

Human Resources Committee Report

Allentown Presbyterian Church (2023-2024)

The Human Resources Committee of the Allentown Presbyterian Church is a committee that addresses the HR needs of church employees and provides guidance to Session on HR related items including hiring, policy, budget and benefits. The committee meets monthly and includes members **Rev. Stephen Heinzel-Nelson, Elder Robert Rhoad, Elder Brian Ricci, Elder Mark Setaro, Elder Nancy Tindall and Elder Karen Collins.**

Hiring: We are blessed to have the following talented individuals joining the staff / taking on new responsibilities here at APC!

- **Christine Guttridge** - Assistant Teacher, Little Tree Preschool
- **Susan Bernieri** – Assistant Teacher, Little Tree Preschool
- **Kristy Haemmerle** – Promotion to Teacher, Little Tree Preschool
- **Rachel Frascella** – Promotion to Head Teacher, Little Tree Preschool
- **Gary Stanley** – Crossing Guard
- **Stacy Dillon** – Lead Caregiver, APC Nursery Caregiver
- **JC Fowler** – Promotion to Director of Outreach
- **Luke Ellis** – Youth Music Leader

APC also recognized Little Tree's **Kim Siebert** and **Lisa Hendrickson** for their 20 years of dedicated service as they have moved on to their next chapters.

A big thank you to the **entire APC staff** for your dedication all year. We can't thank you enough for your service, leadership and love to make the Lord's house the best it can be.

Respectfully Submitted,

Brian Ricci
HR Committee Chair

Administration and Financial Committee Report

The A&F committee (Peter Barlis, Jane Crain, Lauren Davis, Vera Sharoff, Patti Stanley, Nancy Tindall, & Ann Marie Wiedemann) meets monthly and deals primarily with church issues related to budget, policy, contracts, and insurance.

Some key highlights of the past year include:

- The committee regularly reviews the giving and monthly financial results.
- 2025 Budget: Compiled and recommended the 2025 budget; total expenses are \$1,242,717 and anticipated income is \$1,179,375, potentially leaving a deficit of \$69,342.
- The committee created an inventory of all church contracts in order to monitor terms and renewals, and of major church policies.
- To date, the committee is working with the Technology Team and Office Manager for the conversion of the giving component of the church's database and communication platform from Breeze to Subsplash. Due to some functionality challenges, fully migrating to Subsplash has been delayed; the committee continues to be involved with the Tech Team, Office Manager and Financial Secretary to address the remaining issues so that the conversion is fully implemented by the end of 2025.
- Insurance coverage: APC's insurance coverage over this past year was with Guide One. The policy runs from June 1, 2024 – May 31, 2025, and is administered through insurance broker Brown & Brown. Brown & Brown negotiates and administers a group master insurance policy program for Presbyterian churches in New Jersey. The GuideOne policy had a major change from our previous coverage that generally increased the policy's deductibles and significantly increased APC's deductible for wind/hail/storm damage from a set amount to a percentage based on the valuation of the church's properties. Working with Brown & Brown, we were able to get the deductible reduced to a fixed deductible for wind/hail/storm damage coverage. Throughout this year, the committee has been working with a local insurance broker to obtain pricing from Philadelphia Insurance, our previous insurer, to see if we could reduce costs by obtaining an individual policy. Unfortunately, the cost was significantly higher for an individual policy vs the group policy. Therefore, the committee recommended renewing the GuideOne policy for 2025-2026.

Respectfully submitted,

Ann Marie Wiedemann
Elder & Chair of the Finance & Adm. Committee

Mission Committee Report

Members:

Cara Barlis, Chair	Rev. Dr. Stephen Heinzel-Nelson
Lisa Boss	Jeff McLaughlin
Mike De Ieso	Krystal Odell
Mary Beth Drew	Beth Rigby
Liz Heinzel-Nelson	Peggy Sue Wright

The mission committee continues to support and oversee local, national and international missions of our church. Working with the leaders of each individual mission, the committee is tasked with managing APC's mission budget, exploring and evaluating new mission ideas, and working to support and drive the vision for the future of mission work at APC.

Local missions support:

- Crossroads Youth Ministry – Encouraging youth and young adults to grow and serve as active members of God's family
- APC Food Security Programs – Supporting APC Food Pantry, North Clinton Avenue Church of Christ, Homefront Motel Meals, Trenton Rescue Mission Pantry, Hightstown Presbyterian Church, St. Bart's Lutheran Church, and Westminster Presbyterian Church
- Homefront – Providing support to displaced families in Mercer County
- The Good Neighbor Fund – Providing short term emergency assistance to Allentown area families and individuals
- Intergenerational mission – Main St. Mission and Maine Mission trip
- Donations to Hope Fire Company, Allentown first Aid Squad, Boy Scout Troop 180
- Presbytery Mission Pledge – Supporting our local Presbytery of the Coastlands
- Working Group on Restorative Justice – Promoting and supporting racial justice
- Urban Promise Trenton – Supporting urban youth through academic and Christian leadership programs
- Refugee Assistance – Supporting One World One Love, a local organization that assists refugees with housing, language and social needs and legal services
- Mental Health Matters – Working to raise awareness, address stigma and develop an understanding of mental health concerns

National missions support:

- Beth El Farmworker Ministry – Supporting migrant farmworkers in Florida
- MATE (Mission at the Eastward) – Supporting our Maine mission partners in home repairs and transitional housing

International missions support:

- Promised Land Ministries – Providing education, meals, housing and medical care to families in Guatemala
- MCU Guatemala – Providing food, children's programs and a women's ministry to needy families in Guatemala
- Villages in Partnership Inc. – Promoting sustainable development to those living in extreme poverty in remote villages of Malawi
- Sakata Church Central Africa Presbyterian – Supporting church repairs to our mission partner in Malawi
- Seeds of Peace – Supporting dialogue and leadership development programs for youth and educators in communities in conflict
- Mission Co-workers – Support for the work of Presbytery Field Workers Rev. Cheryl Barnes in Malawi, and Leslie Vogel, regional liaison for Mexico and Guatemala

Mission Updates!

Food Pantry Update *Submitted by Lisa Boss*

After over 10 years of selflessly volunteering her time; Sandy Carduner stepped down from the Food Pantry and moved to Florida. Lisa Boss ensured all the administrative tasks and government reporting was completed. Art Rosengarten and Jackie Valesi rotated our inventory weekly and assisted in placing the order with Fulfill every month. Deena and Bill along with Sue Colt shopped for food to ensure our shelves were full every week. We have approximately 20 amazing regular serving volunteers that serve our clients with love and respect. The last few months we have seen a record number of clients coming to our pantry, serving over 500 individuals a month.

This mission has been blessed to be able to serve our friends in the Allentown Community, as well as fight hunger throughout New Jersey. We just want to thank all the people who have supported this mission. Thank you!!



HomeFront Committee Report Submitted by Mary Beth Drew

Together with other churches, companies, and organizations, we are supporting HomeFront, to break the cycle of poverty in the area. Without basic living needs of food, clothing, and shelter being met, other programs that teach and support these families would be challenging. HomeFront families and staff are tremendously grateful for APC and its loving members and friends who help support this vision and ministry. Tutoring and other unique opportunities are available throughout the year to assist clients in getting back on their feet. Hosting birthday parties, BBQs, and fun activities for the kids during the year and summer camp are some ways our APC community can help in building deeper friendships in serving. The beautiful Family Center, situated by the Trenton-Mercer Airport in Ewing, is always a great way to start or learn more – contact Mary Beth to have a tour!

2024-2025 activities:

Throughout the year, APC continues to support specific needs, financially, as well as in-kind. As Homefront's clients' needs grow, the adaptability and creativity of the staff and leadership meet the challenge of food, clothing, shelter, and social services. One example is during the season of Mother's Day, APC and Little Tree helped collect diapers/wipes for their diaper resource center. This service is critical to parents, as food assistance programs do not cover. Other APC groups and numerous volunteers from our faith family have continued in their support of Homefront in their ongoing backpack drive in the summer (approx. 25 bags), as well as Christmas wishes (approx. 25 kids), and other requested seasonal needs and opportunities. ROCK, Stepping Stones, and FFG continue in creative and generous support of the Homefront kids with service projects throughout the year, as homemade blankets, snack bags for their summer campers. And as a wonderful highlight, our ROCK kids host Homefront kids every May in their Friday community performance. This time offers a relational opportunity to connect as kids following the performance with games, food, and fellowship! We are grateful to God for the grace and desire to partner with this organization.

For more information about HomeFront, check out www.homefrontnj.org



Homefront Motel Meals

Through our ongoing relationship with Homefront, a team initiated support of their Motel Meal program. Started in August 2022, this monthly ministry continues to feed singles, families, and elders who are forced to live in motels with little or no transportation to Homefront's food pantry. We pack approximately 35 bags and deliver them monthly, led by JC Fowler. These bags accompany Trenton Area Soup Kitchen's hot meals. It is a beautiful way to connect and serve! Our hope and prayers are that this ministry will only be needed for a temporary time; until HomeFront can find spaces and move these friends to homes or apartments.



Trenton Rescue Mission

On Mondays, Wednesday and Fridays from 10:00 to 2:00 volunteers warmly greet clients, sometimes in Spanish, other times in English. Since opening three years ago, nearly 6,000 individual family members have received nutritious food. And that number continues to grow. Arly Uz-Barragan said "We don't know if the growing number of patrons means we will need to extend our hours or expand our space. All we know is, with your help, we will be here!" With the funds received from the Allentown Food Pantry they have been able to purchase food to keep their shelves stocked! One client said "This means so much for our family. We are very grateful to be able to come here and choose from such nutritious foods."

North Clinton Church of Christ Meals & Personal Care Pantry

Submitted by Mike De Ieso

The APC congregation has expressed a desire to help those living in the margins of our community, and this mission has responded. Mike De Ieso, Beth Rigby, Colleen Crawford, Anne Haines, Mary Kokesh, Mitch and Vera Sharoff, Nicola Abrams, Ed Velez, and others have continued the important work at the North Clinton Ave meal mission, which provides meals every second Saturday of the month to needy families and individuals in the Trenton area. After the North Clinton Ave Church of Christ lost other sponsors during the COVID-19 pandemic, APC doubled the number of meals it supports from 4 to 8 so that those meals could continue. In 2020 a food "Blessing" box distribution program was started to supplement basic food needs. In 2024 a Children's Summer Lunch Program was launched to feed 50 needy children a week for 4 weeks in the Trenton area.



In 2025, Pastor Stephen and Mike De Ieso spoke at the ribbon-cutting ceremony to celebrate the launch of a personal care pantry on-site at Church Of Christ. The church will be asked to donate hygiene items throughout the year to distribute on meal days.

Anne Haines has been collecting clothing for the distribution program across the street, and a new free Laundry will be launched in May, 2025, which will provide free use of washers and dryers for the poor in the Trenton area. Thank you for your generous support of our needy brothers and sisters in our community!



Other Food Programs Supported by APC Food Pantry Funds

Through the leadership of Beth Rigby and Lisa Boss, APC has been able to continue our support of other local food ministries through 2024:

- Trenton Rescue Mission Pantry – serving approximately 250 families / individuals each month, providing produce and personal needs grocery items
- Hightstown Presbyterian Church – serving approximately 250 families / individuals each month, providing personal needs grocery items
- St. Bart's Lutheran Church – serving approximately 300 families / individuals per month, providing milk, eggs, and produce
- Westminster Presbyterian Church – serving approximately 450 families / individuals per month, providing personal needs grocery items

As of 2025, APC will no longer be allocating funds to Hightstown Presbyterian Church, St. Bart's Lutheran Church, and Westminster Presbyterian Church. Our priority will be to continue to support our APC pantry, as well as North Clinton Church of Christ, Homefront meal programs, and the Trenton Rescue Mission pantry.

Many thanks to all who have donated and volunteered in support of APC food missions!

Seeds of Faith Garden Submitted by Robin Bruins

The third warmest summer on record since 1895, 2024 was a challenge at the garden. Periods of dry weather and humidity encouraged some disease but the blessings of irrigation brought relief and a bountiful harvest. 1270.25 pounds of vegetables were grown at the garden and delivered to the Allentown Food Pantry. The greatest problem encountered was a limited labor supply. Four souls planned, planted and harvested. Fervent prayer has yielded fruit and some new volunteers have arrived to add their enthusiasm and skill. We hope to increase our efforts to feed those in need.



Urban Promise Submitted by Mike De Ieso

Urban Promise Trenton provides urban youth and teens a chance to believe in and build a positive future by providing the skills necessary for academic achievement, life management, spiritual growth, and Christian leadership. This is achieved through after-school and summer academic programs, tutoring, leadership training, college and secondary education tuition support, and community partnerships. In 2025, APC will again be sponsoring a deserving student, Anfry Mejilla, with a modest tuition grant towards their education at Rowan University. Anfry has been an exemplary participant in Urban Promise youth and tutoring programs, has given back to the organization as a Street Leader, and has joined us for worship at APC. In addition, UPT Director, Sean McFadden, and some UPT leaders and members joined Crossroads for several sessions, and are exploring ways to partner with our youth ministry to identify potential community service and leadership opportunities.

Maine Mission Trip

Every other year APC plans an intergenerational Maine Mission trip, partnering with Mission At The Eastward (MATE). This mission focuses on home improvement and repairs for local homeowners in need, but includes nightly devotions and music, as well as a service oriented vacation bible school. There are over 100 APC missionaries who are signed up for the July 2025 trip!

Good Neighbor Fund

Through the generosity of donations from our APC family and the surrounding community, this fund continues to provide assistance to local families with utilities, rent, medical bills, or other urgent needs.

Working Group on Restorative Justice Submitted by Marla Golden

(formerly the Working Group on Racial Justice)

The executive board, which includes co-chairs Manda Bliss and Marla Golden, along with Will Anderson-Beck and Anna Fe Rebada, is pleased to report that the newly renamed Working Group on Restorative Justice has been active this year, focusing efforts on continuing education and discussion on a broad array of topics that include justice and equity beyond our original focus of racial justice. APC is a Matthew 25 church, and works to follow and model Jesus' direction in Matthew 25:40, "The King will reply, 'Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.'"

- It should be noted that the name change is not meant to shift or shadow focus away from the important and complex issue of racial justice, but instead to add to our ability to learn from, strive for, and serve those who are seeking justice of all kinds. Restorative justice, in particular, is a way of addressing harm, conflict, or injustice that focuses on acknowledgement, healing, and repair.
- WGRJ presented three adult education classes in April/May based on the PCUSA's The Things that Make for Peace Bible Study, covering: Practicing Peace, Extending Peace, and Living Peace. This was an interactive program aimed to integrate peacemaking into our daily lives, difficult conversations, and challenging situations, with Biblical principles at its center.
- The WGRJ developed and incorporated a Group Covenant Prayer intended for use at all meetings and gatherings hosted by the working group.

- The WGRJ hosted 6 informal gatherings to continue viewing the Netflix docu-series High on the Hog, which explores how African American Cuisine transformed America. These Friday night gatherings were attended by between 8-16 members and friends of the working group, and cuisine from various minority owned local businesses was provided and enjoyed!
- The WGRJ continues to actively participate in the Bending the Moral Arc's Courageous Conversation alongside the Witherspoon Church and Nassau Presbyterian Church, both of Princeton, NJ. This continues to provide excellent and challenging discussions about a range of justice related issues.
- Co-chairs and Pastor Stephen met with Hannah Lovaglio, Senior Pastor of the First Presbyterian Church of Cranbury to discuss Cranbury's experience as a sanctuary church.
- The WGRJ continues work on the development of an Anti-Racism Policy with plans to present to Session in June 2025.

Participants and members of the Working Group include the executive board along with Mary Kokesh, Rachel Rondinelli, Julie Yi, Ralph Crome, Gary Bliss, Beth Rigby, Anne Haines, Richard Young, and Alison Young.

Mental Health Matters

Galatians 6:9 - "And let us not grow weary of doing good, for in due season we will reap, if we do not give up"

The Mental Health Matters Ministry continues to build this important aspect of our church. Over the last year, we have met regularly and implemented several of our initiatives. We have also continued to educate ourselves and others in the complexity of mental health and wellness.

Foundational Work

- Created a tab on the APC website for Mental Health Matters
- Created a comprehensive resource list and description of the mental health services available in our area, including emergency mental health services, inpatient and outpatient treatment centers, behavioral health centers and crisis numbers. Other information provided includes how to find a therapist, the different types of therapists and counseling available, how to make contact, what information to provide and what questions to ask when looking for the right type of help. This will be posted on the website tab.

Educational Opportunities

- Hosted a two week Adult Ed class in the fall on the importance of family and community support, its role in mental health and wellness, and the Biblical basis for addressing Mental Health, with Janet Haag, the Executive Director of NAMI (National Alliance on Mental Illness) Mercer and Rev. Miriam Diephouse-McMilan, chaplain at Trenton Psychiatric Hospital.
- Facilitated a "Mental Health First Aid Training" for 17 participants at Crossroads in July. This was valuable training for anyone who may need to deal with a mental health situation. We hope to offer this training again in the fall. It was provided by the College of New Jersey Counseling Office free of charge.

- In October, 3 team members attended NAMI's "Harvest of Hope" Conference, a day-long opportunity to learn from mental health professionals and those who have experienced mental health issues. The inspirational keynote speaker for the conference was Elizabeth Vargas, who shared her struggles with mental health and addiction and her road to recovery.
- Participated in Advent Village, to provide information about our ministry. We received \$1,200.00 in donations and are thankful to our church family and community for the support.
- Facilitated a book study of the widely acclaimed "The Anxious Generation." It was offered as a spring small group. We may be offering this book study again in the future as there are many opportunities to help parents address the concerns in this book.

Other Initiatives

- Rev. Lindsay Anderson-Beck wrote a grant for our ministry and we were awarded \$9,300.00 from the Presbytery of the Coastlands. This money will be used for education and training, to create a fund to offset the cost of counseling for those who are in need, and to use as other mental health ministry opportunities emerge.
 - Therapy is crucial to individuals and families who are dealing with mental health issues, but insurance coverage and cost may prevent some from seeking that help. Our team will be creating a protocol for administering the Presbytery of the Coastlands grant money for a counseling fund for those who need financial help for therapy.
 - Lindsay asked that some of the grant money be used for two opportunities to address issues that have been in discussion for some time. Our team has no objection to this, as while not directly under a mental health umbrella, it addresses specific challenges that many people are experiencing today. The grant money will be used: 1) to provide a therapist-facilitated support group for people experiencing separation and divorce, and: 2) to host a marriage enrichment weekend in the fall.
- Our team will organize our first support group for parents whose adult children struggle with mental illness/addiction. The goals of this group are to provide information and guidance from a therapist or other professional on agreed upon topics; emotional support from peers through shared experiences; resources for managing mental health issues; opportunities for mutual encouragement; and spiritual support for hope and healing. We are gathering those interested in this group to help find a clear focus to address the needs of those who will attend.
- MHM hosted several game nights since the first of the year, on the third Fridays of the month. These gatherings promote fun and fellowship among church and community members. We meet from 7-9pm and enjoy playing games and learning each other's life stories. We plan to continue these game nights throughout the year.

Ongoing Work

At the present time, the Mental Health Matters Ministry is refocusing our work to align more closely with the Strategic Planning Committee's vision of meeting the needs under their categories of "Life Circumstances" and "People on the Margins". We hope to be a

part of future conversations and a vital part of the implementation of this visionary work at APC.

- We have started collecting a resource library (digital and physical) and will continue that work in conjunction with the SPC.
- We look forward to being on the rotational schedule for Adult education classes and small groups. Specifically, we have secured Miriam Diephouse-McMillan to lead 3 Adult Ed classes in October based on her book, "Sacred Balance." Beginning in the fall after Miriam's classes, we hope to incorporate this book and its spiritual practices as a spiritual wellness guide in both our ministry and church-wide, through small groups and book study. The book includes ideas for simple and practical ways it can be used with all ages and spiritual maturity. We will be introducing the book in our support group for parents of young adults who struggle with mental health/addiction.
- We are looking for resources to train volunteers to help with more practical matters that affect families dealing with mental health issues, such as navigating insurance and other paperwork that can be overwhelming, and finding programs and services best suited for an individual who is struggling. We also hope to provide comfort support including meals, visits, or lending a hand where needed, seeking to partner with the Deacons and others when possible.

We will continue to work on the formation of this ministry, serving those who need the healing arms of the church.

In His Name,

The MHM Team: *Mary Beth Drew, Marla Golden, Deb O'Hare, Alison Young*

Workwell – New Mission Partner

Pastor Stephen has been in communication with Workwell, a local organization that assists people transitioning from incarceration. On April 13, 2025 a Workwell staff member, volunteer and program graduate presented information about their organization to APC congregants during the adult education hour. Our committee will be discussing ways to form a meaningful partnership with Workwell going forward, as our members may feel called to volunteer and connect with clients.

Beth El Farmworker Ministry *Submitted by Beth Rigby*

Beth El ministry remains rooted in spiritual care of Florida farmworkers and their families from prayer, worship and Bible Studies, to simply being present in times of crisis. In 2024, Beth-El Farmworker Ministry expanded the breadth and depth of their ministries while remaining responsive and flexible in the face of increasing need and weather crisis. The Client Choice Food Pantry and Market Programs expanded with additional storage capacity and refrigeration equipment, making it possible to serve 7,831 farmworkers in 2024 and distribute 25,651 food bags to help fight hunger and food insecurity for the hundreds of seasonal workers in central Florida. Supplementing the Beth El campus pantry, 2600 farmworkers across 16 area farms were served in 2024 by periodic farm visits from Beth El staff bringing resources directly to farmworkers who can't afford to miss work or are unable to travel to the pantry. Delivery of critical items like paper goods, detergent, and non-perishable foods ensure families stay healthy and

safe. In August through October, Beth El teams quickly mobilized to respond to the impact of 3 devastating hurricanes, coordinating with multiple groups to distribute supplies, food, hygiene kits, flood buckets, and warm meals for 269 families needing help after Hurricane Debby and 318 families after Hurricane Helene. In addition to supplies, they provided shelter for 20 individuals and delivered food to 50 isolated farmworkers after Hurricane Milton. Throughout the year, Beth El continued to engage in and promote the success of farmworker children, high school and college students with educational programs, backpack distribution, scholarships, and skill training. Learn more about this vital organization at www.beth-el.org.



Our vision is a thriving and equitable community for farmworkers and their neighbors.

MCU Guatemala *Submitted by Pat Opperman*

MCU- Guatemala (United Christian Missionaries in English) continues to use meals and groceries as an evangelical tool in and around Guatemala City. They serve over 600 meals to needy children each week across 4 program sites and distribute groceries to dozens of struggling families. MCU also boasts a vibrant women's ministry and a street corner ministry focused on performers and vendors. The mission calendar is peppered with special events and activities ranging from visiting speakers to a huge year-end Christmas Project. Besides the mission, MCU hosts a church service and Sunday school classes each week. APC's support of the mission family allows Pat and Yesenia to spend more time catering to children and families through MCU Guatemala.

Promised Land Ministries *Submitted by Brad Drew*

One of our most significant international partnership is with Promised Land Ministries (PLM) in San Lucas Tolimán, Guatemala. For more than 30 years, APC has collaborated with PLM to support various initiatives aimed at improving the lives of the local community.

Promised Land Ministries is a Christian nonprofit organization based in San Lucas Tolimán, Guatemala, dedicated to serving local communities through education, health, nutrition, and economic empowerment programs. Since its founding in 1995, PLM has partnered with local churches and international mission teams to address the needs of families in the Lake Atitlán region. Their initiatives include school sponsorships, women's vocational training, healthcare access, and sustainable development projects aimed at breaking cycles of poverty.

Last summer, a team of 26 members from APC traveled to San Lucas Tolimán to assist PLM in their mission. During this trip, the team collaborated with local workers to build nine modest homes for families in need, providing them with safe and secure shelter. In addition to construction, the team engaged with the community through children's ministry activities, offering educational support and spiritual enrichment to the local youth. These efforts were part of APC's ongoing commitment which encompasses feeding programs, education, and medical clinics.

The mission trip was a transformative experience for the APC members, deepening their faith and understanding of global service. By working alongside PLM and the residents of San Lucas Tolimán, they not only contributed to tangible improvements in living conditions but also built lasting relationships rooted in mutual respect and shared purpose. This journey continues to inspire us to continue supporting initiatives that promote holistic development and spiritual growth within underserved communities.

Villages in Partnership Submitted by Liz Heinzel Nelson

VIP – Villages in Partnership is a registered 501(c)3 organization working in the remote villages of Malawi, Africa to offer tools that enable people to lift themselves out of extreme poverty. Our impact area continues to grow and now includes 29 different villages with the potential to impact the lives of over 29,000 people. We continue to respond to the priorities set by the communities. Your longstanding commitment to this organization ensures we can continue to do that. Here are a few of the things you have made possible in 2024:

- Further developed VIP's Demonstration Farm with the completion of a warehouse and farm manager offices, expanding the large scale irrigation by laying drip irrigation lines, and brought much needed electricity to the farm and farm buildings.
- Drilled 7 new wells and rehabilitated 5 wells
- Grew the livestock program with distribution of animals to include:
 - 689 goats
 - 83 goats passed on from one household to another more vulnerable household
 - 3 dairy cows
 - 55 pigs
- Supported seed multiplication initiatives, producing of 8580 groundnut seeds for redistribution
- Expanded banana production to include 180 farmers in 10 villages
- Enrolled 616 children in 14 VIP sponsored Early Childhood Education Centers
- Celebrated the first students graduating from One Heart Secondary School. The school was recognized as the top school out of 149 secondary schools in the area.

- Continued to host medical and dental outreach clinics, treating over 2200 patients in addition to providing physical therapy clinics for 22 children with cerebral palsy, and caring for 55 chronically-ill, homebound patients.

We host Friendship, Medical and Beekeeping trips to Malawi where you can witness first-hand our similar humanities as well as the unique struggles of the villagers. Every year we welcome APC members to join us on these trips. In 2024 we hosted, along with Liz Heinzel-Nelson, Jean Buscaglia-Yurkiewicz, Bob Rhoad, and Denise Shaefer.

We hosted our 15 Year Anniversary Gala in October, 2024 where many APC members and supporters attended to share in the celebration and to hear the impact VIP has made over the past 15 years and to hear out hopes and dreams for the future. We were also one of 5 finalists in the 2024 .ORG Impact Awards in the Hunger and Poverty category, beating out thousands of other entries. .

To learn more about VIP please visit Villages In Partnership or access our latest Annual Report on the website.

Seeds of Peace Submitted by Beth Rigby

2024 was a year of challenge as events in Israel and Palestine continued to escalate. Seeds alumni and staff reported leaning heavily on the relationships and trust previously established at the Seeds of Peace Camp in Maine, finding strength and support from each other across religious, political and geographic barriers, allowing them to pursue their leadership peace efforts in the midst of their personal strife and grief as from bombings and loss. Over 8000 peace-building alumni lead change, promote empathy and work to create just and inclusive societies around the world in 27 countries. Programs include year-round critical thinking dialogue and leadership gatherings for adults in the Middle East and Asia. Out of the excellence of Seeds training and connections, participants find their own voices, form relationships and gain insights into the root issues that divide them, freeing up paths to greater levels of confidence, trust, and respect, and opening the channels to find solutions together. Learn more about this inspiring organization at seedsofpeace.org.

SEEDS OF PEACE

About Get Involved **Programs** Our Changemakers News Contact  

OUR PROGRAMS

We transform conflict by developing leaders and accelerating their impact in their communities.



CREATING UNDERSTANDING

An interfaith program for young people.

[See Programs](#)

BRIDGING DIVIDES

A transformational summer at our flagship Camp is followed by year-round local leadership programs.

ACCELERATING LEADERS

Fellowships and convenings invest in alumni and others with the greatest potential to lead change.

Emerging Needs

Through your generosity, APC has been able to respond to urgent needs that arise both nationally and internationally. The committee approved donations to Black Mountain Presbyterian Church in October 2024 for hurricane relief. In January 2025 additional funds were sent through PC-USA Presbyterian Disaster Assistance for assistance to those affected by the California wildfires.

Presbytery and Mission Co-workers

We continued to support our local Presbytery of the Coastlands through 2024. Of note, during the February 2025 meeting of the Presbytery, funds were donated by Presbytery to support MCU Guatemala mission.

APC also has continued to allocate funds for PC-USA mission co-workers, Rev. Cheryl Barnes in Africa and Leslie Vogel in Central America. However, PC-USA is changing its model of global engagement and ending all mission co-worker positions in Spring 2025. Our prayers are with the leadership of PC-USA and the former mission co-workers as they discern the path forward.

Committee Updates

Cara Barlis will be stepping down as chair of the Mission Committee as of June 2025. Leadership will be transitioned to Mary Beth Drew.

Our committee works to support each of our church missions and to encourage both participation and leadership in our congregation. Our ministries and partnerships continue to evolve and expand to meet changing needs of those in our local community and in the world at large. Over this past year we continue to be blessed by the generosity of our members who give not only financial support but also their time and talents.

We look forward to another year of discipleship through mission!

Respectfully Submitted,
Cara Barlis