



ANNUAL REPORT

2023

www.jubileepractice.org 

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Message from Our Co-Directors

In November 2023, The Center for Jubilee Practice had its first-ever in-person board meeting. For two days, most of the board met with Rick and Ashley to discuss how things had been going and look to the future. An important aspect of the meeting was having communal meals. Ashley and Rick prepared sheet pan salmon tacos as the rest of the group helped set the table and put out drinks. Everyone worked as part of a team, each role as valuable as the next, to create a table we could ALL come to and eat from in joy, respect, and love.

This image is not dissimilar to the world CJP hopes to create: one where equity and dignity reign and where are all able to participate in the creation of the table they come to. In order for this to happen, we must work toward healing and repair, restorative justice, and reparations.

In most faith communities or mid-councils we've worked with, the problem is not one of apathy nor a lack of appreciation for the importance of the work. The question is how we convert best intentions into constructive, collaborative action. Our plan is to help our partners map out strategies and build skills using proven and new approaches to move people to action. We all have a role in building the table. We invite you to join us in the work.



Co-Directors Rev. Ashley DeTar Birt (she/her) and Rick Ufford-Chase (he/him)

Where We've Been

When working with clients, The Center for Jubilee Practice looks at a community over time: where they've been, where they are, and where they seek to go. For this report, we'll be exploring the year using the same approach, starting with "where we've been."



When Rick and Ashley began conversations about working together in early 2021, neither could've imagined the places their work would take them. From Utica to Sacramento to Washington State to New York City, we've traveled around the country accompanying congregations and mid-councils as they work toward concrete action steps in the name of reparations, healing and repair, and restorative justice. This accompaniment has involved learning about a community's historical and current culture, engaging them in a process of education and exploration of justice issues in the broader community, identifying opportunities for both financial and collaborative partnerships, and developing a concrete action plan for acts of healing, repair, and reparation. We've done this work with an intersectional lens; while racial justice is our primary focus, we also consider gender, sexuality, ability, culture, environmental, and other issues and identities that encapsulate the full human experience.

In addition to this important work, we also began exploring outreach and support to marginalized groups historically harmed by the church. Recognizing that most mainline denominations in the U.S. are majority white, Ashley began interviewing religious students and professionals of color in majority white schools and workplaces. Bearing witness to these stories has allowed us to identify patterns in the treatment of people of color and ask ourselves how our work can address these issues. Currently, our plan is to continue these conversations throughout the upcoming year.

Our Original Model

Over the past two years, CJP has done accompaniment work using a variety of tools and approaches. By doing a preliminary stage and a long-term stage, we've done research, had conversations, offered preaching and education, and much more with the groups we've worked with. This work has been both intersectional in its approach and specific to each circumstance. Our services have included:

Assessment Online survey for the entire community, as well as an effort to work specifically with BIPOC/LGBTQIA+ folks in the community to create space for their honest feedback	Task Force Consultation Regular consultation (1-2 times per month) with a Healing/Repair/Reparations Task Force	Education Bible/book studies, Justice 101 seminars, and thoughtfully designed immersion experiences/deep focus travel seminars
Affinity Group Creation Help developing a model of supportive affinity groups to create space for people of non-dominant cultures within the community	Preaching/Teaching Occasional preaching/teaching to assist with formation for the entire community (up to once per quarter)	Next Steps Preparation Support in preparing and sharing a proposal for action steps with the broader community (together with your Task Force)

“Ashley and Rick were very helpful in guiding us through the process, designing the Welcoming Spaces Survey and administering it. Their analysis led us to the conclusion that we have a lot of work yet to do in educating our congregation about these issues.”

-Virginia Anthony, Kirk of Kildaire

Where We Are

As we look both back at how we've done things and forward to our ever evolving work, we also know it's important to ground ourselves in the now. Let us reflect on the work we've done this year and consider the lessons learned and accomplishments achieved.

Accompaniment Work

This year, we accompanied a number of churches and presbyteries on their journeys to taking concrete action steps toward healing and repair, restorative justice, and reparations. Whether it be consulting on culture change initiatives, preaching on the legacies of abolition, teaching folks how to be justice disciples in their church context, or helping people take steps toward giving land back to the Native people who originally inhabited it, we've sought to help others as they seek to do important, difficult, and faith filled justice work.

Faithful Partnerships

We know that our work is not only intersectional but collaborative. This work is impossible to do alone, and we know that we all go further when we go together. With this in mind, we partnered with a number of groups this year as colleagues and thought partners. Through financial support, honest conversations, speaking at events, and more, CJP has sought to be good neighbors to those also working toward racial restorative justice.

Education Opportunities

Both Ashley and Rick took advantage of opportunities to further educate themselves and reach out to others in support and solidarity. Ashley attended the Katie Geneva Cannon Center for Womanist Leadership Conference where she connected with Black clergy and lay people to learn how womanism is being applied in various forms of ministry today. She also participated in the Black Theology and Leadership Institute and learned about the connections between Black preaching and various justice issues. Rick and Ashley both became trained facilitators of the Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI), which allowed them to administer the inventory to clients and outside groups.

Accompaniment Work

Most of our work this year involved accompanying churches and presbyteries as they sought out ways to enact reparations and racial healing and repair. We had four main clients this year: Madison Avenue Presbyterian Church, Olympia Presbytery, North Central California Presbytery, and Utica Presbytery.

Madison Ave. Presbyterian Church

After a preliminary discernment contract, we continued our work with Madison Ave. Presbyterian Church through November 2023. The work of their Racial Justice Task Force included educational walking tours of Chinatown and the African Burial Ground National Monument in NYC, racial justice movie/discussion nights, and evaluations of current and potential partnerships based on racial and cultural factors. We also developed a virtual “Justice Discipleship” course for congregation members to faithfully develop awareness of their own racial identities, practice having conversations about racial issues, and develop criteria for partnerships with organizations focused on addressing racial and systemic injustice.



Olympia Presbytery

Last year, we began consulting with a team from Olympia Presbytery around the future ownership and operations of Sound View Camp located on Puget Sound. After many conversations (including an in-person trip to Sound View camp) and hearing from folks representing a variety of viewpoints, we helped them develop a plan to create an independent 501(c)(3) run by presbytery, community, and tribal leadership that could lead to the eventual transfer of land to local tribes. With the help of CJP, the team created a list of action steps including but not limited to presenting the proposal to the presbytery, creating an Administrative Commission to implement the formation of said 501(c)(3) and identify board members, and contacting local tribes. Currently, the Administrative Commission is meeting and working to make this plan a reality.



Accompaniment Work

North Central California Presbytery

At the end of 2022, we began conversations with North Central California Presbytery's Gospel, Equity, and Inclusion Task Force as they sought assessment tools to help them identify systems, structures, attitudes and practices that limit the capacity to live into the gospel vision of God's Kingdom. Formed by uniting the former Stockton and Sacramento presbyteries, NCCP sought to explore how racial and cultural dynamics were affected by this coming together and how to address the issues they were facing today. Working with their GEI Task Force involved creating a plan to survey past and current presbytery leadership, connecting with over a dozen key constituents to learn about the experiences of BIPOC and immigrant presbytery members, and hosting an in-person retreat in Sacramento.



Utica Presbytery

For the past two and a half years, Utica Presbytery has been both a primary financial supporter and a theological and thought partner in our work. Without their support, The Center for Jubilee Practice would not exist, and we are eternally grateful for their support. In 2023, CJP engaged with Utica Presbytery on a variety of fronts. The overture passed in 2022 around concrete acts of healing and repair when property becomes available due to church downsizings, mergers, or closures was shared with other presbyteries as they considered their own practices around property. Conversations were also facilitated with various presbytery leaders around the consideration of property in Utica presbytery itself. We made connections with local racial justice leaders, including leadership from the Utica and Rome chapters of the NAACP. Rick attended coordination council meetings and session meetings, and Ashley preached at a historic Presbytery meeting held at the Abolitionist Hall of Fame in Peterboro, NY. We also continued our regular meetings with the Stated Clerk, conversing on the current and future state of the presbytery as well as our work around the country. As we approach the final months of our formal partnership with Utica Presbytery, we are both thankful for all that the presbytery has made possible and excited for what lies ahead of us.



Faithful Partnerships

Another important part of our work is engaging with organizations that share our principles and values. We know that the work of reparations and restoration is challenging, and being in community with others makes it easier. We all go further together than we do alone, so we've worked to support and be supported by key partners.

Faith and Landback Roundtables

In January, Ashley and Rick began participating in virtual roundtable discussions with faith-based folks actively organizing within their faith communities around landback. Held once every two months, these discussions provide time and space to share hopes, concerns, and much more while brainstorming with others doing similar work.

Panel Participation

As an extension of our Faith and Landback conversations, Rick participated in a panel at The Religious Origins of White Supremacy: Johnson v. M'Intosh and the Doctrine of Christian Discovery Conference at Syracuse University. In addition, Ashley participated in the Reparations Conversation Tables Project organized by Johnson C. Smith Theological Seminary with funding by the Ford Foundation and Henry Luce Foundation.

Financial Support

CJP was able to financially support The Center and Library for the Bible and Social Justice (CLBSJ) event titled "Reading for Justice: A Celebration of Banned Books and Critical Thinking" (Rick also served as a speaker). Doing this allowed us to not only support the CLBSJ but also the freedom to engage with edgy, challenging literature that often changes lives. We know that many of the books that educate us on racial issues and reparations have lately found themselves banned, and we're thankful to the CLBSJ for highlighting them.

Education Opportunities

Doing racial justice and reparations work is not something one does in a vacuum. It's important to continue learning tools to help people prepare for their journey toward racial healing and repair as well as to connect with those working in the most affected communities. We participated in several opportunities this year.



Katie Geneva Cannon Conference

Ashley attended the 2023 Katie Geneva Cannon Center for Womanist Leadership Conference. She was able to connect with womanist pastors and lay people from around the country to learn about the legacy and future of womanism in church, the greater community, and our daily lives.



Intercultural Development Inventory

One way to evaluate where people are in their cultural awareness journey is the Intercultural Development Inventory. Both Ashley and Rick trained as IDI facilitators and have administered it to outside groups and clients alike. They also used their own results to learn more about each other and deepen their working relationship.

Black Leadership and Theology Institute

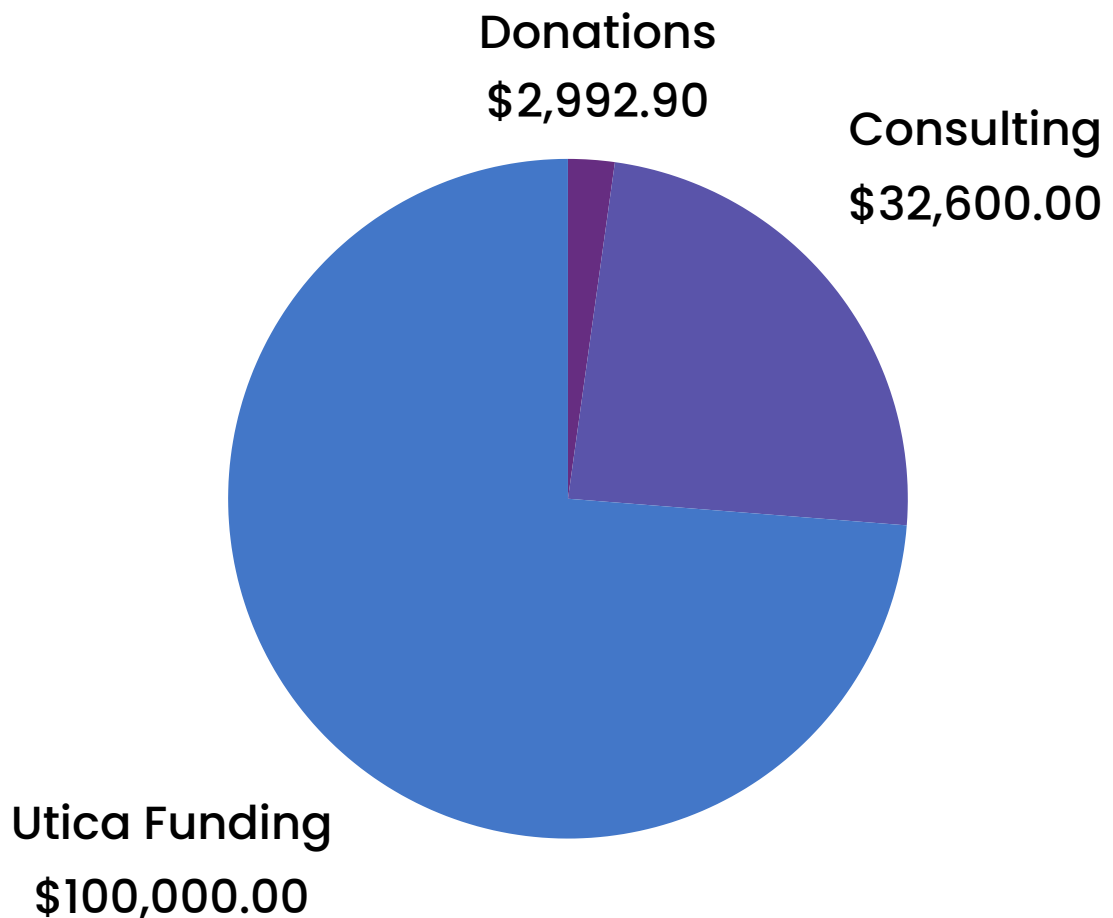


This July, Ashley attended the Black Leadership and Theology Institute Conference at Princeton Theological Seminary. Themed "Searching for the Soul of Black Preaching," the conference brought together Black preachers to learn about and discuss the intersections of the church, gender, climate issues, present day civil rights struggles, and more. An intergenerational event, the conference allowed folks to converse across age demographics.

Financials

2023 was a year of stability and growth for CJP financially. We've received 10 of the 12 quarterly grants of \$25,000 from Utica Presbytery. We also brought in over \$32,000 in consulting fees from clients across the country.

Revenue (Total \$135,592.90)

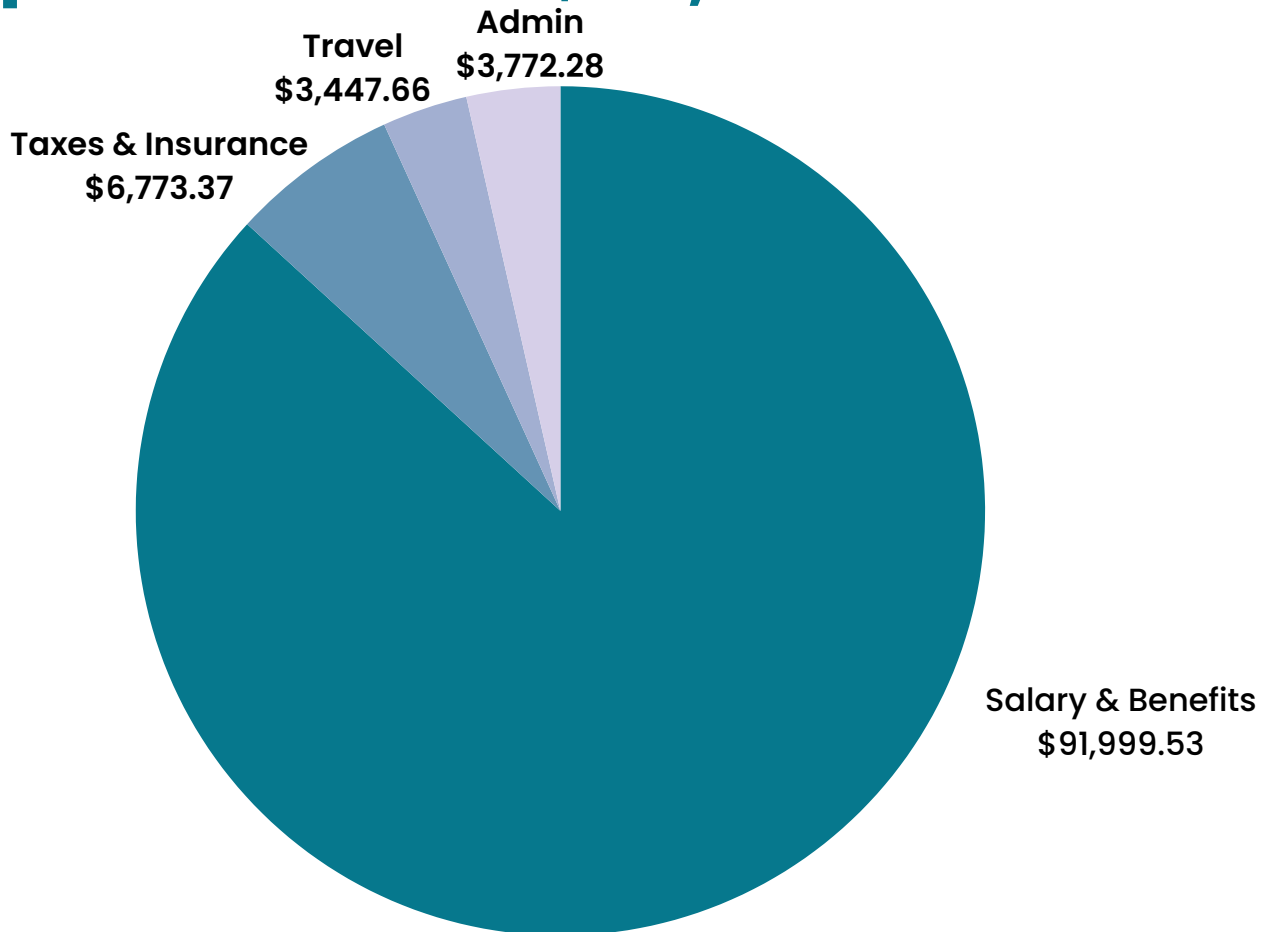


“I think we are more willing to engage with challenging work and conversations, and more equipped to do so. We feel like we have the resources to have those conversations with our congregation and work towards transformative work.”

-Rev. Beverly Bartlett, Madison Ave. Presbyterian Church

On the expense side, our overhead remains very low. Both Co-Directors work half-time, meaning their salary and benefits rest at \$91,999.53 total. We traveled more than last year, increasing our spending on that. Still, most of our work is done virtually from home, meaning most of our other expenses are taxes, insurance, and relevant software and supplies.

Expenditures (Total \$105,992.84)



Recognizing that our partnership with Utica Presbytery is nearing its end, our goal for 2024 is to increase both the volume and scope of our clientele. In addition to connecting with new communities to accompany, we also hope to engage with religious communities in new ways including seminars and webinars, workshops and training, and coaching. We give our sincerest thanks to Utica Presbytery, without which none of our work would've been possible.

In-Person Board Meeting

In November 2023, members of the CJP board and staff met in person for the first time. Convening under the majestic trees of rural Vermont, the board and staff discussed our work over the past two and a half years, assessed the current landscape of Christian racial justice work, and began to plan the future of CJP.



Coming together in person allowed for us to recognize the importance of collaborative work and mutual support, which led to proposed changes for 2024 in how we approach our work, who we partner with, and how we reach out to the world.

We also took time to connect with each other and the local community. In order to sustain ourselves our work, we made space for connection, fellowship, and even fun. This kept our relationships strong, our spirits high, and our souls ready for the work.



Where We're Going

We are so proud of the work CJP did in 2023. We expanded upon our 2022 work, accompanied new communities on their path to healing and repairing historic harm, and considered our path forward with clients and partners. Reflecting on this, we're creating a future that includes:



- A new accompaniment model that expands upon our original to include three stages: discernment, development, and implementation
- A focus on building the “legacy” of each community we work with
- A social media presence including Instagram, Facebook, and YouTube (including hiring a Social Media Manager)
- New and continued work with strategic community partners
- Further outreach to people of color and other marginalized folks
- More opportunities for educating ourselves and others

Acknowledgements

Ashley and Rick know that the work of CJP is only possible because of CJP's clients, primary partners, donors, and amazing Board of Directors. We like to take a moment to acknowledge their contributions.

Board of Directors



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Co-Chair



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Acknowledgements

Primary Partners

- Presbytery of Utica
 - Johnson C. Smith Theological Seminary
-

Donors (as of date published)

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*Recurring donor

If you see something that needs a correction, please let us know at ashley@jubileeppractice.org.

“I love being on CJP’s board because it recognizes the need for restorative justice and reconciliation in the world, and the realities that mainline denominations face in the secularization of America.”

-Annanda Barclay, Board Co-Chair



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