Missionary Trip to Puerto Rico. Five youth traveled with Rev. Whittaker and Minister Anthony to help rebuild and cultivate the land.

Staff

Rev. Dr. Damaris D. Whittaker
Senior Minister
Minister Bridget Kelso Anthony
Associate Minister
Eric Alderfer
Director of Children’s Ministry
Mia Michelle McClain
Acting Director of Children’s Ministry
Chris Whittaker
Director of Music
David Ford
Business Manager
Dinean Davis
Communications and Ministry Coordinator
Laurrenda Hatcher
Bookkeeper
Hilda Cash McCrillis
Nursery Attendant
Lazarro Rodriguez
Sexton
Wilfredo Serrano
Sexton
Carlos Rodriguez
Evening Receptionist

Consistory

Beverley Sheares
Elder, Chair of Consistory
Victoria Dillard
Elder
Lorenzo M. Alsberry
Deacon
Johanna Garcia
Deacon
Delana Glenn
Deacon
Lisa Kline
Deacon
Brian Plane
Deacon
Wendy Sealey
Deacon
Zoe Reyes
Deacon
Abigail Ruane
Intersections Ministry Deacon
Devora Jones
Intersections Ministry Deacon
About FWCC

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

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

1 Peter 2:9-10 (Message Bible)—“But you are the ones chosen by God, chosen for the high calling of priestly work, chosen to be a holy people, God’s instruments to do His work and speak out for Him, to tell others of the night-and-day difference He made for you—from nothing to something, from rejected to accepted.”
I welcome you to the 2017-2018 annual report.

Although it has only been a year—it is hard to believe all that has transpired. Surely, we are not where we started. While we have had our share of challenges, great things have happened at Fort Washington Collegiate Church. Robert Rohr reminds us that “every good thing that happens here begins with letting go of our ways and submitting to God’s will.”

We began this year with a commitment to “Faith in the Resistance.” In many varied ways, Fort Washington Collegiate Church has made a difference in the neighborhood and around the country.

I would like to outline just some of the activities that have taken place in the past year that demonstrate the wonderful work we have been able to do together.

Having good staff is very important to the success of the church. I am pleased that this year we welcomed David Ford, Business Manager, and Dinean Davis, Communications and Ministry Coordinator. Their professionalism and outstanding skills have already made a difference in the life of the church.

I have worked diligently in implementing new processes and procedures to improve the administration of the church. We launched “Bridges,” our monthly newsletter, in order to keep you informed about church events. We have intentionally increased our presence on Social Media, which has yielded great results.

Our commitment to justice and peace has propelled us to open our doors for immigration clinics, press conferences, vigils and community mobilizing actions. We are intentional about the church being a space where the community can gather.

Around the City, we have prayed, advocated, marched and yes, protested—letting our voices be heard, standing in the gap, being the church in the world.

Nationally, we responded to Puerto Rico and St. Thomas, after the devastation of Hurricane Maria. I led four mission trips with members from Fort Washington and Middle Churches. Two members of our congregation went to St. Thomas to lend their hands. I have marched and rallied with the Poor People’s Campaign in Washington, DC, and have visited the border of New Mexico and Juárez with clergy from around the country. Our work in the world continues.

Our church continues to grow. We received 29 new members, and baptized 5 children. The presence of our children reminds us that God is still with us, and God is doing a new thing. I have enjoyed
getting to know members of the congregation, whether in their homes, over coffee or in my office. It is through developing relationships with you, that God's work for the church is revealed.

I am grateful for the support of those who share our vision and who have worked tirelessly during a time of transition to get us to this point—our Consistory, our talented and dedicated staff, and You. A special thanks to the Salon Hang task force, who organized a successful fundraiser at the beginning of the church year, and to the Puerto Rico/VI ministry team for a successful Island Dance Party to support our ongoing work in Puerto Rico and St. Thomas.

May we continue to put God first in our lives and let go of our ways, thus continuing to submit to God's will for Fort Washington Collegiate Church.

Paz y Amor,

Rev. Dr. Damaris D. Whittaker
A YEAR IN REVIEW - TRANSITIONS

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

This has been a successful year of transition, on every level. We have welcomed our new Senior Minister, the dynamic Rev. Dr. Damaris D. Whittaker, and I was granted standing as a Licensed Minister and MID (Member in Discernment) in the United Church of Christ, the first steps on my path towards Ordination.

During the transition, I temporarily managed SPACE RENTAL requests. While this was not originally a regular part of my duties, I was happy to learn and grow in this area. Space Rentals account for a large portion of Fort Washington’s annual income. Under my management, we not only met our budget goals, but we exceeded them for the year by engaging new community partners. One of our new partnerships, Tennis World NYC, offered free tennis lessons for children and adults during the spring. Tennis World used our gym as their summer program drop-off/rain date site, and we are looking forward to more tennis throughout the year.

I am especially proud of this year’s historic MISSION TRIP to Puerto Rico in July. This year we journeyed with 5 young people (the “Mission 5”), 3 chaperones and our very own Rev. Dr. Damaris D. Whittaker, who was born and raised on the island. The Mission 5 had the chance to work in solidarity with those who understand that we are all fighting for each other. Our motto was borrowed from Australian activist Lilla Watson: “If you have come here to help me, you are wasting your time. But if you have come because your liberation is bound up with mine, then let us work together.”

From repairing and rebuilding roofs, distributing school supplies in underserved neighborhoods, to planting sustainable vegetable fields, the Mission 5 were able to make valuable contributions to the Puerto Rico relief effort. They demonstrated that love and support can overcome all obstacles.

Our commitment to the youth is being manifested in several ways. This year we designated certain second Sundays as Youth Sunday. Those days were marked by increased participation from the youth (ages 9+) – from leading the service to reading the liturgy, and offering an “Adult’s Message” in lieu of the usual “Children’s Message” (the parents in the congregation thoroughly enjoyed it). I also instituted a
new role for young people – the Pastor’s Usher. The Pastor’s Usher arrives early on Sunday morning and helps make sure that the Sanctuary and Chancel are set up properly. They check in and assist Rev. Whittaker and me, and then remain available throughout the service. This role has been a great way for young people, many who have previously served as Acolytes, to get even more exposure and experience with our Sunday morning worship service. Going forward, Youth Sundays will occur every other month with the added participation of the younger children (ages 4-9), led by Mia McClain, our Acting Director of Children’s Ministries.

One thing I am deeply grateful for is our Senior Minister’s willingness to share the pulpit. Many churches only allow their Associate Ministers to preach once or twice a year, if at all. Here at Fort Washington, I have been able to preach using a variety of different creative methods. From using first person testimony, to referencing Marvel comics (I can’t help it), to sharing a sermon with both Rev. Whittaker and Mia McClain during Black History Month, and engaging in a poetic sermon duet featuring Lisa Kline on bass for Trans Day of Visibility, I have been able to explore preaching from various creative angles.

LOOKING AHEAD – FALL PROGRAMMING

In addition to coordinating the Mission Trip, I also run the SUNDAY SCHOOL with Mia McClain, for young people aged 11-17. We meet from September through June during the Sunday Morning Worship Service immediately after the Passing of the Peace. Using a combination of UCC worship resources, sermons, lectionary passages, and educational theatre exercises, young people are encouraged to delve deeper into their faith and build a lasting relationship with God.

This Fall we began our bi-weekly CONFIRMATION CLASSES for youth ages 12-17. Young people who complete confirmation classes become full members of the church (Baptisms are offered as necessary). The Confirmation ceremony is designed and led by the students and is held in June.

Finally, earlier this year, I was granted standing as a Licensed Minister and MID (Member in Discernment) in the United Church of Christ. I am deeply grateful to report that I will be Ordained as a Minister of Word and Sacrament in December of 2018. Fort Washington has been a loving, creative space. I am blessed to serve here.
Our music season at Fort Washington Collegiate Church has been very full. The 2017-18 has been a year of the ministry maturing into a wonderfully dynamic and vibrant church music program that is growing deeper connections to our community.

The Joyful Voices continue to grow and strengthen as a community within FWCC. This year saw an increased dedication of new singers, and we tackled a diverse and expanding range of repertoire. Joyful Voices leads worship on average 3 of 4 Sundays of the month. We expanded our reach into the community this year, participating in a very memorable performance at the United Palace’s Interfaith Music Festival in March. In April, members of Joyful Voices also shared solo performances at the United Palace’s “Piano and Me” Series, spreading music and representing Fort Washington in the neighborhood.

Our Community Choir continued wonderful growth throughout the year with approximately 50 members. We presented two fantastic concerts in Fall and Spring.

The music ministry supported and participated in several special events this year. We helped support the Salon Hang Fundraiser – where I served as a staff liaison and provided critical behind-the-scenes technical support that empowered the committee to raise over $12,000. In January, we hosted jazz guitarist Matt Davis & Aerial Photograph, who, along with support from Chamber Music America, presented “Welcome Home Suite,” which highlighted stories of immigrants in Washington Heights.

We held a Jazz Evensong service during Lent this year, which evolved into a Jazz Communion service during regular 11:00am worship on the first Sunday of each month.

The music ministry continued to support the Washington Heights Chamber Orchestra, which is an extension of our music program offerings. The WHCO performed monthly free concerts, attracting
audience members not just from Washington Heights, but from all over the city and New Jersey.

Additionally, our work in the community has helped strengthen key relationships – with the United Palace Theatre and Northern Manhattan Arts Alliance in particular. NoMAA hosted their **Uptown Arts Stroll Closing Ceremony** at FWCC, which was a valuable outreach opportunity.

**CONCLUSION**

Among churches our size, (and many times our size), FWCC has one of the most dynamic music programs in New York City. Our offerings are accessible to amateurs and professionals alike, and our blended style of Sunday morning worship is very unique and special.

As we continue to grow, we only want to get **more people involved** in sharing their gifts; participating in our ministry as a place to share, grow, and be artistically challenged. We hope to foster greater long-term commitment that flourishes out of a feeling of connection to the FWCC community.
God has been doing a new thing at Fort Washington this year! In February, we rolled out another branch of spiritual formation: Theology on Tap—an adult learning opportunity in which participants explore life & faith in a casual setting. The gatherings were held once a month on a Friday at various locations in the Washington Heights neighborhood. Fort Washington provided appetizers, and I facilitated casual discourse on a variety of topics, including: Christian Politics and Rivaling Theologies, The Meaning of Lent (personally and communally), Multiplicity and Diversity within Worship, Theology of Suffering, Theodicy, and What Healing Means, and Self-Care Amidst Resistance. The final gathering of the year will be Thursday, November 29th at 7pm.

After expressing much interest in Theology on Tap (though they weren’t quite old enough to attend)—the (pre)teens of The Fort urged me to host a similar spiritual formation gathering just for them. On October 21st, we launched Theology on Tap TEEN EDITION, an opportunity for preteens and teens to shake up their faith at an off-campus location, over milkshakes! We look forward to continuing this new engagement with our youth in the new year.

Our children and youth transitioned to a new model for our church school programming in August. Inspired by Rev. Whittaker’s vision for a multi-level church school experience that would allow for smaller classes and more age-appropriate spiritual formation, the new curriculum—Deep Blue Kids (for ages 4-9) and Submerge (for ages 10-13)—explores sacred stories, parables, and liturgical action appropriate to each season, paired with response through various mediums of expression including painting, drawing, journaling, sculpting with play dough, and learning to tell the stories to one another.

With this new church school model, we have arranged the children and youth into 3 classes: Deep Blue Kids: Ages 4-6, Deep Blue Plus: Ages 7-9, and Submerge: Ages 10-13. Because Fort Washington Collegiate Church adheres to the United Church of Christ Safe Church Policy, each class must be supervised/co-taught by 2 adults. Thus, we have solicited the help of the congregation to roll out our multi-level church school program. Volunteers will commit to a few Sundays a year and lead the 40 minute lesson with a co-teacher. In addition, we have two new seminary students, Carolyn Barschow and James Admans, as Sunday School Assistants. They will teach ages 4-6 and 7-9, respectively, two Sundays a month.

We also recently launched Youth Sundays—a bi-monthly experience in which our children, ages 4 and up, lead us in worship through offering prayers,
songs, an Adult’s Message, and showcasing their art. The theme of our first Youth Sunday was “Child of God.” Youthful Voices, our children’s choir, offered a post-sermon musical selection by Mark Miller entitled “Child of God”—the lyrics to this powerful song are the foundation of our new Youth Mission Statement. Our next Youth Sundays will be December 16th, February 10th, and April 14th. Youth Book Club, the Acolyte Ministry, and Pastor’s Usher are other ways for our young people to be engaged at The Fort. I look forward to the new things God will continue to do at
I joined FWCC in mid-April and spent the first few months observing and learning about Fort Washington Church and the Collegiate Corporate environment. I have found many helpful hands and welcoming hearts in making adjustments into my position. My responsibilities are in the areas of improving FWCC’s financial sustainability (by increasing income and finding cost savings), developing better business practices and procedures, and increasing our staff’s capacity to provide better services to the FWCC congregation and our Washington Heights community.

It has been inspiring and motivating to discover the talents and dedication of my colleagues. My staff responsibilities include supervising Lazaro Rodriguez, Wilfredo Serrano, Carlos Rodriguez, and co-supervising Dinean Davis. I also serve as the human resources liaison, coordinating payroll and hiring paperwork, and I manage administrative, building, and technology operations.

The challenge of taking over our rentals operations from Pastor Bridget, who has provided helpful guidance and historical context, has been an engaging one. I’m happy that Pastor Bridget can now devote her energies to serving our FWCC congregation more directly.

One of my priorities is to increase FWCC’s ability to support its operating costs by growing our rental income. Our first success has been the negotiation of a 6 to 10-month rental contract with the nearby TEP Charter School, which has a large Hispanic and Black population, to host their Physical Education courses in the Gymnasium. For the 2018-2019 fiscal year, this partnership will provide us a significant consistent monthly income.

We have also strengthened new rental partnerships with Tennis World NYC, which develops youth and adults through teaching tennis skills in our Gymnasium. We have also renewed external program rental contracts with Young People’s Chorus and The Wooden Button Daycare for the 2018-19 academic year.

We are working to intentionally and selectively partner with local organizations whose missions and values align with FWCC’s. Specifically, we have been strengthening relationships with neighborhood community groups such as the Washington Heights Business Improvement District, and the Northern Manhattan Arts Alliance, as well as some of our community-minded business vendors, such as United HealthCare, Aetna, and Matthijssen Business Systems.

I have also been exploring opportunities with current vendors to reduce costs and/or improve service and changing vendors where appropriate to achieve these goals.

Being present on worship Sundays has allowed me to get to know our congregants, and this enables them to address administrative questions and issues with me directly, leaving Reverend Damaris and Pastor Bridget free to address more pressing congregational needs.

Finally, we are working to improve our ability to be a welcoming office and to engage and support the congregation in being able to contribute their “time, talents, and treasures” to manifest the mission and values of the gospel. To that end, we have welcomed Dinean Davis, our Ministry & Communications Coordinator, who has notably shared her talents in a number of church-organized events. All our staff have been collaborating to implement practices and procedures for more effective event management.

With the restructuring of the Collegiate Church ecosystem, I am hopeful that we will see a greater collaboration across the Intersections, Marble, Middle, and West End Collegiate.
This year brought exciting opportunities for the Fort Washington Collegiate Church Consistory. At the beginning of the church year, we ordained three new deacons. Wendy Sealey and Johanna Garcia serve as FWCC deacons and Abbi Ruane was ordained as a deacon for Intersections International, the Collegiate Church’s social justice and global peace ministry. Our new deacons brought a wealth of skills and knowledge that has helped to improve the operations of FWCC and helped reshape how the Collegiate church functions.

During 2017-2018, the Consistory of Fort Washington Collegiate Church increased our participation on all Collegiate committees. FWCC representatives were:

- Audit Committee – Deacon Brian Plane
- Executive Committee – Rev. Dr. Damaris Whittaker, Elder Beverley Sheares
- Investment and Endowment Committee – Deacon Wendy Sealey
- Financial Planning Committee – Elder Beverley Sheares
- Operations Committee – Rev. Dr. Damaris Whittaker (ministerial liaison), Deacon Lorenzo Alsberry
- Outreach Committee – Deacon Johanna Garcia, Deacon Abbi Ruane (Intersections)

This past May, FWCC deacons hosted “We the Deacons,” a retreat for the deacons of all 5 ministries of the Collegiate Church. It was the first time that our church was chosen to host this Collegiate-wide event.

The Consistory participated in New Members Dinners, welcoming new members and sharing our spiritual journeys. We actively participated in extending hospitality to Sunday worshipers serving as greeters for our Sunday morning worship services. Additionally, we assisted the ministers with serving communion. We regularly identified members who were in need of pastoral care, phone calls, visits, and communion.

Over the year, we sought to improve our communication with the congregation by becoming more visible to those in need of our services. Through the Deacon’s Fund, our benevolence offering (2nd offering taken on the 1st Sunday of the month), we were able to assist congregants and some in our community with small financial grants. We launched a Stewardship Campaign last fall that resulted in increased giving by our congregation. Your generosity helped FWCC to end the fiscal year in the black for the first time in many years.

As we look forward to our new church year, we anticipate continued growth in our church family. We invite those of you who are already involved in ministries in our church to stay connected and ask that you invite our new members to join you in your ministry activities. For those who have not yet found your niche, stay tuned. Under the dynamic leadership of our Senior Pastor, Rev. Whittaker, we will outline a bold agenda that provides numerous opportunities for you to connect with others in our faith community as well as to advocate for, and to serve those outside our gates to improve the lives of all God’s children.

We are thankful for the unwavering support of our FWCC family. We ask for your prayers as we continue to discern God’s will for our leadership team and our congregation. We are grateful for the work that has been undertaken by our Senior Minister, staff, and all of you. Without God’s grace and Rev. Whittaker’s vision, leadership, abundant pastoral gifts, and love for all of us, these successes would not have been possible.
Yoga For A Cause
Salon Hang
Decolonizing Puerto Rico
Island Dance Party

Children’s Book Club
Theology on Tap
Keeping Families Together
Rezoning
The financial support of the Collegiate Church Corporation represent approximately 75% of our operating income in appropriations, expanded appropriations and grants.

**The congregation’s offerings and pledges represent 9% of our annual income.**

Other income includes rentals and special fundraisers such as Salon Hang. Our space rental income was $19,781 over budget for FY 2017-2018.
EXPENSES

2017-2018 Budget

$913,967

- Adult Education: 0%
- Children's Ministry: 1%
- Educational opportunities during fellowship hour continue to create faith formation opportunities.
- Children's Ministry: <1%
- We are committed to our vibrant children's ministry. The "Deep Blue" curriculum provides an enriching opportunity for our children to learn and deepen their faith. The children's choir, "Youthful Voices," has blessed the congregation with their gifts.
- Youth Ministry: 1%
- A mission trip to Puerto Rico was a part of our Youth Ministry this year. The "Mission 5" helped in the repair of roofs that were damaged as a result of Hurricane Maria, and planted seeds to assist a community in Orocovis, Puerto Rico in working towards sustainability.
- Church Life: 3%
- Here and in the community, Fort Washington Collegiate Church continues to serve as a beacon of hope for all!

ADULT EDUCATION - $2,103
CHILDREN'S MINISTRY - $2,778
YOUTH MINISTRY - $8,680
CHURCH LIFE - $27,577
SOCIAL JUSTICE - $2,351
SMALL GROUPS - $5,751
MUSIC & WORSHIP - $59,489
OTHER OPERATING EXPENSES - $210,867
PAYROLL - $464,773
BENEFITS - $129,599
EXPENSES

2017-2018

Music and Worship 7%
The church music program is growing deeper connections to our community. We are including a diverse and expanding range of repertoire that represents various styles of music from different cultures.

Small Groups 1%
God Talk is an excellent example of a small group that provides an opportunity for fellowship and faith formation.

Staff Salary and Benefits 65%
Staff salary and benefits are covered by appropriations and extended appropriations.

Summary

Income: $917,708
Expenses: $913,967

Note: FY2018 was the first time since 2011 that FWCC did not draw funds from its endowment, overspend its appropriation, or require debt forgiveness from the Corporation.
VISION FOR 2019

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

Our vision for the next year incorporates feedback from the congregation and seeks to address the needs of our greater community and our nation. Our congregational survey and many one-on-one conversations yielded findings that the Fort Washington Collegiate Church is yearning for opportunities to fellowship, gather and take action.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fellowship</th>
<th>We will begin a process of incorporating small groups into the life of the church. Further, we will evaluate the structure of the current ministries.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Membership</td>
<td>We accepted 29 members in 2017-2018. We will continue to work to become a church of radical welcome, centered in love and justice.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financials</td>
<td>It is our goal for 2019 and beyond to work towards a sustainable model. Our giving during 2017-2018, represented 9% of our sources of income. We will continue to work to increase our giving, as well as implement a fundraising plan that includes diverse sources of income.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Gospel In The World</td>
<td>The world is in need of the Church. Our message is one of inclusion, love, compassion and justice that will not be compromised. We will continue to be a bold witness, committed to standing in the gap, knowing that the cost of discipleship may be high.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>