

Ashland EPC



2023 Annual Report

“Ashland Church is a fun place to be!”

When I get together with other pastors, a common question is, “How is your church doing?” In some ways it’s a complicated question with lots of answers. It’s very much like when someone asks you, “How is your family doing?” One of the responses I give to people is “Ashland is a fun place to be!” Why? Because it is. I really think what God has accomplished in our church over these past few years is truly amazing. It hasn’t all been easy, but God has been blessing us and we are starting to see more and more of the fruit of God’s Spirit working in our church family.

Last year had its share of both joys and sorrows. As a family, we grieved the loss of some of our very long-time members who had faithfully served and loved us in the Lord. Amidst the sorrow, and through the diligent work of some of our leaders, we had the joy of completing the merger with Park Avenue Community Church. We also continue to have the privilege of “parenting” the Mantua Creek Church as we pray for and support them in becoming a new EPC church in Gloucester County. Along with this, we continue to have the blessing of sharing our facilities with Grace Ministries who in September also became a brand new EPC church! God is not only blessing Ashland Church, but He is also allowing us to be a blessing to many others in our Kingdom family!

Another question that people sometimes ask me is where I pastor? With a smile on my face, I tell them, “I get to be the pastor of Ashland Church.” Last year, after over two decades of ministry at Ashland, the church so graciously allowed me to take my second sabbatical, which lasted about 4.5 months. Thank you! It was a bit different as I mostly stayed in town, however I was able to connect with the Experiential Learning Office at Urban Promise, a ministry we have been connected with for years. Coming out of sabbatical, and getting back into Church life, felt a bit like stepping onto an already fast-moving treadmill, and as the summer and fall came someone kept pushing the “speed up” button.



One thing that I came out of sabbatical with was a strong sense in my spirit of a need for us as a church to have a time of revision and discovery of who we are. We have gone through so many changes as a congregation, and I believe God has positioned Ashland Church for a new season on our journey. In November our Church leadership met to explore and discuss what that might look like, and decided to work with an EPC Church Health Coach, which began in December. I believe this will be a pivotal year for us as we seek the Lord and follow the leadings of the Holy Spirit for our church, and I am thankful to be able to walk this journey with all of you.

It’s Great to be pastor!

-Jamie Cupschalk

Worship Arts

I remain grateful that God has equipped our music and arts teams: musicians, those skilled in audio visual capacities, folks gifted in leading worship, and great communicators of God's Holy Word. Many thanks to Darrell, who faithfully leads worship. Thanks also to Lynn Brogren and Elyse Proctor, who implemented a new program that we have been using to project song lyrics and prayers.



God has given us the privilege of joining with the congregation in worshiping and praising him every Sunday morning, as well as seasonal services: Maundy Thursday, Thanksgiving, and Christmas. During the year, our youth led worship for several morning services. Children's Choirs also contributed to Sunday morning worship. Appreciation to Deb Ford, who faithfully teaches our little ones and prepares them to express their praise. Songs of praise were offered by our adult choir during the seasons of advent and Christmas. We were very blessed to have had our entire advent candle lighting series authored by Joe Carty, and then delivered by families, youth, care groups, and our Creative Hands ministry.

An ever-present challenge is keeping our sound equipment up to speed. We are tasked in deciding what to prioritize so that we might continue to lead worship in the sanctuary and online. We trust that God will give us discernment in making these decisions.

I am thankful for the privilege of serving and joining with Ashland in worshiping our God.

Respectfully submitted by Carol Holmes, Worship Arts Director

Deacons

In 2023 we were blessed to have ten Ashland members serve as ordained Deacons: Jen Bello, Lynn Brogren, Rosa Chowning, Marilyn Ford, Debbie Joseph, Earnita Nadeem, Joe Rivera, Elia Rosario, Stephanie Wiley, and Gloria Proctor. This past year our Deacons served the members of the Ashland community through constant prayer for individuals needs, cared for the sick, widows and shut-ins through visitation, phone calls, cards, meals, and assistance with funerals.

During September the Deacons were busy working alongside with the Elders, staff and many volunteers as Ashland hosted Presbytery. Deacons also help with our Community Outreach dinners, which were held in October and Christmas Day. In the past several years the Deacons have held a Thanksgiving Food Drive. Through donations from our congregation, we provided food for 11 families (49 people). Next year we look forward to continuing the Food Drive to work alongside with Park Avenue Food Pantry.

Lastly, the Deacons coordinate communion on the first Sunday of each month. I want to express my appreciation and gratitude for all those who have served as Deacons and given of themselves to serve the needs of others.

Respectfully submitted by Gloria Proctor, Moderator

Children

2023 was a fun year of growth for Ashland's Children's Ministries! Our faithful Sunday School and Kids Church volunteers weekly invest in the spiritual growth of our little ones, making sure that they feel safe and know that they are a part of God's family here at Ashland! Our PreSchool and Elementary rooms received some updates in color and design to create safe and calm environments for all of our children in the beautiful neurodiverse world God has created us in!

We have been blessed to partner with Grace Ministries for our Sunday morning Children's Ministries and seasonal outreaches. Their partnership has allowed us to grow in both numbers and depth, including adding a new age group to our Sunday Morning Kids Church.

For VBS we rode the waves of emotions. Learning how God created us, how to cope with hard feelings, and how to find our peace in Jesus! We had a wild ride filled with Bible lessons, songs, stunts, creativity, and games and met many kids and families from our community.



Our amazing volunteers continue to minister to our children on Wednesday nights, which have become our time for Kids Worship Choirs. We love getting to see these bright young children bring the songs they learn into our Sunday Morning Worship Service.

Our Partnership with Tender Hearts Preschool & Daycare has grown in 2023 as it became a ministry of Ashland Church. Our staff enjoy visiting the children and seeing all the fun they are having and we are blessed when the

children and their families visit our Kids Ministries and Worship Services. The staff at Tender Hearts is truly an amazing group, helping children to grow in God's love and learn new skills and lessons along the way!

Youth

Ashland Youth started 2023 with a Winter Retreat at the Keswick Christian Retreat Center. They had a lot of fun in the indoor pool, spending hours in the gym, exploring the pine-barren woods around them, and having plenty of daytime and late-night shenanigans! They also experienced beautiful times of worship and heard the Word preached while watching it portrayed in beautiful works of art. This weekend became a time of growth together in community and in our relationships with God. Leaders were blessed to witness many youth make commitments and recommitments as they began the year.



Midway through the year Ashland Youth enjoyed a summer retreat at Refreshing Mountain in Lancaster County, PA. We all had the opportunity to step away together and grow in relationship as a group and with God. Our youth stretched their limits and faith as they bravely took on the high ropes course and zipline! There was never a shortage of things to do with a large pool and waterslide, farm animals, a nature center (where we held snakes!), hiking trails, archery and the beloved gym to play and hang out in. A worship team from Ashland led us

every day in prayer and praise and we had the opportunity to learn from Pastor Joe Kim! This retreat was also the first attempt at connecting some of our local EPC Youth as we joined with students and leaders from Manoa Church & Grace Ministries. We are very excited about future partnership plans in the works!

Throughout the year we have continued to meet regularly for social events, Bible Studies, Sunday School, times of worship, and service projects at Ashland and Urban Promise. Our students are typical teenagers trying to grow up and find their way, and they have amazing servants' hearts. The love of God in them shines as they serve others whether it be our Ashland Kids on Sunday morning, helping in the worship service up front and with tech support, or traveling to serve at Urban Promise. I cannot wait to see how God will continue to use His young people in 2024!

Young Adults

Many of our “more mature (in years)” members will remember what the college and early career lives of our 20s and early 30s were like as we grew into adulthood and discovered a little bit more about how God created us to be. We stepped out of the faith of parents or mentors and learned to follow God on our own, finding our place to belong in His loving community. It has been beautiful to see our Ashland Church family embrace our young adults as they journey through this stage of life, letting them see God’s love and belonging and allowing them space and room to grow into God’s calling for them. It has been a blessing to see them explore. They have long been faithful servants with their feet of faith on the ground and moving, in 2023 we got to see new ministries such as the Young Adult Bible study begin and grow as they desired to weekly dig deeper into God’s Word. It has also been beautiful to see them grow in community with each other and our church family at whole church community events and social times for them with visitors from those with more years behind them to build friendships together in Christ.

-Janine Fleming, Children and Youth Ministries Director



R.E.P.S. and Trustees

The Trustees, working together with our REPS and volunteers, have enjoyed a productive year of service. We're grateful to our God who always provides as well as to those in our church family for their financial support, time, effort, and encouragement. A big thank you to Deb Ford for her dedication and leadership. The REPS group is a casual, enjoyable and easy way to help maintain and improve our properties both at Ashland and Park Avenue. Consider, pray about it and come join us. Thank you on behalf of both groups.

Completed Projects 2023

- Painting – Ashland interior hallways, children's rooms, Janine's office, kitchen, balcony, Tender Hearts rooms and picnic tables stained.
- Fire Inspection Completed– Knox box installed, fire extinguishers updated/tagged, new CO detector (kitchen), stove vent cleaned, emergency and exit lights functional, fire alarm system and boiler inspections completed.
- Plumbing/Electrical – exhaust fan replaced, light switches, new water for the heater ladies room, wiring installed with new automated exterior door, new control board in branch box to control mini-splits (one side of building)
- Heating – new boilers installed
- Kitchen – new ceiling tiles
- Lounge – new ceiling lights
- Doors – (2) repaired
- Signage – new welcome wall, door decals (3)
- Gutters – cleared and/or cleaned
- Landscaping - flower beds near front sign and entrances, bushes maintained
- AED (Automated External Defibrillator) mounted in central hallway
- Horner Hall – bulletin board updated (Grace Ministry and AA groups), additional board mounted (Ashland Church news), carpet professionally cleaned.

Ongoing Projects 2023-2024

- Offices – Financial and main office centralized; Janine relocated/updated
- ADA Family Restroom – architect and permits secured, under construction
- Storage – new spaces prepared for maintenance, cleaning, seasonal materials
- Windows – cleaning and installation of new screens continues

-Dennis Cesare

Mantua Creek Church Plant



We are so grateful for Ashland's investment in the Mantua Creek Church plant. Overwhelmed by the gift of friendship with God, we are building a church community near Mantua Creek and Rowan University that prioritizes reaching deconverting and deconstructing GenXers and Millennials, and their children.

Since my (Greg's) leaving Care Net in May, 2023, God has opened and closed doors consistent with re-positioning myself vocationally to move our church plant forward. An excellent finish carpenter who ran my own LLC in the past, I plan to use those skills to supplement both the internal and external giving required for a revised six-year plan. As we begin year four of that plan, here is some of the impact we're having—we received these testimonies just two months ago:

- “When we first started coming, I was questioning if there was a place for me in the evangelical church. I was discouraged by the rise of Christian nationalism, and a narrow and wrong application of a Christian worldview in light of current events. It was a huge encouragement to find like-minded Christians, restoring a sense of hope in me. I’m also very grateful for the relationships we have built.”
- “It has helped me not dread church every week because there are almost no judgmental comments or looks and the services are easier for younger people to understand. It really has helped shape my faith, especially in the last year. It has given me a place where my anxiety is accepted, and I can share my struggles without judgment.”

Again, these are the kind of stories your investment has made possible—stories we hope to multiply in the coming years. As our parent church, please pray:

- That God would bless the work of our hands, increasing both the size and impact of our 21-member core group.
- That in February, we would transition successfully out of individual homes into our new rented space.
- That God would give us wisdom, unity, and excitement in planning some key launch events for friends and family before and at Easter.
- That in the midst of the hard thing we are setting out to do, God would give us strength, joy, and tangible encouragement along the way.

-Greg Austen



Missions

Once again, we celebrate that Ashland church is privileged to be participating in His outreach both locally, nationally and around the world. In 2023 were able to share some special missionary moments and host some very special people that we serve and support. In June, Sarah Palmer from the Boys and Girls Christian home, Fred Acheampong from African Book Challenge, Lauren Herman, Intervarsity Christian Fellowship and Al and Mary Ginter, Entrust Thailand shared updates.

As a committee, we welcome Margeret Ramsey who brings a new perspective having been a pastor's wife and her involvement in Jericho prison ministry for many years. Erin Fleming, Stephen Cupschalk and Lynn Brogren continue to serve on our team. Our main goals are"

- 1.) To continue relationships with each of our ministries or individual missionaries.
- 2.) Communicate their vision, needs and prayer requests to the congregation.
- 3.) Support them financially to the best of our abilities.

Each of our members is working towards building relationships with our missionaries and then share a monthly update during the worship service. The committee also recommends and works with our Session to complete the annual budget; Ashland missions is funded by taking 12% of our regular giving and setting it aside before any other expenses are paid. Last year we were able to give over \$40,000 to our 20 ministries. We are also getting involved in a few special projects including assisting Calvary Church in Kwabeng, Ghana with completing the roof of their church building.

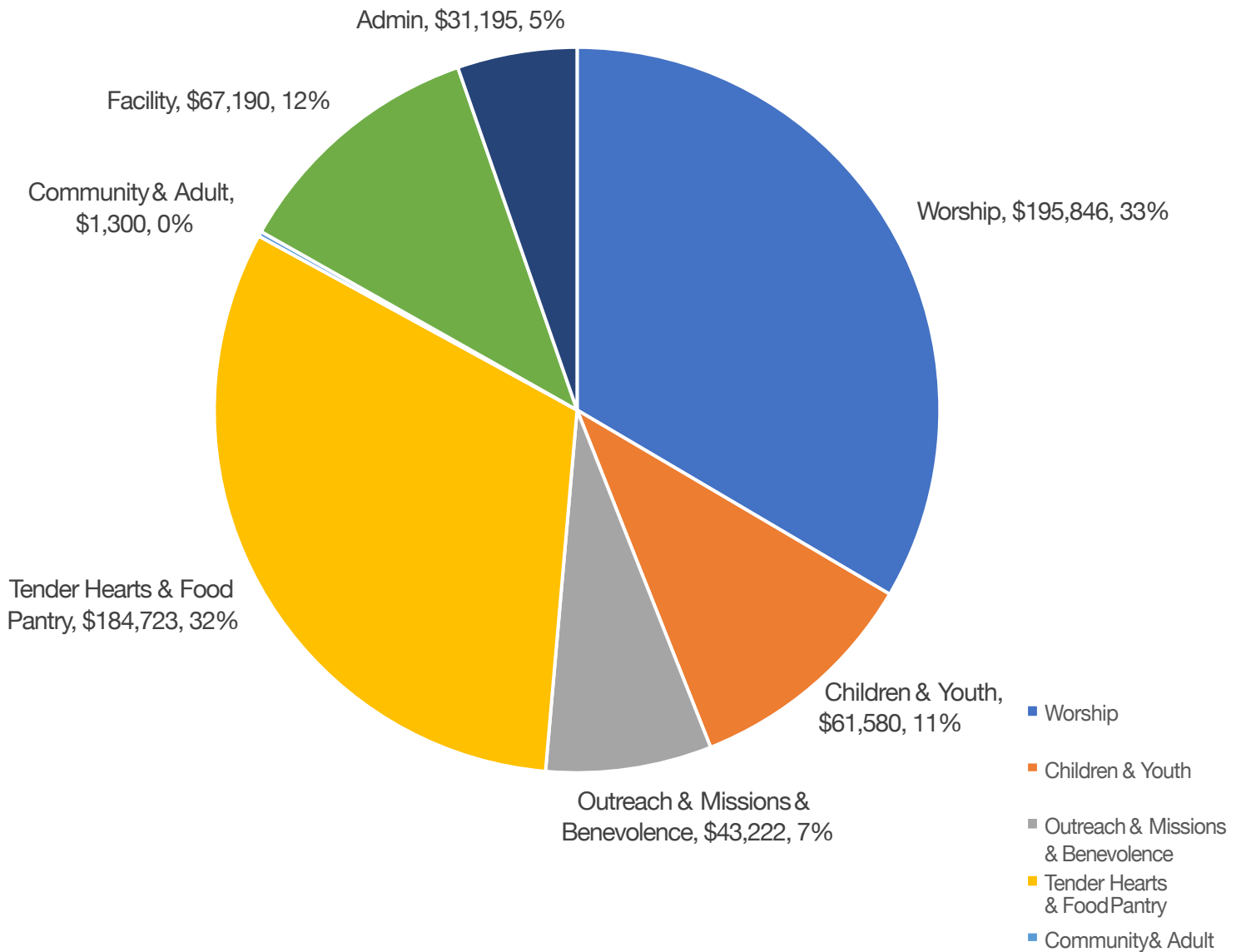
We would love to include you in corresponding with and praying more specifically for one of our ministries, please let us know and we would certainly welcome more members to our committee. Please reach out to Darrell Proctor or any of our members.

Ashland is currently supporting:

African Book Challenge - ABC Ghana
Boys and Girls Christian Home - India
Christian Ministries Camden
ENTRUST - Thailand Al and Mary Ginter
EPC World Outreach - Phil Thrash
EPC General Assembly - Robert Hamd
EPC General Assembly - Bruce Anderson
EPC General Assembly - Dave & Debbie Walker
EPC General Assembly - Adger McKay
Mantua Creek Church Plant - Greg and Pam Austen
InterVarsity Christian Fellowship - Lauren Herman
Mission to the World - Missions - Peter Boling
Park Ave. Community Church - Food Bank
POTE - Engage 2025 Missions - Andre and Albina
Urban Promise - Camden, NJ - Bruce Main
ServingLeaders Ministries Carl and Caroline Kishbaugh
Wycliff Bible Translators - Dave and Penelope Pickens
Wycliffe Bible Translators – Bill and Faith Foust



2024 Total Budget



Category

Worship	\$195,846	33%
Children & Youth	61,580	11%
Outreach & Missions & Benevolence	43,222	7%
Tender Hearts & Food Pantry	184,723	32%
Community & Adult	1,300	<1%
Facility	67,190	11%
Admin	31,195	>5%
Overall Budget	\$585,056	100%

2023 Year End

- Income shortfall of approximately 3.2%
- Giving was under budget by 5.3%
- Other contributions exceeded budget
- Expenses were over budget by approximately 1.7%
- Expenses in some categories were lower than budgeted
- Expenses in other categories were reduced
- Final shortfall of approximately 4.8%

2024 Budget

- Overall budget \$357,911 is 6.5% higher than 2023
- Adjustments (+/-) made in many areas of the budget
- 3% staff salary increases this year

Ashland Church Staff

Jamie Cupschalk - **Pastor**
Carol Holmes - **Worship Arts Director**
Janine Fleming - **Children and Youth Ministries Director**

Ashland Office Team

Rosa Chowning, Rachel Crain, Karen Davidge, Renee Lieb,
Chris Slone, John Tait

Elders

2024: Mike Greco, Chris Slone, Dave Witt
2025: Janine Fleming
2026: Frank Davidson, Darrell Proctor, Esther Twum-Acheampong

Deacons

2024: Jen Bello
2025: Joe Rivera, Elia N. Rosario, Jeannine Schippnick
2026: Lynn Brogren, Rosa Chowning, Debbie Joseph, Earnita Nadeem, Gloria Proctor

Trustees

2024: Rob Favuzzi, Deb Ford, Kelvin Satterfield
2025: Bill Buzard, Dennis Cesare, Tom Seitzinger, Ed Winchester
2026: Bob Grady, Ruth Seitzinger

Treasurer

Corinne Beyer

Financial Secretary

Rebecca Emmel, Nancy Simpkins

Assistant Financial Secretary

Donna Blizzard

Auditing Committee

Dave Witt: Chair, Melissa Gallagher, Robin Kerth

Nominating Committee

Chris Slone: Chair, Frank Davidson: Vice-Chair, Joe Bello, David Cupschalk, Matt Davidson, Lori Greco, Frank Oware

Our Mission

To seek the lost and grow disciples who worship and enjoy our Lord.

Our Vision

To be a Covenant family in our community which is transformed by the Gospel, empowered by the Spirit, and focused by our Mission.

Ashland Church

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