

2022-23: A Church Year in Retrospect

After the church service on June 11, Session members Susan Vice and Connie Fayen presented the following report to the congregation of what has happened in our church life over the past year, both at the governance level and as a congregation. Included in this report are the following: explanation of the Designated Pastor process; positive signs in CPC church life during the past year, with a list of specific events and activities; and acknowledgement of Rev. Lambright's successful completion of his first year as Designated Pastor.

September 2021: As a congregation, we voted to allow the Presbytery of Northeast New Jersey to take over jurisdiction of our church, in the form of a four-member Administrative Commission, to run Session meetings, and to make decisions as needed.

December 2021: The Administrative Commission approved formation of a six-member committee to search for a Designated Pastor. Two committee members were CPC members, elected by the congregation; two were members of the Administrative Commission; and two were members of the Presbytery.

July 2022: After a methodical search by the Designated Pastor Search Committee, Rev. Lambright accepted a three-year agreement with the Presbytery of Northeast New Jersey to become the Designated Pastor for CPC.

September 2022: Rev. Lambright began his three-year term at CPC.

With a Designated Pastor, at the end of the three-year term, three options are available:

- The Designated Pastor believes his work is complete in bringing a church and its congregation to a healthier spiritual place, but feels called to a new mission.
- The Congregation feels the Designated Pastor has guided them and helped them set a new direction, but feels a new pastor would be more suited to lead them into that future.
- Both the Congregation and Designated Pastor feel they have grown together, have set a new direction together, and wish to continue to embrace the challenges of the future together. At this juncture, the Designated Pastor would become a Called Pastor and would be installed in this new role.

January 2023: A list of nominees to serve on Session was presented to the congregation and approved.

March 2023: The Administrative Commission completed their duties with CPC.

April 2023: The Session resumed, after many months, their full leadership role within our church, defined as making decisions in the running and management of our church and serving as spiritual leaders. Pastor Marcus—who had moderated the monthly Administrative Commission/CPC committee meetings since October 2022—assumed his role as moderator of monthly Session meetings.

May 2023: The Administrative Commission was formally dismissed by Presbytery.

Since last September when Rev. Lambright joined us as our spiritual leader, we, as a congregation, have accomplished much because we have continued to participate in church life at many levels:

- Attendance at worship each Sunday has increased
- New faces of all ages dot the pews each Sunday
- In-person Sunday School participation has increased
- New and increased financial giving is apparent
- Frequency of and attendance at Coffee Hour have increased

Our boards, committees, and other groups within our church have continued or expanded their mission and outreach, both within our church and in the wider community. The list below highlights our activities over the past church year. Embedded in this list are the ideas, planning, implementation, and efforts of our congregation, now with Pastor Marcus as our spiritual guide. Pause, reflect, and celebrate on the following activities:

- Trustees installed a streaming service to provide an online presence for Sunday worship
- Children's choir began rehearsals and now participates periodically in worship services
- Choir and bell choir have continued to provide music almost weekly, in the absence of a full-time Organist/Choir Director
- Participation in the Mountainside-wide Garage Sale, a joint effort with the Nursery School, resulted in a considerable donation to Family Promise
- September and June food collection for Family Promise
- Trustees Work Days were held in October and May
- Fall Fellowship Dinner in October
- Deacons Community Trick-or-Treating on Old Tote Road
- Thanksgiving Food Drive, a joint effort with Boy Scouts
- Deacons Annual Turkey Drive for St. Elizabeth's Church
- Christmas Pageant

- Deacons Giving Tree, partnering with Family Promise of Union County and Institute of Music for Children; and Mitten Drive, supporting families of St. Elizabeth's Church
- Deacons Christmas Project: Gifts for Those at Home
- Valentine's Day "Fill a Bucket" Mission Project, with participation from the Nursery School and Mountainside Newcomers Club
- Souper-bowl Sunday
- Palm Sunday Pancake Breakfast and Fellowship
- Deacons Easter Projects
- Children's Day and Picnic

As we conclude the 2022-23 church year, we would also like to take some time to acknowledge the successful completion of Rev. Lambright's first year with Community Presbyterian Church and thank him for everything he has done to become part of the CPC community and to guide us along our spiritual paths.

Pastor Marcus began his commitment with CPC last September, with his first Sunday service being on Rally Day. In an effort to get to know his new congregation, he invited everyone to make an appointment to meet with him for one-on-one meetings called "Ten Minutes With Marcus."

He also participated in lunches held by the Women's Association and the Men's Group. As the year progressed, Pastor Marcus learned about CPC's annual Thanksgiving and Christmas traditions, about February's "Souper Bowl Sunday" and Valentine's Day service projects, and about the traditional Palm Sunday pancake breakfast. He participated in coffee hours, where we have also enjoyed getting to know his wife Kelsey and daughter Celeste.

From the beginning, Pastor Marcus jumped right into his pastoral duties, attending monthly meetings of the Deacons and the Board of Trustees, and moderating the Administrative Commission meetings. When we elected a new Board of Session earlier this year, he became the moderator of our Session meetings, as original jurisdiction was returned by the Presbytery to our church.

Pastor Marcus enriched the liturgical seasons of Advent and Lent with bible studies, as well as by creating special services for Christmas Eve, Ash Wednesday, Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, and an early-morning Easter sunrise service. In the past year, he has shared our joy with a baptismal service and our sorrows with memorial

services, and he has reached out to members of the congregation with visits and phone calls when they were ill.

He concluded his obligations with the Presbytery of the Coastlands, where he previously served, and transferred his membership to the Presbytery of Northeast New Jersey, for which he attends the quarterly stated meetings. He became part of our larger community by joining the Westfield Clergy Association. In October, he attended the Union County Interfaith Day of Prayer service at Temple Emanu-El in Westfield, and in November he offered the invocation and benediction at the Mountainside Veterans Day gathering.

On top of all this, during the past year, Pastor Marcus has also held weekly staff meetings, received monthly pastoral coaching sessions and submitted his final assignment for his first course in the Doctor of Ministry program at the Austin Presbyterian Theological Seminary in Texas.

We can all agree that Pastor Marcus has had quite a successful first year at the Community Presbyterian Church!