



2023 Annual Report

BE LOVED. BELONG. BE THE DIFFERENCE.
cobleskill united  *methodist church*


Overview

Seeking New Paths

2023 was a year of seeking.

With our ministry and community returning to a post-Covid normal, our congregation has begun to seek a path toward its identity as an accessible and inclusive congregation serving a God of Love. **How do we witness to a God that is Love?** We have explored this question both theologically and practically. And as we grow, we ask deeper questions and discover new paths.

Read through these pages to see how we have journeyed along in our identity toward being a more loving, accessible, and inclusive congregation in 2023.



Part of our Lenten "Altarscape" set up for the Lenten theme of "Seeking."

Inside

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The first daffodil arrived in April!



*Easter morning surprise as
Pastor Anna cracks an egg
over Emmie's head. Surprise!
The egg was empty!*

Staff

REV. ANNA BLINN COLE
Pastor

PAIGE BULMER
Office Manager

ROSALIE DANFORTH
Treasurer

NAOMI PICKETT
Financial Secretary

JAMIE LIVINGSTON
Building Monitor

HILARY TAYLOR
Nursery Manager

BETSY WALSH
Organist

BURKE HERRICK
Choir Director

MARGARET ORTIZ
Custodian

Cobleskill United Methodist Church

LAY LEADERSHIP REPORT

For the year beginning January 1, 2024

NOTES:

Blank Underlined spaces are vacancies to be filled. **Bold underlined** are newly filled positions. Numbers after a person's name designate how many terms that person has served on a particular committee.

ADMINISTRATIVE ROUND TABLE

Lay Leader.....	Scott Barton
Lay Member to Annual Conference.....	Neil Law (<i>term: 2022 – 2024</i>)
Alternate Lay Member.....	Paige Bulmer (<i>term: 2022 – 2024</i>)
Church Council Chair.....	Ann-Marie Frank
Church Council Vice-chair	<i>Rotates</i>
Church Treasurer.....	Rosalie Danforth (staff)
Financial Secretary	Naomi Pickett (staff)
Finance Committee	Tarrence Lasher
Trustees Chair.....	Alan Danforth
Trustees Treasurer.....	Janet Sand
Staff Pastor Parish Relations Chair.....	Debra Wollaber
Youth Representative.....	Alexander Smith
Outreach Committee Chair.....	Lori Lasher
Thrift Store	Paige Bulmer
Food Pantry	Loren Schaff
Church Historian.....	Martha Price

STAFF PASTOR PARISH RELATIONS COMMITTEE (SPPRC)

Debra Wollaber, *chairperson*

CLASS OF 2024	CLASS OF 2025	CLASS OF 2026
Carl Stoner (2) Anita Wright (2) Lori Lasher (2)	Brian Elder (1) Denise Smith (1) John Jarvis (1)	Natasha Foote (2) Tom Carney (2) Debra Wollaber (2)

Members not included in classes:

Scott Barton, Lay Leader Neil Law, Lay Member to Annual Conference

Committee must have 5-9 members; all professing members of the church

TERM LIMITS: Members may serve TWO consecutive 3-year terms

TRUSTEES

Alan Danforth, *chairperson*

Janet Sand, *treasurer*

Loren Schaff, *vice-chairperson*

Jeff Foote, *secretary*

CLASS OF 2024	CLASS OF 2025	CLASS OF 2026
Alan Danforth (3) Dick Frank (2) Jeff Foote (1)	Bruce Wright (8) Janet Sand (2) Neil Law (1)	John Price (5) Loren Schaff (3) Alicia VanZandt (1)

Committee must have 3-9 members; 2/3 must be professing members of the church.

Trustees must be elected by written ballot at Church Conference.

TERM LIMITS: There is NO mandated term limit. QUORUM: A majority of the members (5)

FINANCE COMMITTEE

Tarrence Lasher, *chairperson*

CLASS OF 2024	CLASS OF 2025	CLASS OF 2026
Alan Danforth Garrett Cole	Debra Wollaber Angie Wright	Tarrence Lasher Laurie Pracher

Ex-officio members (staff): Rosalie Danforth (treasurer); Naomi Pickett (financial secretary)

TERM LIMITS: There is no mandated term limit.

LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT TEAM

Pastor Anna Blinn Cole, *chairperson*

CLASS OF 2024	CLASS OF 2025	CLASS OF 2026
Darah Wright	Suzanne Mazoff Ann-Marie Frank	Martha Price Brittany Noble

New class members are to be nominated from the floor of church council

TERM LIMITS: Members are limited to ONE 3-year term.

COMMITTEES WITHOUT CLASSES (no term limits):

WORSHIP TEAM	Pastor Anna Blinn Cole, <i>chairperson</i> Liturgists: Scott Barton, Alan Danforth, Natasha Foote, Brian Elder, Suzanne Mazoff, Paige Bulmer, Tom Carney, Lisa Cardilli, Sarah Blood, and Chris Cash.
OUTREACH COMMITTEE	Lori Lasher, <i>chairperson</i> , Margaret Herrala, Paige Bulmer, Loren Schaff, John Jarvis, Tom Carney, Pastor Anna Blinn Cole
YOUTH MINISTRY TEAM	Amy Kennedy, Dennis Manning, Pastor Anna Blinn Cole
CHILDREN'S MINISTRY TEAM	Lisa Cardilli, Paige Bulmer, Kate Elder, Karen Stoner, Doris Leverett, Amy Kennedy, Suzanne Mazoff, Pastor Anna Blinn Cole, Teri Hammon, Beth Cash
SAFE SANCTUARIES	Teri Hammon, Amy Gildemeister, Kate Elder, Beth Cash, and Anna Blinn Cole (<i>pastoral representative</i>)
CAMPING REP	Lori Lasher
COMMUNION STEWARD	Denise Smith
AUDIO/VISUAL TEAM	Alex Smith, Tarrence Lasher, Carl Stoner, Jeff Foote
BREW CREW	Janet Sand, Sandra Manchester, Martha Price, Brittany Noble, Denise Smith, Suzanne Mazoff, Natasha Foote, Cindy Barton, Kate Elder, and Elizabeth Agen

New Faces, New Places

Pastor's Report

by PASTOR ANNA BLINN COLE

In 2023 Cobleskill United Methodist Church has seen sustained and healthy growth in every facet of its ministry. We are finding new and deeper ways of living out Christ-centered lives. We are sharing the message that each person is a beloved child of God just as they are. We are creating space to belong for all ages and walks of life. And together we are making a tangible difference in our community.

Worship is at the heart of our church life. Over the course of the year we've walked through many different worship series including a series focusing on generational legacies leading up to the birth of Christ (*From Generation to Generation*, Advent 2022), a season of asking spiritual questions (*Seeking: Honest Questions for Deeper Faith*, Lent 2023), an Eastertide series focusing on God's creation in peril and how we can help (*Holy Ground*, Spring 2023), a series on the foundations of John Wesley's vision for a Christian life (*Three Simple Rules*, Pentecost 2023), a summer of learning life lessons from the imperfect families of our tradition (*A Summer of Genesis*, Summer 2023), a back-to-school series exploring the intersectionality of a childhood favorite and Jesus (*The Theology of Mister Rogers*, Fall 2023), and an autumn series digging deeper into the radical message of Jesus' enduring prayer (*The Greatest Prayer*, Fall 2023). Our year concluded with an Advent/Christmas series about finding joy in the midst of a challenged world (*How Does A Weary World Rejoice?*, Advent 2023).

In-person attendance has grown more than 20% in the last twelve months as we've welcomed new people of all ages to our Sunday morning service. Online worshippers have also increased and we've improved our sound and camera system to better stream what happens in the sanctuary.



ABOVE: The spunky group of Easter Sunrise Worshippers.

BELOW: Mr. Roger's puppet show during children's time with Amy Kennedy.



BELOW: My Halloween costume was about empowering girls to have positive female role models.



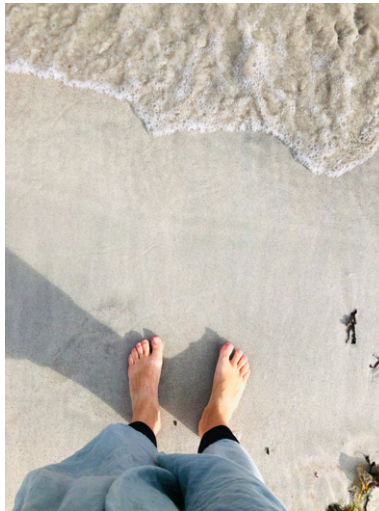
Our church has leaned into its role as a voice for justice in the community. In December and January we stood beside our sister congregation, Warnerville UMC, supporting the reopening of their Warming Station to house the homeless. Our special focus on caring for God's creation in worship has spilled over into practice. Styrofoam collection has doubled this year and our youth have gotten involved in its recycling. More and more families in our church are starting to recycle as we see our discipleship to Christ reflecting ecological stewardship.

You'll read all about how our Outreach Ministries and Children and Youth Programming have been on the rise this year, too. Our church's many ministries are propelled forward by committed and passionate volunteers.

My own continuing education has included a year-long Eco-Preacher course offered by the BTS Center and a 12-week course through the Upper New York Conference on Asset-Based Community Development. Both classes have been super. Additionally, I was very humbled to be able to take a 10-day pilgrimage this summer to Iona, Scotland for spiritual renewal. This trip gave me space to unwind and soak in the silence and liturgy of a sacred community steeped in ancient and rooted spiritual practice.



Climbing the "Big Hill" on the Isle of Iona, Scotland.



Chilly and refreshing Atlantic Ocean in Iona.

2023 by the numbers



3.5

The number of people required to change 44 light bulbs approximately 25 feet off the ground. One to climb the ladder. One to hold the ladder. One to carry the lightbulbs. Half of one to take pictures and offer encouragement.

42%

INCREASE

in Road to Jubilee Thrift Store proceeds this year. We give all of this money away and you can read about that on Pg 27.



20%

The amount our worship attendance has grown in 2023.

23

DIFFERENT SMALL GROUPS gathered during 2023 for fellowship, Bible study, support, and discipleship.



18

VOLUNTEERS

from our church worked on 9 different home repair projects around the neighborhood during Operation: Home Repair.



\$72,168

Raised by this congregation through its thrift store and other charitable giving for our food pantry and other critical local, national and global ministries.



Dick Frank supporting the Warnerville Warming Station in early January.

The Balcony View

Administrative Round Table Report
by ANN-MARIE FRANK

The Administrative Round Table is comprised of committee and team chairs as well as at-large members who meet approximately every two months to share information regarding the work and activities that are taking place within our church. As we move into 2024, it is our goal to be more streamlined in our approach, with members of our team who will represent and focus on our vision statement of "Be loved. Belong. Be the Difference."

Early in 2023, our congregation stepped up to support our sister church, the Warnerville United Methodist Church, in their effort to open a Code Blue Warming Station for individuals in need of shelter on cold nights. The Warming Station is now open for its 2nd winter and is a welcome and essential resource for our unhoused population.

We have a number of new "Fellowship Groups" who meet approximately once a month for a meal outside of church. These gatherings allow us to get to know each other better, and they happen to be a lot of fun!

We have a new bell choir directed by Tom Carney. We are grateful for this group of talented individuals and their contributions to our wonderful music program.

During the summer, our church participated in "Operation: Home Repair," sponsored by the Mosaic United Methodist Cooperative Ministry. Volunteers from CUMC and other Mosaic churches provided maintenance and home repairs for local homeowners in need of assistance.

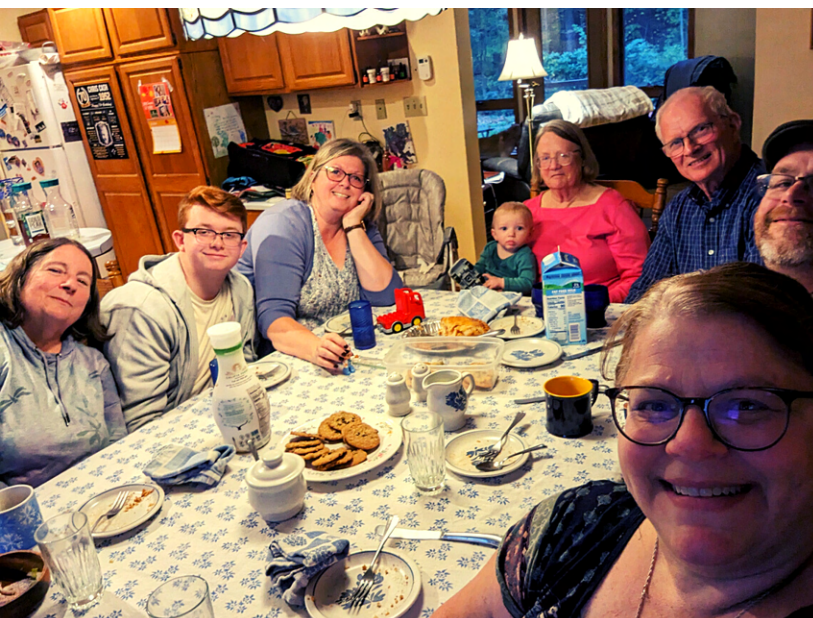
In addition to the summer lunch program, summer "Compassion Camp" for kids, our block party, a church retreat at Skye Farm, the Crop Walk, monthly potlucks, Halloween Hallow, and the Eco-Advent Festival, we had a major renovation of the sanctuary chancel area to make it more open and accessible. This was a major undertaking that allows flexibility in worship and other events. Many thanks to all the people who made this dream a reality.

Our food pantry continues to provide individuals and families with much needed food, personal hygiene, and household items. Donations and sales at our thrift store have been skyrocketing.

I have no doubt overlooked a number of activities, events and programs from this past year. We are blessed to be so active and have such a talented and enthusiastic pastor, staff and congregation. Together, we have made a concerted effort to become more inclusive, accessible and loving to those in our congregation and community. I can't think of a better witness to God. Let's keep the momentum going in 2024!



Two of our wise sages at CUMC, Jane Olcott and Olive Scott after worship.



ABOVE: One of our many Fellowship Groups meeting for dinner.



Paige crafting at
the Eco-Advent
Festival in
December!

At the Front Door

Office Manager's Report

BY PAIGE BULMER

Somewhere there is a statistic that says that the average American goes through 12 different "career" changes before they retire. I have been a clinical social worker, customer service manager, retail manager, account manager, substitute teacher and office manager. Of all of these, I can honestly say that this job is the only one that I have had where there has never been a day that I have not looked forward to coming to work, or that I have not enjoyed the time I spent here.

One of the things that I enjoy most about my job is that I get to be the first point of contact for most people who come into the building during the week. Having my door open to the hallway, I get to greet and welcome everyone who comes through the door. Whether that person is a Trustee who I see several times a week (I'm looking at you, Alan!), someone coming here to drop off donations for the thrift store, a community member who is attending a meeting, or someone new to the community who has stopped by to see what our church is about, my interactions with them sets the tone for how they experience our church community.

A few weeks ago, I had a young woman stop in the office, looking a bit wary, and when I said, "Hi, can I help you?," she took out her phone and started typing something. She then handed it to me. It was a message that her phone had translated from Spanish to English. She and I went back and forth with the messages, translated by her phone, and I showed her around the building and told her when our service is held each week. She was lovely and I was so glad that I could help her feel comfortable and welcome here in this space (with the help of some technology!)

So yes, I do answer phones, send emails, create worship PowerPoints and order supplies--and I am very happy to do all of those things!--but it's the people, our community, and all the relationships that I get to build through my work that makes this Office Manager truly blessed.

Small is Beautiful.

Small Group Ministry Report BY PASTOR ANNA

Worship on Sunday morning is great. But sometimes to really get to know our fellow community members at church, it's important to have spaces for conversation, laughter and fellowship that extend beyond weekly worship.

2023 saw us launch several new types of groups to encourage stronger relationships among our community and support our growth as people of a shared faith.

In March we started seven new Fellowship Groups, designed to meet together for a meal and fellowship at least once a month. It's been amazing to hear about all the fun you've had from playing trivia together at the Bull's Head, meeting for board games to outings at the apple orchards. We are always adding to these groups as new people join our community and it's a great way to get connected.

In addition to Fellowship Groups, this year we also restarted the Parent's Group which meets every Sunday morning at 9:30 during the Sunday School hour. Led by Karen and Carl Stoner, this group shares about the joys and struggles of parenting all while drinking plenty of cups of coffee and lots of laughter.

In the summer, we started another brand new type of group for CUMC. The Covenant Discipleship Pilot Group began on the parsonage porch with six women dedicated to supporting one another in a journey of discipleship oriented around a shared covenant. This group continues to meet weekly as we grow together in our faith journey. With this pilot group underway, new Covenant Groups may be formed in the future.

Our church continues to offer other seasonal groups including the "Welcome Mat" class for newcomers in the spring, Advent and Lent small groups, Bible Study on Tuesdays, and a plethora of support groups.





The choir spreads out across our newly opened chancel area.

Music in the Air

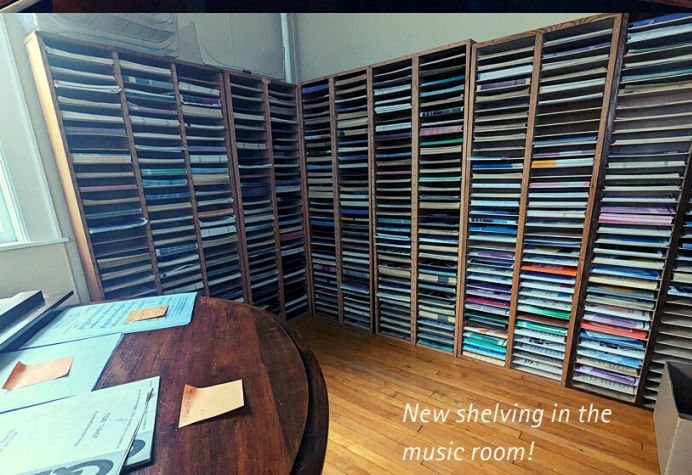
BY BETSY WALSH AND TOM CARNEY



The bell choir practicing for Christmas Eve.



New bell platforms sit across the pews.



New shelving in the music room!

This year our Music Program found rhythm under the leadership of Betsy Walsh (accompanist), Burke Herrick (choir director) and Tom Carney (bell choir director).

The Chancel Renovation gave us the opportunity to reshape the way our musical groups use our Sanctuary. A new fully accessible niche was created giving access to the organ from the side of the chancel, and new handbell tables were made to fit over existing pews. A closet was added to the storage room at the front of the Sanctuary with shelves dedicated to the storage of our church's four-octave handbell set. Additionally, with the widened chancel platform steps, the choir can spread out as it sings, as pictured above! We hope these improvements will be the beginning to many musical efforts over the years.

Having only been together for one year, our bell choir has played a range of music that has included flute and organ accompaniment. Bell ringers have played increasingly more difficult music and have brightened many of our Sunday services along with Christmas and Easter.

The choir has been upgrading its space in the Music Room with new shelving that organizes the church's vast collection of choral music. The Music Room now has a new desk and copier that compliments the space.

Many thanks to Carl Stoner who built new music storage shelves in the Music Room, Jeff Foote who constructed the new over-the-pew handbell tables, and Will VanDeValk who built custom shelving in the new closet to store the many cases of handbells.

*Members of
our Sunday
School class
with teacher
Kate Elder
showing off
some eco-art.*



A Look at the Numbers

Finance Committee Report

BY TARRENCE LASHER

There are so many exciting things happening at Cobleskill United Methodist Church. The budget can even be included in that statement. 2023 finished strong. Giving from the congregation topped our goal by more than \$15,000. Our bills are paid and we are carrying money ahead into 2024. We withdrew \$25,000 from our investments to supplement giving, but are working to reduce this safety net. Approximately 60% of our budget covers the cost of our staff, the key to the success of so many of our programs and worship. Approximately 20% of our expenses cover annual building costs. Funds from the trustees cover major repairs and upgrades to our buildings. Strong congregational giving has allowed CUMC to have an excellent staff and a sound building, freeing up resources to focus on ministry, both in the sanctuary and in the community.

2024 Cobleskill United Methodist Church budget will be increasing approximately \$30,000 (14%). Pledges from the congregation are up more than 21% from 2023. 64% of our returning pledgers increased their giving and we have 10 new families pledging. This increase in giving allows us to increase the compensation of our staff.

Annual giving from the congregation allows for the doors to remain open, the staff to be paid and the ministry to happen. We are truly blessed to have a giving and vital church community.

2023 Budget

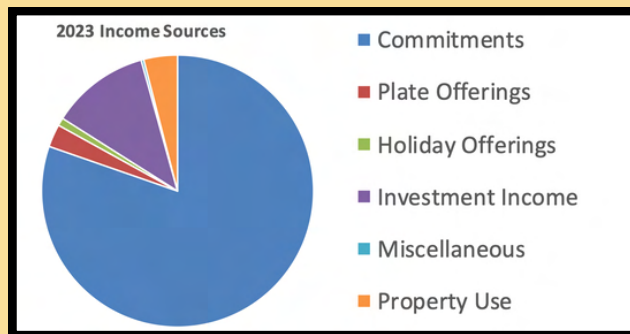
A group of intrepid moms and daughters climbed the bell tower after a small group meeting this summer.



	2023 Budget	2023 Actual	% of Budget	2024 Budget
Income				
Commitments	152,000	173,305	114%	187,000
Plate Offerings	2,500	5,853	234%	5,000
Holiday Offerings	3,000	2,020	67%	3,000
Investment Income	27,000	25,250	94%	20,000
Miscellaneous	300	665	222%	200
Property Use	11,200	8,656	77%	13,600
Faith Offering	3,921		0%	
Total Income	199,921	215,749	108%	228,800
Salary and Benefits				
Pastor Salary	49,168	49,168	100%	52,986
Substitute Pastor	500	270	54%	500
Staff Salary	54,000	51,025	94%	59,643
Substitute Staff	300	470	157%	1,050
Service Contracts	2,500	2,134	85%	3,500
FICA	3,000	3,164	105%	3,540
Pastor Pension & Health Ins.	24,725	24,725	100%	26,247
Staff Medicare	600	740	123%	750
Unemployment Insurance	800	476	60%	600
WC Insurance	200	979	490%	300
Total Salary & Benefits	135,793	133,152	98%	149,115
Operating Expenses				
Pastor Accountable Reimbursement	4,500	2,677	59%	4,500
Annual Conference	750	1,078	144%	1,000
Office Supplies	3,500	2,338	67%	3,000
Postage	1,000	792	79%	1,000
Banking	1,000	1,072	107%	1,200
Marketing/Publicity	400	54	13%	300
Finance Committee	100	29	29%	100
Technology	1,500	1,758	117%	2,000
Total Operating Expenses	12,750	9,798	77%	13,100
Church Ministries				
Nursery Supplies		97		150
Children's Ministries	500	1,169	234%	500
Vacation Bible School	500	855	171%	750
Fellowship Team	225	270	120%	286
Worship Team	1,200	1,373	114%	1,200
Leadership Development	150	0	0%	100
Safe Sanctuaries	200	68	34%	200
Adult Studies	500	630	126%	500
Youth Ministries	800	133	17%	800
Choral Music	400	257	64%	300
Total Church Ministries	4,475	4,851	108%	4,786

Budget (cont.)

	2023 Budget	2023 Actual	% of Budget	2024 Budget
Building Maintenance				
Church Heat	9,200	9,441	103%	9,200
Church Electric	5,500	4,969	90%	5,500
Phone & Internet	1,600	1,596	100%	1,600
Snow Removal	8,000	5,730	72%	8,000
Maintenance	3,500	3,420	98%	3,500
Refuse Collection	900	828	92%	900
Insurance	9,500	9,603	101%	9,500
Water & Sewer	1,500	1,132	75%	1,500
Parsonage Heat	2,000	1,888	94%	2,000
Parsonage Electric	1,400	1,475	105%	1,400
Custodial Supplies	750	1,435	191%	1,000
Total Building Maintenance	43,850	41,517	95%	44,100
Connectional Expenses				
Ministry Shares	28,033	27,696	99%	29,148
Retiree Premium	2,503	2,953	118%	3,153
Total Connectional Expenses	30,536	30,649	100%	32,301
Total Expenses	227,404	219,967	97%	243,402



2023 Unbudgeted Missional Giving

Unbudgeted Missional Income	
Thrift Store Income	44,524
Food Pantry Income	20,000
Offerings	2,791
Missional Giving	4,853
Unbudgeted Missional Income	72,168
Unbudgeted Missional Giving	
Thrift Store Allocations	43,850
Food Pantry	17,694
Offerings	2,791
UMCOR- Hawaii Fire Relief	870
UMCOR- Turkey/Syria Earthquake Relief	941
Camp Scholarships	3,032
Total Missional Giving	69,178



Ella explores the sands at Skye Farm Camp during our Labor Day Retreat

New lighting on our church's front porch gives off a warm welcome and adds better accessibility to this entrance.



Stewarding our Resources

Trustee Report

BY ALAN DANFORTH

The following officers were elected for 2023:

Chairperson: Alan Danforth

Vice Chair: Loren Schaff

Secretary: Harriet Berard

Treasurer: Janet Sand

Elected trustees are custodians of all church assets. These assets are held in trust for the Upper New York Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church. The church endowments, physical church, parsonage, their contents, and vacant land are all monitored by your elected trustee board.

Trustees work closely with the church's financial advisors, Leo and Sean McAllister of Cadaret Grant. Cooperation with the financial planner ensures that our endowments are prudently and diligently managed. Endowment funds historically contribute approximately \$25,000 to the operating budget. We have set a goal for reducing this amount to \$0 by 2026.

Many projects were accomplished in 2023. Projects included removal of multiple year's accumulation of no longer needed material from the church basement. This removal was with the assistance of a SUNY Cobleskill AGR fraternity.

Tree removal and trimming of branches in the church park was done by Lubrano Tree Service. Total cost was \$7,000.

The storage room next to the furnace was repaired with new flooring, walls, electrical, and sump pump installed. This project helped alleviate some of our water drainage problems. On The Level Construction did the repairs, with a total cost of \$16,832.

New exterior lighting in the church entrance was added. This is low voltage lighting to accent the entrance and illuminate the stairs and porch area. Barefoot Lighting was the installation company, with a total cost of \$4,200.

The renovations to the chancel area were a major accomplishment. Pews were removed, organ relocated, handicap ramp installed, audio equipment updated, hardwood flooring installed, and area enlarged. The project blended existing woodwork with new. This was accomplished with the assistance of our in-house architect, Scott Barton and our contractor, Richard Buffo, owner of On the Level Construction. The project pictures and costs are included in another report.

The above projects are just a few of the accomplishments achieved in 2023. Trustees continually monitor the heating system, fire alarm system, plumbing issues, and minor repairs. The endowment funds used to complete these projects, in addition to the operating budget contribution, amounted to approximately \$125,000.

Your elected trustees are dedicated to maintaining a welcoming door policy for our congregation as well as our many visitors. They are always available for comments and suggestions.

Trustee Managed Fund Balances as of December 31, 2023

Trustee Bank Account Balances

Bank of Richmondville (Checking)	\$ 4,162.10
NBT Bank (Accessibility)	331.59
NBT (Memorial funds)	5,506.72
Total Trustee Bank Accounts	\$10,000.41

Trustee Investment Fund Balances

The principals (P) in the below accounts are to remain and the dividends are used to fund the designated ministries.

Lily Vedder Scholarship Fund (\$10,000 P)	\$10,655.33
Jones Altar, Flower & Landscaping (\$10,000 P).....	10,133.50
Student Awards Fund (\$40,000 P)	45,314.11
Decker Camp Scholarships (\$20,000 P).....	25,870.95
Regular Undesignated.....	1,054,533.18
Total Trustee Investment Accounts	\$1,146,507.07



New leaders blessed at the beginning of 2023.



Special Report

CHANCEL RENOVATION

BY PASTOR ANNA BLINN COLE

In 2023, our church undertook a calling to make the chancel space at the front of our sanctuary accessible. Why? This is the space where we proclaim the Word and gather around the Table. We believe all people should have the opportunity to participate in these aspects of church life. This includes being part of a musical presentation, acting in a pageant, reading a story book with children, leading the liturgy, speaking scripture, preaching a sermon, or breaking the bread. We believe that God is with us, among us and empowering us to tell God's story in every way we can.

Making the chancel space accessible has meant physical changes to better reflect our theology of inclusion in how we share and participate in the worship of God.

Let's start with the physical. We knew we needed to provide alternative ways to reach the platform for people who find stairs difficult. We replaced an unused choir loft with a ramp. We also wanted our organ to be approachable without stairs so we moved it back into a walk-up niche. We opened up the communion rail to remove visual barriers and widened the steps so that they are spacious and welcoming from many directions. We improved our sound and visual projection systems to help people hear and see better both in the sanctuary and on our broadcast.



Because we wanted to also have flexibility in how we share the Word and Table, we decided to make the built-in furniture normally found in a chancel area movable. Our podiums and communion table now have wheels. The platform area itself was doubled in width to provide more room for accessible interactions. Already a puppet show, Christmas pageant, poetry reading, creative "altarscapes," interactive children's times, large gatherings around the font and Table, and choir anthems have filled the space.

But accessibility is much more than a physical change. Theologically we believe there should be no barrier that separates us from God. Each of us acts as a vessel for the Word of God bringing something unique and beautiful in the sharing of worship. Each Sunday a different lay person speaks the scripture followed by this response, borrowed from the Iona Community:

*For the Word of God in Scripture and
Other Wellsprings of Nourishment,
For the Word of God Within Us,
For the Word of God Among Us,
Thanks be to God.*

Accessibility is a core value of Cobleskill United Methodist Church. Each person is a gift of God no matter their ability, temperament, gender identity, race, sexual-orientation, or politics. For us, accessibility is making room for our differences and breaking down all barriers to God.

The work of accessibility is a journey, not an ending. We began in 2013 as our church made its main entrance, bathrooms, and gathering spaces physically accessible. We continued this journey when we became a Reconciling Congregation in 2022 affirming the sacred worth of all people. Moving forward we give thanks that creating accessibility doesn't mean losing our sense of place in a sanctuary we love. Instead, it becomes an opportunity to open traditional spaces to new people in new ways.



ABOVE and BELOW: Decorated for Christmas and Epiphany, the chancel created a flexible space for our many services.

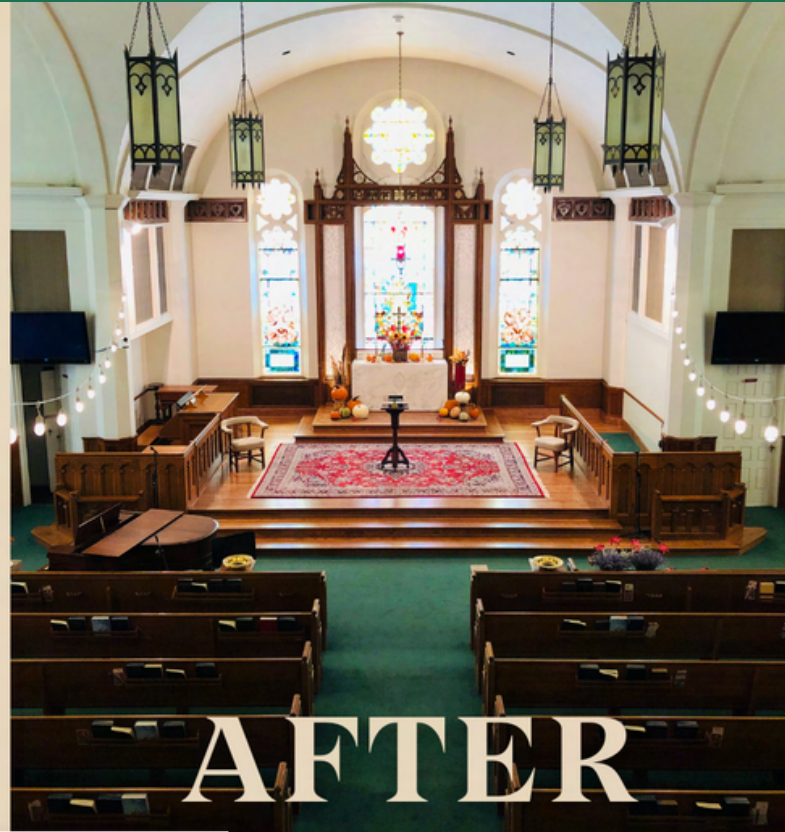


BELOW: A ramp now replaces the unused choir loft at stage left.

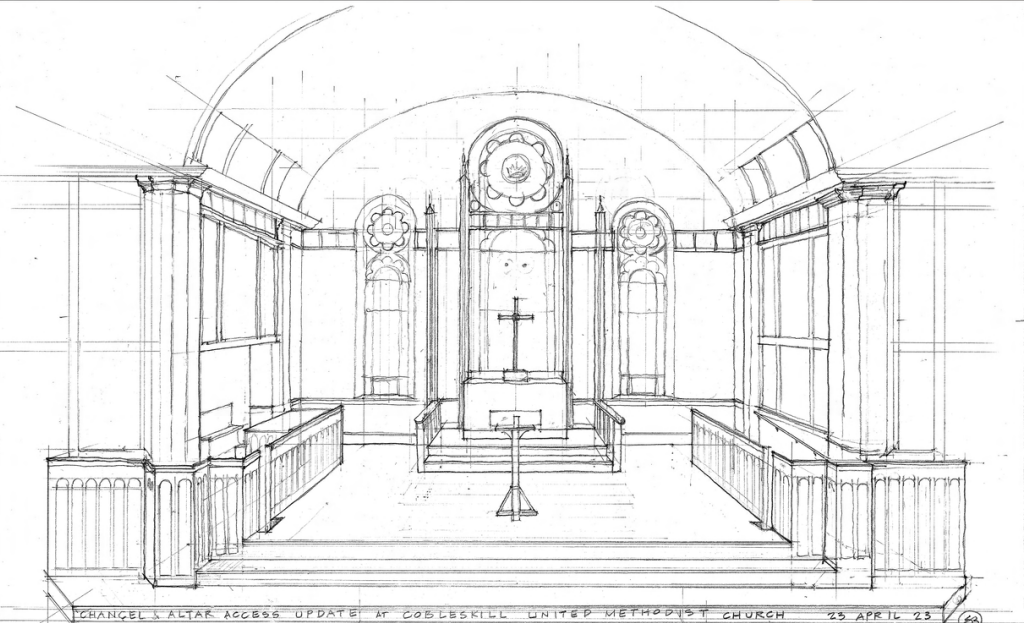




BEFORE



AFTER



CHANCEL & ALTAR ACCESS UPDATE AT COLESBERRY UNITED METHODIST CHURCH 23 APRIL 23

Lay Leader, Scott Barton is an architect by day and guided our Chancel remodel plan. Careful attention was paid to retaining and reusing original woodwork. Here is one draft of the new design.



Informational meeting for proposed changes on April 23.



Many pieces to this project over the summer months.





Pastor Anna shows the children how new shortened pews make space for mobility devices.



A DAY OF CELEBRATION

A special Service of Dedication on November 19, 2023 gave us the opportunity to celebrate the work done and give glory to God. Rev. Pam Mikel Hayes, pastor at CUMC from 2008-2017, returned to bring the message. District Superintendent Bob Kolvik-Campbell also brought greetings on behalf of the Bishop. Trustee Chair, Alan Danforth gave a history of our facility and the many ways this building has changed and evolved over time to meet the needs of each new generation.



PROJECT FINANCIAL SUMMARY

Expenses

On the Level Construction	\$52,850
Boynton Audio.....	\$ 8,934
Rosenberry and Meyers Organ.....	\$ 9,450
Total Expenses.....	\$ 71,234

Income

Audio Visual Fund.....	\$ 5,000
Investment Withdrawal.....	\$19,784
Employee Retention Credit Funds.....	\$46,450
Total Income.....	\$ 71,234



Two pews were shortened in total to make space within the body of the congregation for wheel chairs and other mobility aids.



Building Healthy Relationships

Staff Pastor Parish Relations Committee Report

BY DEBRA WOLLABER

The Cobleskill UMC Staff Pastor Parish Relations Committee (SPPRC) completed a very busy year in December 2023. With four new members and a new Chair we had a lot to learn but accomplished a great deal over the course of the year. For those who are not aware of the purpose of SPPRC, we seek to build strong relationships between the Pastor, Staff, Congregation, and the District Superintendent so that we can be mission-focused in making disciples of Christ for the transformation of the world.

As a congregation we have achieved so much in 2023! A short list includes:

- The formation of Fellowship groups that meet regularly
- Sending 14 campers to summer camp at Skye Farm
- Renovating the Chancel so that it is handicap accessible and provides space for pageants, presentations and, of course, worship
- Pastor Anna engaging in worship series that were (and continue to be) inspiring, pertinent, and helpful as we live our lives as Christians

This year found our committee reviewing and updating Cobleskill UMC's policies and procedures ensuring that each is current and relevant to our daily work. Specifically, with the help of volunteers, we updated our Safe Sanctuary Policies, Employment Policies, and Job Descriptions. We also conducted conversations with each staff member as a way to ensure each can share joys and concerns about the work that they do. We are grateful for the work that Pastor Anna and our staff do to make sure we are able to accomplish our mission and vision goals.

Camping and Scouting Sunday brought the outdoors inside as we celebrated the way God moves us to new adventures.



We have grappled with what would seem to be mundane issues. For example, work-life balance is an important component of a life well-lived. We wrestled with that when we examined our job descriptions and worked with Pastor Anna to assist her in defining boundaries that will assist her in creating a better work-life balance as she frequently works 50 to 60 hours a week in order to serve our pastoral needs.

Also included in SPPRC's responsibilities is to make sure all of the required District forms are completed and submitted by their due dates. These include:

- Writing a Covenant of shared goals between the pastor and parish
- Setting the pastor's compensation
- Conducting an assessment of the parsonage
- Assisting the Finance committee with budgetary decisions related to pastor and staff

We were able to thank our staff for their wonderful work through your contributions to our "envelope" in the weeks prior to Christmas. We thank you for your generosity!

As we move into 2024, we would like to encourage you to share with our members any joys or concerns that you might have. Our committee is diligent in addressing those joys and concerns. Be aware that whatever is shared will be confidential.

Being the Difference

Outreach Report

BY PAIGE BULMER

What does "Outreach" mean to you? Most people would say it is a way of offering support and welcome to people nearby and farther away who may be experiencing some sort of hardship. Outreach is a core component of who we are at Cobleskill United Methodist Church, and the Outreach Committee is dedicated to being the "hands and feet" of Jesus by caring for our neighbors. In 2023, our outreach ministries were once again primarily funded through proceeds from The Road to Jubilee Thrift Store, which totaled over \$44,000. What an incredible blessing! With this money, we were able to send financial support to more than 25 local and global organizations which support causes ranging from immigrant resettlement, veterans' assistance, LGBTQIA advocacy, animal welfare, criminal justice, and food insecurity. Additionally, we are able to provide camp scholarships to any of our young people who wish to attend one of the Upper New York United Methodist Camps each summer. Outreach also includes funding for our neighborhood connection events such as the annual Block Party and the Halloween Hollow.

In this past year volunteers from our church committed their time and energy to assisting with Operation: Home Repair, a brand-new local mission venture with our Mosaic Cooperative Parish that addresses housing inequities in our local community. And of course, the volunteers who help with the Food Pantry and Thrift Store every week are the backbone of these ministries. Reaching out, supporting, connecting with and loving our neighbors as Christ called us to do is what we are all about at Cobleskill United Methodist Church. Our outreach ministries are a truly wonderful, tangible example of how we are doing just that.



Ann-Marie Frank is part of our cash-desk volunteer team at the Road to Jubilee Thrift Store.



Our Annual Outreach Volunteer Appreciation Lunch



Trunk or Treaters at our Halloween Hollow,

2024 Proposed Outreach Ministry Allocation

Local Mission	
Catholic Charities/Caring Connection: In the past, pastors and secretaries were being asked by those who were coming into the church for donations for needs. There was no way to properly vet such requests and pastors frequently were at a loss as to how to help these needy persons best. Catholic Charities is able to vet the requests and provide assistance to those in need. Specifically, they give assistance in housing, items needed for automobiles (e.g., repairs, insurance), personal needs, transportation, utilities, etc. This is money well spent and we are grateful to have an organization we can send people in need to and have their needs met.	\$3,000
Venison Donation Coalition: This is an organization that allows hunters and farmers to donate properly field-dressed deer for processing into meat packages. Venison packages are then donated to Food Pantries like ours for distribution. This cost offsets the costs of processing.	\$150
Office of the Aging Meals on Wheels: Seniors who are experiencing physical decline or financial hardship are delivered nutritious meals daily to their homes.	\$300
Hospice (Helios Care): Helios Care provides symptom management, pain relief, family and grief support for individuals and families experiencing serious medical conditions.	\$500
Sunshine Fair Bike Donation: Every year bikes are maintained, fixed, and given away to children at the fair. This covers the cost of two bicycles.	\$400
Mosaic Mission Fund: We are a part of a dynamic, collaborative effort on the part of local United Methodist Churches to work together and solve common issues in our valley. Mosaic members from churches across our region volunteer regularly in the thrift store. This fund also contributes to Operation: Home Repair, a skilled team of Mosaic volunteers who work with Schoharie County residents in need of home repair.	\$5,000
Neighborhood Outreach/Halloween: In 2020 and 2021 we welcomed local families to a fun, safe, outdoor Halloween experience dubbed the "Halloween Hollow." It has been a great hit, and we look forward to continuing this new tradition!	\$200
Emergency Assistance Funds: (Families in need, natural disasters, flood buckets, etc.)	\$500
Joshua Project: Our church continues to support the Joshua Project as they serve summer lunches in our community, sharing our facilities, our funds, and our volunteers.	\$500
Block Party: For 4 years we have funded a community block party in early September. Members of the community have been invited to join the fun!	\$1,500
Backpack Program CRCS: Cobleskill/Richmondville Central School. Many of the children who attend CRCS experience food vulnerability on the weekends. The Backpack program provides them with food so that they are able to eat on the weekends.	\$2,000
The Skye Farm Foundation: We believe that camp brings great value and experiences to our kids, teens, and adults. We continue to support this United Methodist camp that has made an impact on so many members of our congregation.	\$1,500
Church in the Wild: Church in the Wild is a missionary church plant focusing on creation care hosted by Sky Lake Camp & Retreat Center. Our church has been invited to partner with them on this work.	\$3,500
Animal Shelter of Schoharie Valley: Because animals are part of God's creation, too!	\$500

Jail Ministry: The Schoharie County Jail Ministry serves those who are incarcerated in our own county now that the new jail has been built.	\$250
Upper NY Mission Hub: The UNY Mission Central HUB helps our local churches bring hope and assistance across the Northeast and around the world. The UNY Mission Central HUB not only assembles cleaning, hygiene, and school kits, but also is engaged in many other ministries such as blessing boxes, ramp building, training the Volunteers in Mission Early Response Team, and so much more.	\$500
Schoharie County Community Action Program: Among its many programs, SCCAP supports veterans in our region. Our donation will specifically aid their work with veterans in Cobleskill.	\$250
American Legion: The American Legion is a non-partisan organization that works to enhance the well being of America's veterans, their families, our military, and our communities by a devotion to mutual helpfulness.	\$500
Neighborhood Presence: In 2024 we will continue to fund new and creative church efforts to engage with our community.	\$1,000
Warming Station Hot Food at Warnerville UMC: This money will supplement a newly established fund to help provide hot meals to the guests staying at the Warnerville Warming Station during the winter months.	\$1,500
Summer Lunch Program Coordinator: This coordinator orders supplies and works directly with volunteers for our summer lunch program, working 15 hours a week throughout the 10 week program.	\$2,500
LOCAL MISSION TOTAL	\$27,300
Internal Ministries	
Cobleskill UMC Camp Scholarships: We fund 100% of the need for camp scholarships. The committee strongly feels that nurturing children's faith as they attend and experience camp is essential to growing their faith.	\$9,000
Spirit Broadcasting: Spirit Broadcasting, in conjunction with SCHOPEG, has allowed our church services to be broadcast for free across a wide viewing area in Schoharie County. However, they incur expenses and we believe it is important to support them so that this mission can be continued in the future.	\$300
Financial Reimbursement to the Endowment: Reimbursing operating costs of the Thrift Store paid by the Endowment in the year 2023.	\$4,200
Monthly Use of Building: \$350/month of 2024 earnings will be donated from Road to Jubilee proceeds to cover operational expenses associated with the store including energy costs, cleaning and operational staff, and responsibly care for our building as we serve our neighbors within the community.	\$4,200
INTERNAL MINISTRIES TOTAL	\$17,700
Global Mission	
UMCOR (United Methodist Committee on Relief): UMCOR Global Ministries is the worldwide mission, relief and development agency of the United Methodist Church. It provides funding for disaster relief, education, global health initiatives, hunger and poverty initiatives, water and sanitation, services for women and children, migration, and sustainable development.	\$500
Heifer Fund: This fund assists in lifting families out of poverty by providing assistance to farmers.	\$250

Mission Trip/Pilgrimage: Mission Trip Scholarships are meant to support people should they choose to provide mission work. For example, a youth may be selected to participate in a foreign mission effort and would require financial support. This allows that person, once they apply, to receive that support.	\$1,500
Special Sundays Support Fund	\$250
CROP Walk: CROP Hunger Walks raise funds to support the global mission of Church World Service, a faith-based organization transforming communities around the globe through just and sustainable responses to hunger, poverty, displacement and disaster. Twenty five percent of the funds raised are returned to the host community to support local hunger fighting efforts.	\$500
Love Beyond Borders: The Love Beyond Borders campaign aims to raise funds for the equitable distribution of COVID-19 vaccines around the world. The initiative has emerged from First United Methodist Church, Boise, ID and seeks to engage The United Methodist Church in supporting COVAX alongside UNICEF, the key vaccine delivery partner.	\$250
Red Bird Mission: The Red Bird Mission is a poverty-relief organization in Kentucky that provides education and Christian evangelism ministries to residents of that area.	\$250
Central Appalachian Missionary Conference: The parent organization of Red Bird Mission, CAMC runs a variety of discipleship and outreach ministries.	\$750
Buffalo Ten Scholarship: The Buffalo Ten Scholarship was created by the Upper New York Annual Conference in response to the horrific mass shooting in Buffalo last May. The scholarship supports students in Buffalo who are attending college, in memory of those lost and to give young people an opportunity to get the education they need to become a strong voice for their community.	\$1,000
Central World Kitchen: Central World Kitchen works to feed people impacted by the war in Ukraine.	\$1,000
U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants: USCRI is dedicated to addressing the needs and rights of refugees and immigrants, providing legal, social, and health services, and advocating for the rights of refugees and immigrants both nationally and globally.	\$500
The Innocence Project: The Innocence project assists in exonerating those who have been wrongly convicted through DNA testing and challenges the criminal justice system to reform to prevent future injustice.	\$500
Reconciling Ministries Network: This advocacy network supports the United Methodist Church's work for full inclusion of our LGBTQIA siblings in all aspects of church life. As a Reconciling Church we support RMN's work on the denominational level.	\$1000
GLOBAL MISSION TOTAL	\$7,250

AS ADDITIONAL NEEDS ARISE, THEY WILL BE CONSIDERED.



Nourishing the Community

Food Pantry Report

BY LOREN SCHAFF

I would like to thank all of the volunteers who help on Friday and all the people who pick up deliveries and the office manager who takes all of the phone in orders. In 2023 we served 1,166 households and 2,753 family members, which is an increase over last year. Children and seniors saw the largest increase in usage. This year we continued to meet the needs of members of our community who are unable to drive by offering food delivery to home bound and medically fragile consumers, averaging 8 deliveries per week. Orders are called in ahead of time and packed up by volunteers, and then delivered to the door of the consumer by our wonderful volunteer drivers, John Jarvis and Sue Lockwood. In addition, this year we provided an extra Christmas dinner to 60 families and included 60 stockings for all the children in those families.

The CUMC Food Pantry is a participant in the Feeding America network, the nation's largest domestic hunger-relief organization that works to connect people who are food insecure with the food they need to care for themselves and their families. The network works to get nourishing food from farmers, manufacturers, and retailers to people in need via regional food banks and local pantries. Hunger can affect people from all walks of life. Many Americans are just one job loss or medical crisis away from food insecurity. The Regional Food Bank in Latham, donors, and volunteers all play an important role in our effort to curtail hunger here in Schoharie County.

Contributions

We are blessed to have so many people giving of their time to pick up the food, sort it and stow it away as well as those who serve the clients who come to our door each Friday. Food and other donations are dropped off at the pantry during the week, usually anonymously; we also have donors who share their excess produce and eggs. Church members have also stepped up and made financial contributions when the need was presented to them. During the year we are helped out by Food Drives from mail carriers, Boy/Cub Scouts, SUNY collections, the Antique Auto Association and recyclable grocery bags at the Hannaford in Esperance. In addition to the caring individuals who give regularly, we received donations from FAM, Beards Hollow Society, and the Crop Walk.

Month	Household	Adults	Children	Older Adults	Total
January 2023	70	112	35	42	129
February	46	116	44	44	98
March	92	125	27	42	220
April	98	121	26	41	220
May	84	102	21	41	187
June	87	126	44	45	216
July	117	97	52	43	263
August	85	111	45	55	200
September	123	210	100	59	236
October	113	169	94	44	245
November	68	144	63	47	144
December	148	198	96	71	229
Year-end Totals	1131	1530	647	576	2387
2023 Monthly Average	94	128	54	48	199
2022 Monthly Average	67	127	40	33	148



The Finally Friday youth group after working hard to pack 60 Christmas Baskets for our Food Pantry guests pictured here with Loren Schaff and Pastor Anna.



With bubbles floating through the air, children patiently wait for the Egg Hunt to begin after Easter Service on April 9, 2023.

Little People, Big Plans

Children's Ministry Report

BY LISA CARDILLI

In January and early February, Kate and Lisa continued to incorporate science, song, and lots of fun art projects in the Sunday morning lessons. Additionally, the children played a key role in the Palm Sunday service by leading the congregation in song on the church steps before processing into the sanctuary. Later in the spring, Amy and Lisa prepared the kids for the children's-led service which concluded the spring term of Sunday School.

This year, Compassion Camp returned to a week-long format. We welcomed 35 youth ages 5-12 for five mornings of games, art projects, music, play, and learning. The theme of the week was "What Every Living Thing Needs" and the children learned about how all things in God's creation need clean air, water, shelter, community, and food.

In September, Lisa, Amy, Paige, and Suzanne took over Sunday School responsibilities. The children created a beautiful mural of their neighborhood, currently on display in the Sunday School room. They also continued the tradition of baking dog and cat treats to distribute at the Blessing of the Animals. We spent four weeks discussing and learning The Lord's Prayer before celebrating Advent with wonderful lessons and crafts from the "A Weary World Rejoices" curriculum. Our Sunday school has welcomed between 4 and 12 children each Sunday and several in the group have formed friendships beyond Sunday mornings.

In December 2022, our nursery welcomed Hilary Taylor as our Nursery Manager. Hilary has put a lot of time and effort into organizing and planning the nursery space to be welcoming and educational for our youngest church friends. Each week the children have new activities available to them which reflect the values and mission of our church and emphasize the scripture reading for the week. Our nursery cares for an average of 3 children each week.

The Children's Ministry Team planned several other events this year to supplement our regular programming including an Easter Egg Hunt in April, a Yard Game Party in late June and the Eco-Advent Festival in early December. It has been lovely to find new ways to engage our children and families in outside-the-box ministry.



ABOVE: A Compassion Camp group of kids between sessions.



ABOVE: Doris Leverett leads candle-dipping at the Eco-Advent Festival.

BELOW: Some of our energetic Compassion Camp Volunteers: Pastor Anna, Beth Cash, Doris Leverett, Katelyn Roe, Teri Hammon, Amy Kennedy, Brittany Noble, and Lori VanDeValk.



Brittany and Lena Noble and June Cole playing croquet at our Yard Game Party in late June.

Luke Cesser sliding down the Bouncy slide at The annual block party in September

Here Come the Youth!

Youth Ministry Report

BY ALEXANDER SMITH



This year has overall been one of the most eventful years for the CUMC Youth Group. Youth Group, in case you're not familiar with it, occurs every other Friday during the school year, and takes place from 6-8 o'clock. With such a small amount of time, you may find yourself wondering, "How can this year have been that eventful?" Well, put simply, we're pretty efficient when having a good time. Now we couldn't do this all by ourselves of course. Every Friday, we have multiple chaperones to help things run smoothly, as well as a very special people called Friday Angels whose job is to bring meals for our youth. Whether it be a taco bar, sushi making, or even just pizza, I think I can speak for all of the youth group when I say, **we appreciate you.**

Now you might be wondering "How awesome is Finally Friday?" To that question I'd have to say one sentence to you. *Finally Friday is pretty awesome.* Throughout 2023, we were able to do so much. But first, I'll start with the fun stuff. Every Friday night is filled with unique games, activities, and discussions. Typically though, we spark our nights off with a nice game of 4-square.

Now let's move to the big stuff. As a whole youth group, we were able to combine a trip to a park and roller rink with the project of recycling a large load of styrofoam which was given to us by members of the church community. This was an overall great experience for the whole youth group with everyone having a wonderful time and enjoying a fun road trip. Another big event we had in 2023 was our journey to the Great Escape. We were able to spend an entire day riding some great coasters and taking a dip at the waterpark. It was a truly wonderful experience, and if we could, we'd relive that every year.

A big question that might have entered your mind at this point is "How could you possibly afford all of this?" To that I've got one word. Fundraisers. Fundraisers. Fundraisers. With our big cake pop fundraiser, we spent the day baking, dipping, and packing cake pops to sell to everyone we could. This single handedly helped us afford to send 15 kids to the Great Escape for a whole day.

This isn't the first time we've prepared delicious baked goods for our community. In the Christmas season, we came together as a group to decorate, package, and deliver Christmas cookies to members of our church community. This was a huge success, and we had a great time passing out cookies and caroling. Another way of giving back to the community was through our Christmas dinner packing session. We all came together one Friday night to package Christmas Ham dinners for the people who use our Food Pantry. We finished packing orders in record time, and had fun while doing it. Lastly, we paired up with the Mosaic Operation: Home Repair to work on painting homes and churches, as well as helping with plenty of other projects. This was an event which will live large in our church's history.

All in all, the CUMC youth group had a wonderful time in 2023. Whether it was delivering cookies, riding roller coasters, or just having a normal day of youth group, we were always together and having fun.



Our Fall Joining Sunday in which we welcomed 8 new people into our community.

Drawing the Circle Wider

Membership Report

BY JANET SAND

Total number of members reported at beginning of 2023	281
Removed by death	4
Removed by transfer to another Methodist Church	3
Removed by transfer to other denomination	0
Removed by action of charge conference	0
Received by profession of Faith	7
Received by transfer from Another Methodist Church	1
Received by transfer from other denominations	3
Restored	0
Total membership as of December 31, 2023	285

In Memoriam:

Valerie Pendas Sally Bennett
 MacDonald Holmes Sandra Emmanuel

Received as transferring members:

Chris Cash Beth Cash
 Bill Courtney Naomi Pickett

Received as Professing Members:

Elizabeth Agen Tristan Peterson
 Henry Mau Brittany Noble
 Sandra Manchester Micheal Roe
 Katelyn Roe

Received as Baptized Members:

Margaret Elizabeth Agen
 Charlotte Grace Burdick

Photos From 2023



Children around our nursery and church during worship, at Fellowship Group, at Potluck and singing on the steps for Palm Sunday.





Youth having fun and eating dinner at Finally Friday and helping with the leadership of Sunday morning worship.



Youth stacking firewood as part of the Operation: Home Repair mission week and making Cake Pops for a fundraiser.



Finally Friday Youth nights include many different experiences. Here is a festive dinner, a balcony story during Holy Week and a baritone player during our "Open Mic" Night.



Compassion Camp welcomed over 35 kids this year with a great group of 10+ volunteers helping to staff the week of fun and learning.



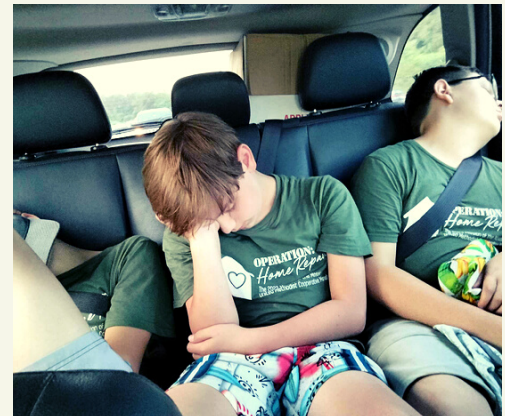
Dancing with Valerie on her last Sunday with us.



Skye Farm Labor Day Retreat



Girl Scouts donating cookies to our Summer Lunch Program



Hard working volunteers during our Operation: Home Repair week with other UMCs from around the Mosaic Cooperative Parish.



Halloween Hollow had everyone looking festive as we welcomed over 2,000 families to our property for hospitality.



Living out our care for God's Earth by beginning a soft plastic recycling program and throwing an Eco-Advent Fest!



The Block Party is always a wonderful way to fellowship with our neighbors!



Worship moved outdoors for the summer as our Chancel was remodeled.



This year's Block Party had a Mr. Rogers' Neighborhood theme complete with a trolley photo booth!



Beautiful skies over our church in many months of the year.



District Superintendent, Bob Kolvik-Campbell brought a message during our Charge Conference.



Having fun around the church as we climb the bell tower after a small group meeting and toss balloons on Pentecost.



Hanging out with our young adults as they come home for the holidays, celebrate graduations, and add humor to our Christmas pageant.