to begin in the new church year.

Last fall, the Consistory and I, with input from the congregation, revised our mission and vision. While many things are uncertain at this time, I am looking forward to what God has for us in the coming season.



COLLEGIATE CHURCH

I serve as President to the Collegiate Church of New York. It has been a year full of joys and many challenges in our beloved church.

On December 5, 2020, the Middle Collegiate Church's building was destroyed by a devastating fire. I watched in awe, as the flames consumed a beloved sacred place. Our work continues as we walk along side our Middle family to find a new permanent location for their ministry.

We were five now we are four. This year, we made the difficult decision to bring the Intersections International Ministry to a close. However, we have been successful in transitioning Believe Out Loud to Cathedral of Hope in Dallas, the largest LGBTQ congregation in the world. Believe Out Loud will become a Cathedral program that will expand that church's community and increase its tailored digital content.

I want to thank all of our Intersections deacons and elders, past and present, for their service and leadership.

Like many organizations during a pandemic, The Collegiate Church is facing economic challenges. As some of you may know, in 2013 the Collegiate Churches of New York made a financial investment in a commercial real estate development project located between 29th and 30th Streets, next to Marble Church, to provide space for that Church's growing programming and to help fund future ministry initiatives and congregations.

Unfortunately, the project suffered along with many New York City commercial real estate developments as a result of the pandemic. A lender to the project exercised its right to take control of it through a foreclosure process, leaving us with a loss on our investment. We continue to work diligently with a very gifted professional team toward the resolution of this matter on behalf of the church.

Many changes are afoot, but we will emerge a stronger church, grounded in our commitment to continue to be God's hands and feet on earth.

GRATITUDE

Family, during these times of uncertainty, I recognize that there is pain, loneliness, brokenness and that we are in need of healing—all of us! But, I invite you to begin with gratitude.

I want to thank you for being who you are—a devoted and loving congregation that loves justice and peace. A congregation that believes in science, and loves their neighbor. I invite you to join me in thanking our exceptional staff for their creativity, commitment and resilience. Let us also thank our Consistory for ALL they do, locally and as part of The Collegiate Church Full Consistory.

May the Holy One continue to walk with you and give you peace.



REV. MICHAEL VANACORE
ASSOCIATE MINISTER FOR
CONGREGATIONAL LIFE

ASSOCIATE MINISTER'S REPORT

Dear FWCC: As I sit down to craft this annual report, I am filled with both sadness and joy. Sadness because my family and I are departing New York at the end of this summer. And joy because of all the wonderful gifts you have blessed me with over the past two years.

I have increased our ministry with the Social Justice Task Force. I am proud to report that we established a rotating lay leadership structure and met monthly throughout the pandemic. Some of our most exciting work last Fall was "Turnout Tuesdays." In the leadup to the presidential election, a core group of about twenty volunteers from the church and community registered hundreds to vote and fill out the census. And, as the housing crisis deepened, Rev. Damaris led us in building a partnership with NMCIR (the Northern Manhattan Coalition of Immigrant Rights) to offer rent relief to 20 undocumented workers and their families.

During the winter and Spring, our biggest initiative was the Community Fridge. Beginning as a project of the Social Justice Task Force, the Fort Fridge became a major project of the church and surrounding community with over 150 regular volunteers. This ministry has connected us to a dynamic network of other fridges and food justice activists throughout the region. The Task Force has also contributed to many other initiatives this year, including the vaccination clinic. The volunteer and community outreach infrastructure we have built together over the past few years was crucial in allowing us to engage over 60 volunteers to staff and run this site.

I have also remained focused on pastoral work and worship. In the ongoing trauma of the pandemic, our bereavement group last Fall provided a needed space for healing. And the community of God Talk grounded us weekly in Scripture and tradition. I continued to work with the Deacons and Elders to provide pastoral care to our community and regularly recruit worship participants from across the congregation. As we build these shared ministries together, we move closer to what Martin Luther called "the priesthood of all believers."

One of our worship experiences that meant the most to me was our celebration of Filipino American History Month. As an Asian American minister living through such a violent rise in Anti-Asian racism in this country, it has been a great consolation to be surrounded



by the solidarity, diversity, and love of this congregation.

Throughout this past year, I have continued to supervise our interns from Union Theological Seminary. It has been a privilege to participate in their formation and cultivate the strong relationship between my church and the seminary that formed me. FWCC is a teaching church, and I have benefited from that tradition. I am grateful to Rev. Damaris, the Consistory, and the other members and leaders of this congregation for supporting my participation in the Next Generation Leaders Initiative (NGLI).

And finally, since saying goodbye to our beloved Mr. Zachary last year, I have stepped in to provide guidance and support to our Children and Youth Ministry. I am grateful for the talent and dedication of this team and, especially, for the beautiful children, youth, and families who bring life and vibrancy to this community.

I want to thank you for these and the many gifts you have given me. The apostle James writes, "Every generous act of giving, with every perfect gift, is from above, coming down from the [Parent] of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change." Know that I treasure each of moments we have shared, along with your many other generous acts of giving. Remember that, though we may take our leave of one another, we will always remain connected. For acts of love and solidarity are gifts that transcend our transience. They connect us forever to one another and to the source of all life, in whom there is no variation or shadow due to change. Amen.





JAMES ADAMS
ASSISTANT MINISTER

It has been so long since I have seen many of you in person and nearly three years since I stepped through the church's doors for the very first time. Every day, I know that I am blessed to know each of you and to be part of this vibrant and loving community.

One of the first priorities for growth that the church listed was an expansion of our virtual footprint to spread the message of love, inclusion, and progressive Christianity. As one of your seminary interns who served this past year, I maintained Fort Washington's social media presence on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. One of my goals was to transform these channels to engage in public theology that aligns with the church's mission and values. These types of posts have demonstrated Fort Washington's commitment to social justice and the love we have for our neighbors. Additionally, I started a new Instagram account for our new Community Fridge, @FortFridge. We quickly gained hundreds of followers and made connections with other community fridges throughout New York City.

Another priority that the church listed was the creation of engaging opportunities to foster connection and belonging through small groups ministries and Bible studies. Queer Theology God Talks have run monthly on first Wednesdays, creating opportunities for both queer and straight folks to engage with scripture in unconventional and meaningful ways. Queer Theology God Talk also attracted many LGBTQIA+ social media users who were new to Fort Washington. We would regularly see new faces on Zoom who found us through the FaithfullyLGBT hashtag.

An additional priority for this past year was strengthening stewardship by creating opportunities for grant writing. This past winter, Rev. Michael and I applied for a Vital Worshipping Communities Grant through the Calvin Institute for Christian Worship. We were fortunate enough to be one of fifteen communities who received this grant. In response to our commitment to loving our neighbors and caring for the most marginalized in our midst, we will use the funds from this grant over the next year to enrich our worship services by centering voices, experiences, and theologies of the transgender community and queer communities of color.



The month of May was a time of significant transitions for me in my ministerial work. I graduated with my M.Div. degree from Union Theological Seminary and was awarded the prestigious Malcolm Boyd Veritas Award for my work and advocacy on behalf of the LGBTQIA+ community. I attribute this award in part to my work at Fort Washington and to this church that is dedicating to making space to minister to the queer and trans community. Following my graduation, I stepped into new roles, including Volunteer and Staff Coordinator for our vaccination site, and was promoted to Assistant Minister. Since then, I have been hiring vaccination site administrative staff, recruiting volunteers, and making weekly schedules. I have also been filling in for a few of Rev. Michael's responsibilities while he is on parental leave.

I look forward to serving Fort Washington again this year, and hopefully, worshipping in person with you again soon!



Beyond Worship





CHRIS WHITTAKER
MUSIC DIRECTOR

In the 2020-2021 church year, we've continued to embrace the new reality of digital streaming services during life with the COVID-19 pandemic and find new ways to innovate and reach our congregation online.

Music Director Chris Whittaker has continued to play an instrumental role in producing our streaming worship services this year, bringing together the diverse and incredible gifts of our congregation. The Joyful Voices have remained faithfully committed to creating new music and recordings for Sunday worship, and we have featured our wonderful roster of jazz musicians during our first Sunday communion services.

A highlight of this year was our beautiful Christmas Eve service which has garnered over 1,400 views. The music featured the Grammy-award winning Catalyst Quartet along with our fantastic house musicians, Jay Sawyer, Sam Weber, Lauren Scales, and Jordan Pettay. The lessons and carols service boasted an incredible feat of music from our Joyful Voices, our congregation, and friends.

While our regular programming is on hiatus, the Joyful Voices and Community Choir have found creative ways to gather and serve the neighborhood. We hosted volunteer events like Sunday morning trash clean-ups around Washington Heights, and we participated in urban gardening activities, beautifying nearby tree pits. With these volunteer events and occasional socially-distant meet-ups, the choirs have found ways to maintain our sense of connection during this time.

Our outdoor volunteer activities have recently culminated in the creation of a new community garden space. Prior to the pandemic, FWCC applied for a received a grant from the New York Restoration Project to transform part of our outdoor space for use as a working garden. In the spring, NYRP helped to install four raised beds and build the infrastructure for a new garden. The garden at Fort Washington Collegiate Church will serve as a refuge in Washington Heights for us all to experience nature, beauty, and community. Following the tradition of kitchen gardens, at the garden members will grow food for the Fort Washington Collegiate Church Community Fridge. The garden will also encourage biodiversity and feature native beneficial plants for pollinators and connect the church with the history and legacy of New York and Washington Heights,





growing heirloom apple varieties and vegetables which celebrate the various cultural legacies of our neighborhood. The garden will also be an exciting way for neighbors young and old to get their hands dirty, learn about the environment, and contribute to the beautification and resiliency of our uptown home. Since June, the garden has provided a welcome ad-hoc volunteer opportunity that connects congregants to their church home in a new way. While the stewardship of the space is currently supervised by Chris and his garden-loving wife, Alexis, we look forward to meaningfully integrating the garden into the church's larger programming in the Fall of 2021.



The church year has not been without challenges as our arts ministry has not been immune to the general "zoom-fatigue" experienced around the country. We look forward to the safe re-opening of the church in September and October where we hope for a renaissance of participation and re-connection of our musical community. With the forthcoming upgrades to our streaming capabilities on Sunday morning, we hope to share even further the good work of this ministry. Fort Washington Collegiate Church has an incredible opportunity to re-introduce itself to the neighborhood and welcome even more artists into the fold. The pandemic has spotlighted the vital necessity of human connection and local engagement. FWCC – and our Worship & Arts Ministry – stands at the intersection of both with incredible promise in greater service.





ALLISON DILYARD
ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR FOR
CHILDREN AND YOUTH
MINISTRIES

This past year was one of uncertainty and constant adjustment, yet filled with optimism. As I reflect on the past year with Fort Washington Collegiate Church's Children's and Youth Ministry program, I am both proud of and humbled by what we were able to accomplish. Despite all of our hopes for returning to in-person worship, we stayed entirely online for worship services and Sunday School, out of an abundance of caution. That is not to say, however, that we did not continue to engage with children, youth, and families as much as our limitations could allow.

In the fall, the ministry team hosted "Pastors in the Park" events after virtual worship every other Sunday, which I cherished as a way to see friendly faces, catch up, and reconnect. Highlights included a very well attended Blessing of the Animals, featuring many of your family pets, origami animals, and, as always, fun with sidewalk chalk. In addition to these gatherings at Bennett Park, the CYM team organized nature walks in Inwood Hill Park and Fort Tryon Park, giving children and their families an opportunity to explore the rich history and natural beauty of Northern Manhattan.

When a citywide resurgence of COVID-19 cases forced us to make the difficult decision of returning to fully remote programming later in the fall, we did our best to make an unprecedented Christmas season as festive as possible. We tried our hand at a progressive virtual Christmas pageant throughout advent, thanks to a brilliant script and design by our friends at Illustrated Ministries, showing an "act" in Sunday worship each week during Children's Time, culminating in a special family Christmas Eve service that showcased the talents of many of our children, youth, and families.



Throughout the academic year, we continued to produce homegrown, adaptive online content weekly. CYM intern Jesse Ortiz offered their unique musical and creative talents for the younger age group, while I used science, history, literature, and art to synthesize lessons and themes from each week's scripture choices for the older set. Jesse's Christian rewrites of popular songs were a particular success. We went from learning how to create online teaching content on the fly in spring of 2020, to essentially producing a weekly mini-curriculum, none of which would have been possible without the help, ingenuity, and talent of our very own Communications & Ministry Coordinator, **Dinean Davis**. Her assistance was invaluable to producing quality lessons, which



will continue to be available online for your viewing pleasure at any time.

As we continued more optimistically into the spring, with vaccine rollouts increasing and new cases of COVID decreasing, we also maintained a conservative, cautionary approach, choosing to once again celebrate the Easter season from home. This meant, however, that I had the opportunity to write and cast a completely homegrown, first ever Easter Pageant, which was just as kooky and heartfelt as ever. The spring also meant saying goodbye to our beloved Jesse, which we celebrated with a farewell hike in Fort Tryon Park's Heather Garden, as they discern their calling in hospital chaplaincy.



We have a lot to look forward to this coming year, with being back in person for the first time in over a year and a half, and a whole host of potential new families joining us. We have found a great mini-curriculum to get us started, from the same great folks at Illustrated Ministry who helped with our Christmas Pageant, and the search for a new director, as well as a seminary CYM intern, are well underway. Fort Washington children's ministry staples, such as Wednesday morning Playgroup and Children's Choir, are back on track to recommence in the fall, as of course are regular Sunday school classes. Though we have truly been held together in the spirit through this whole ordeal, I am so blessed to be with you in the flesh once again.





DAVID FORD
BUSINESS MANAGER

“God uses broken things. It takes broken soil to produce a crop, broken clouds to give rain, broken grain to give bread, broken bread to give strength. It is the broken alabaster box that gives forth perfume. It is Peter, weeping bitterly, who returns to greater power than ever.” -- Vance Havner

Last year I wrote of 2019-20 requiring flexibility, creativity, and perseverance in response to unexpected challenges. The 2020-2021 year has forced us to dig even deeper as we weathered health, social, political, and environmental conditions mostly beyond our individual control. But we have also experienced new paths of action as vaccines offered us a level of protection to emerge from shelter and isolation.

FACILITY USE AND RENTALS

During the 2020-21 year, we finally were able to cautiously open FWCC’s facility for a few special circumstances—Vax site, and location rentals—with organizations that practice strict COVID safety protocols.

It came to our attention in early 2021 that there were no vaccination sites available for Manhattan residents above 125th St. After trying fruitlessly with New York City to establish FWCC as a vaccination site, we were able finally to partner with local healthcare provider, Community Healthcare Network (CHN), which accessed funding through FEMA, to provide 3,091 first-dose and 3,017 second-dose vaccinations for neighborhood residents and others, from late April thru late July.

During the early phases of 2021 re-opening, we hosted two rentals with production companies that required vaccinations and performed daily testing. One was a holding, and the other a shoot. Watch “The Last O.G.” Season 4, episode 5 (starring Tracy Morgan) to see our Sanctuary’s front entrance portrayed as the entrance for a homeless shelter. (A bit of trivia: the “The Last O.G.” episode was directed by Carl Weathers, who you may remember played Apollo Creed in several “Rocky” movies, a soldier in the first “Predator” movie, and numerous parts in other movies and TV shows.)





FACILITY OPERATIONS

On the continuing saga of our façade renovation project, work stoppage due to COVID resumed during Summer 2020, but we experienced a three-month shutdown delay through the Fall, due to New York City Department of Buildings permit issues. Work since Spring 2021 has progressed slowly, and we now have an expected finish date and removal of scaffolding by the end of 2021. Fingers crossed!

GRATITUDE

We are grateful that we have been able to still serve FWCC and our congregation working primarily remotely during this challenging year. I want to thank our Facility staff—Wilfredo Serrano and Lazaro Rodriguez—who maintained the facility and for their fortitude during uncertainties of furlough reductions in hours. Our other staff continued to make adjustments to provide worship services as best we could working remotely.

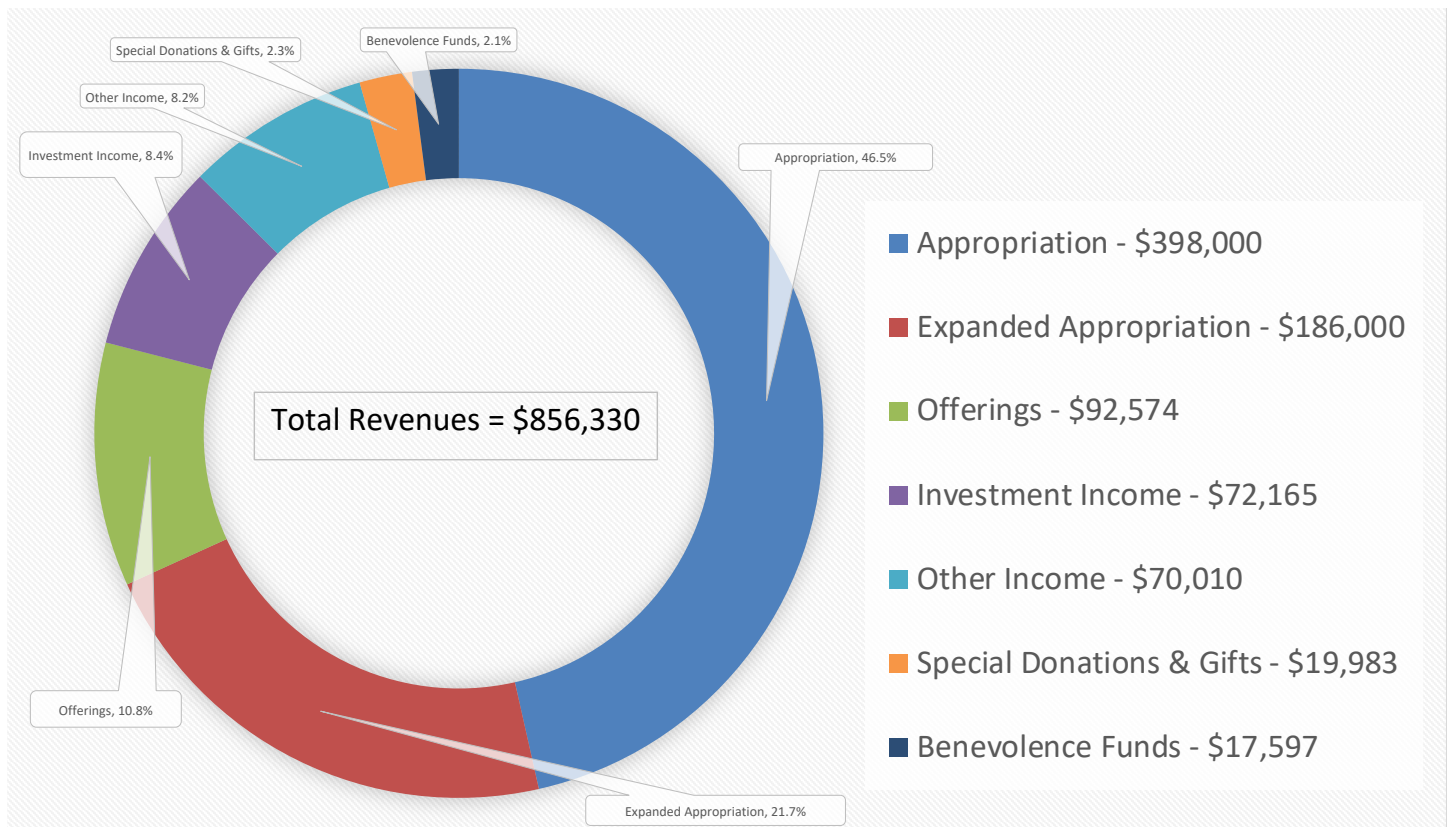
We now see a light of renewal as we open to in-person worship. Much will be different, but I believe the key to success is to adopt the perspective that change doesn't happen TO us, but FOR us. As John C. Maxwell says, "Change is inevitable. Growth is optional."

Here's to growth in our continually evolving environment!



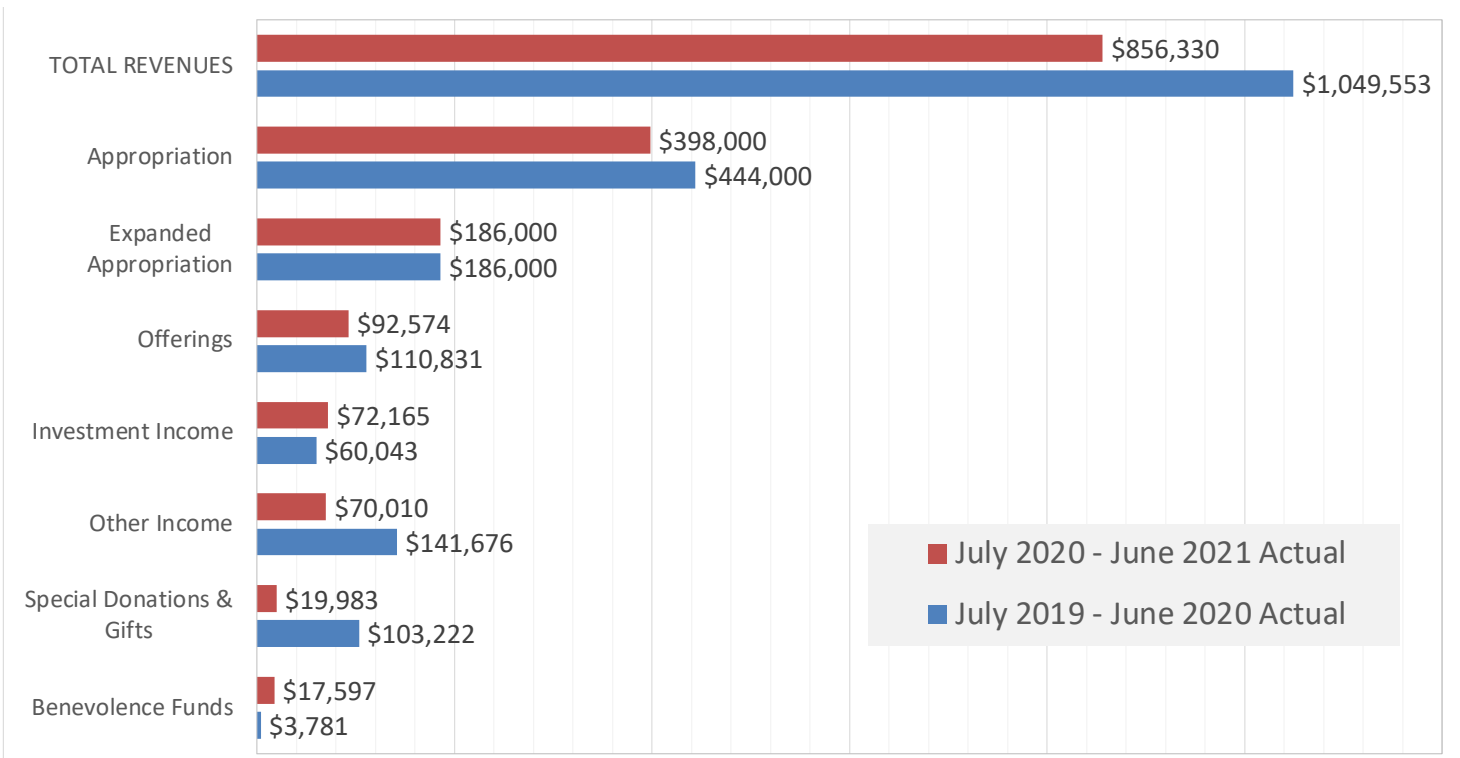
REVENUE SOURCES

2020-2021 Operating Income Actual



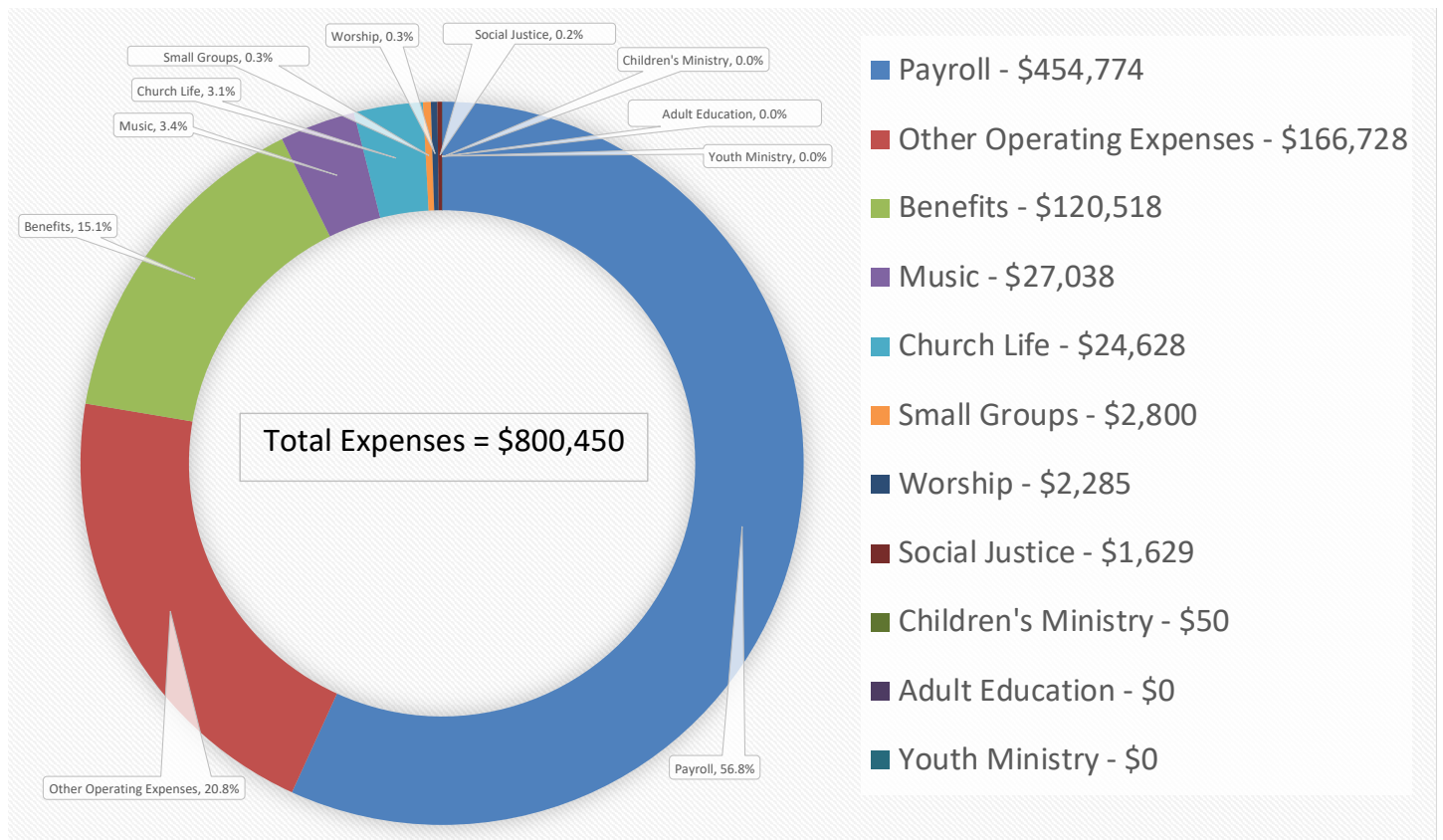
REVENUE SOURCES COMPARISON

FY2020 vs FY2021



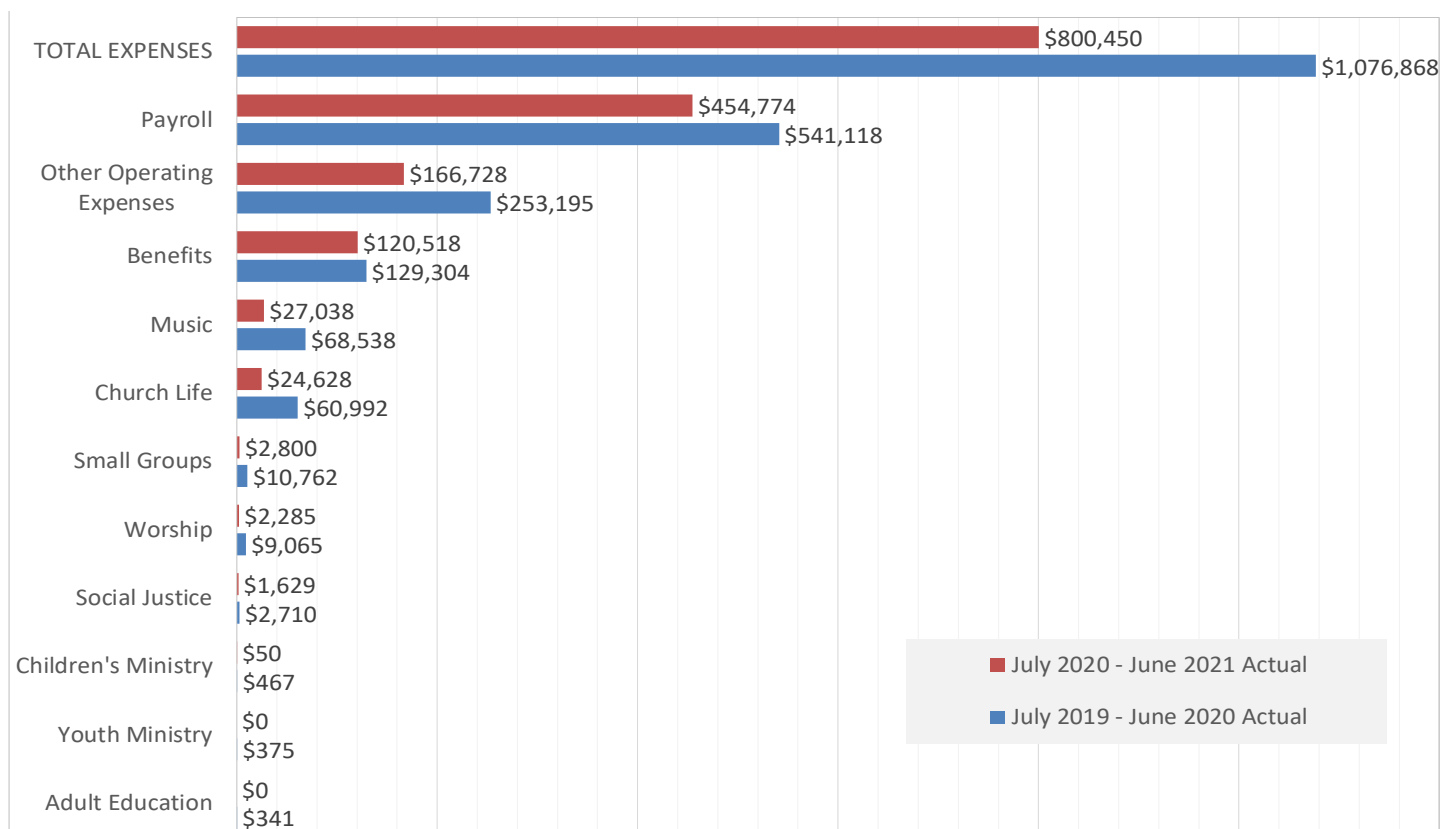
EXPENSES

2020-2021 Actual



EXPENSES COMPARISON

FY2020 vs FY2021



EXPENSES

2020-2021

Summary

Income:	\$856,330
Expenses:	\$800,450
Total:	\$55,880



Investments

Putnam	95,963
Raplinger (Wilmington)	237,348
Raplinger Cash (Wilmington)	19,746
Savings Bond	15,000
Wilmington	343,079
Total Investments (Market Value)	\$711,136

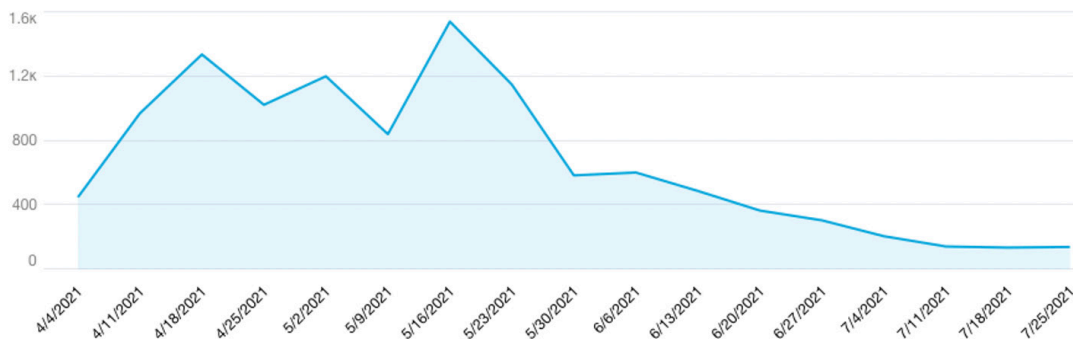


Executive View: Doses Administered

6,108 Doses Administered at Fort Washington Collegiate Church

3,091 1st Doses

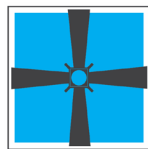
3,017 2nd Doses



1st Dose Volume Trend (all CHN church-based sites)

Individuals vaccinated in Washington Heights, CHN sites vs. U.S. total





FORT WASHINGTON
COLLEGIATE CHURCH
GRACE. DIVERSITY. COMMUNITY.

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