



HARC

2023 IMPACT Report

Hagerstown
Area
Religious
Council

*Our year in
the community*



HARC's mission is to embody mercy, justice and love as diverse faith partners in Washington County, Maryland.

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On the cover, clockwise from top:

1. HARC's November meeting at the Islamic Society of Western Maryland mosque; 2. Equity in Education Scholarship recipients for 2023-2024; 3. Assembling Micah's Backpacks at St. Mark's Episcopal Church, Lappans; 4. Participants of the Hike for Hunger & Hope Challenge Hike

Message from HARC's Board president

HARC had a great year of ministry! One focus in 2023 was the mental health crisis and prevention of the opioid crisis. Houses of worship hosted health summits, offering counsel toward recovery. While these crises persist, these interventions created hope and fostered recovery for many people.

Supporting arriving refugees in Hagerstown was another challenging mission HARC engaged in through the **Refugee Welcome Network**. Faith communities shared in the task of getting families settled in apartments, providing furniture and food. These efforts have been extraordinary, showing how we are our brother's and sister's keeper. The outpouring of love and support from the community has been outstanding!

The community **Good Friday Unity Walk** was meaningful, singing songs of the Lord, reading the holy scripture, and looking to the resurrection Easter Sunday with our Christian brethren. The **HARC Hike for Hunger and Hope** brought the community together again, raising more than \$30,000 for HARC and Micah's Backpack! The lunch and fellowship at the conclusion of the Hike was delightful. Our second-annual **Interfaith Progressive Dinner**, and the Interfaith panel discussions were wonderful because people visited and shared meals together. The bond of love was tied strongly.

The HARC members' meeting with Hagerstown Mayor Tekesha Martinez in the spring began a good building of relationships. Mayor Martinez shared her story and committed to working with HARC on many pressing issues in our city. We continue to meet with her monthly.

The **Washington County Black Professionals Network** and **Equity in Education Scholarship Fund** each received a grant from the Episcopal Diocese of Baltimore. The scholarship fund received a grant from the Fletcher Foundation as well. This empowers and helps to advance the efforts of justice and equity in our community.

There are many other highlights of our good work together in this report. Thanks to all houses of worship, the leaders and the lay members who support our work together through HARC. Your presence, time, and resources empower HARC to bring positive good to all in need in our community, and are so appreciated! Our gratitude also goes to our media specialists who keep everyone informed about our work. We are grateful for the new members on our Board of Directors, and for all members of the HARC community.

God richly bless you all,

Rev. Christopher Serufusa

St. Andrew's United Methodist Church



Rev. Christopher Serufusa

WE BELIEVE

**in the power of faith
communities working together.**

**We strive to listen
when God is speaking, and act boldly
together to make a difference in our
community. We build collaborations
across boundaries of religious
differences, as well as with community
organizations, to do the work
we are called to do.**

THE ESSENCE OF HARC:

**EVERYTHING WE DO
FALLS UNDER THIS BELIEF.**

The pages of this report are filled with evidence of the *power of faith communities working together*. Much of this work also fits under other categories, so here we focus primarily on the building of interdenominational and interfaith relationships, which leads to more tangible efforts that fall under our other three Belief Statements.

The Interfaith Team

In 2023, HARC's Interfaith Team continued to identify ways to educate the public on the world's faith traditions, while promoting peace, tolerance, and compassion in our community.

Interfaith Progressive Dinner

Our second-annual Interfaith Progressive Dinner was held on Saturday, September 23. Four different faith traditions were represented: Baha'i, Unity, African American Pentecostal, and Muslim. At each location, participants enjoyed culturally relevant foods and faith leaders presented a short program on the history and beliefs of their faith.



Above, Rev. Les McIntosh ("Pastor Mac") speaks on the history of the African American Pentecostal church.



At left, Paula Myers and Rev. Sandy Boyer share the history of the Baha'i faith and the Unity Movement.

FAITH COMMUNITIES WORKING TOGETHER

Interfaith Progressive Dinner



At left, Dr. Sohrab Shahab, president of the Islamic Society of Western Maryland, speaks to the group on the commonalities between Islam and other faith traditions.

At right, part of the expansive dessert buffet at the mosque, our last stop of the Interfaith Progressive Dinner.



The Season for Nonviolence begins each year on January 30, the anniversary of the assassination of Mahatma Gandhi. It ends on April 4, the anniversary of the assassination of Martin Luther King Jr. Those 64

days are set aside for practice of the principles of Gandhi, King, and others to bring about peace and nonviolence in our world. The Interfaith Team promoted this season with resources and social media posts focusing on and encouraging the practice of peace for all ages. Information can be found on harccoalition.org under the “Resources” tab.

The annual **Interfaith Retreat, “Sensing the Divine”** was held on March 4, facilitated by Rev. Sandy Boyer. We explored the idea that the Divine is everywhere present, we need only open our eyes and ears and learn to use our spiritual senses to get in touch with our own inner mystic.

LOOKING
FORWARD
2024

This year’s **Interfaith Retreat, “Let the Spirit Move You”** is scheduled for Saturday, March 2 at Shepherd’s Spring Camp & Retreat Center. For all the details, visit harccoalition.org/event/2024-retreat

Have you read a book that’s inspired you?

LOOKING
FORWARD
2024

If so, you might be interested in the HARC Book Club, which meets every other month. Participants gather and share a book—fiction, nonfiction, poetry—that has inspired them. If you’re interested, contact Rev. Sandy Boyer at sandy.boyer@gmail.com for more information, dates and times.





Interfaith Community Thanksgiving Service

Our annual **Interfaith Community Thanksgiving Service** was held on Sunday, November 19, at Trinity Lutheran Church in Hagerstown. Leaders from various faith traditions including Christian, Muslim, Jewish, Buddhist, Unity, Baha'i, and Secular Humanist participated. Attendees were invited to enjoy a reception after the service.

A free-will offering included shelf-stable food for

Trinity Lutheran's food pantry, and monetary donations. Monetary donations went to purchase staples for the food pantry of the Islamic Society of Hagerstown, which were immediately distributed to local Afghan refugee families.

Would your house of worship be interested in hosting this service in 2024? If so, contact Rev. Sandy Boyer at sandy.boyer@gmail.com



The annual **Historic Houses of Worship Tour** held on December 26 is free, open to the public, and is a wonderful opportunity to see the interiors of historic downtown Hagerstown houses of worship. Participants learn about the architecture and heritage of each location from docents.

A self-guided walking/driving tour, the 2023 event was its 10th year and the first since the pandemic. This popular event is a collaboration of the houses of worship, HARC, and the Washington County Convention & Visitors Bureau.

Good Friday Unity Walk



In April, about 100 people participated in HARC's annual Good Friday Unity Walk in Hagerstown's City Park, with Christians of all backgrounds uniting in remembrance on this holy day.

WE BELIEVE
in nurturing the unlimited
potential of every child.

We focus our collaborative efforts
on building supports around
and creating opportunities
for children and families.

Micah's Backpack

A partnership of HARC, Washington County Public Schools, Maryland Food Bank, and 48 sponsoring houses of worship and organizations

The need for the Micah's Backpack program has continued to grow at a rapid rate during this current school year, as special pandemic programs have ended, including rental assistance, as of July 2023. Costs have risen and families are struggling more than ever. School staff say they hear more children verbalizing that they don't have enough food at home.

We are grateful that all the sponsoring houses of worship and organizations have been nimble and so generous, with some shifting to different schools as needed and many increasing the number of children they serve. They consistently do the week-to-week work of feeding children in this program, despite the challenges. We're also grateful to the school liaisons, who face so many extra challenges in their jobs, yet still make it a priority to identify children who are food-insecure and make sure they receive their bags of food each week.

Micah's Backpack makes a difference *Survey results from the 2022-23 school year*

- 82% of children said they were able to pay more attention in school because they are less hungry since receiving the bags**
- 77% of children indicated they sometimes come to school only to get food**
- 96% of children said they feel better in school when they're not hungry**
- 58% of parents indicate they feel more engaged in their child's school since receiving the bags**
- 72% of parents said this extra food enables them to pay other bills**
- 88% of school staff agreed that students are more engaged in learning during the school day**
- 100% of school staff indicated that this program cultivates a more positive relationship between students and coordinators/school staff**

Updates for this school year include:

- **48 sponsoring houses of worship and organizations are currently serving more than 1,200 students in 37 schools with weekly food.**
- **Micah's Backpack is now serving 80% of schools in Washington County**
- **Current sponsors are stretched to their limits. More sponsoring houses of worship/organizations are needed!**

NURTURING THE UNLIMITED POTENTIAL OF EVERY CHILD

We asked kids & parents:

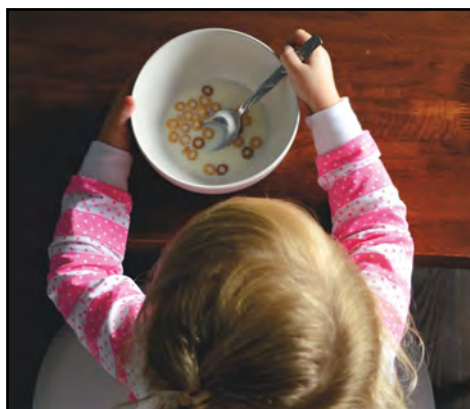
“What do you like about Micah’s Backpack?”

Kids said:

“Gives us food because my mom doesn’t have enough money to buy food.”

“It gives me food to eat when I don’t have any.”

“I love the peanut butter because I can eat it over your bread.”



Parents said:

“The relief that my child has something to eat!”

“Healthy food and snacks. It helps lower the grocery bill.”

“Really helps us in our home and we really appreciate it.”

thank you

We are so grateful to these sponsoring churches and organizations who did the bulk of the day-to-day work of providing food for children through Micah’s Backpack in 2023:

Bethel United Methodist Church
Brownsville Church of the Brethren
Concordia Lutheran Church
Crossroads Church
Emmanuel United Methodist Church
Evangel Baptist Church
First Christian Church
Grace United Methodist Church
Hagerstown Church of the Brethren
Hagerstown Church of the Nazarene
Haven Lutheran Church
Hilltop Fellowship Church
Hollowell Brethren in Christ
Interfaith Service Coalition (supported by Hancock area churches)
John Wesley United Methodist Church
Marsha Green & Family
Maugansville Bible Brethren Church
Mt. Moriah Lutheran Church
Otterbein United Methodist Church
Paramount Brethren in Christ
Presbyterian Church of Hagerstown
Redeeming Grace Church
Rehoboth United Methodist Church
Ringgold Church

Salem Lutheran Church
Shiloh United Methodist Church
Smithsburg Valley Church
South Washington County Food Pantry
(supported by churches in South Washington County)
St. Andrew Presbyterian Church
St. Andrew’s Episcopal Church
St. Ann Catholic Church
St. James School
St. John’s Episcopal Church
St. John’s Lutheran Church
St. Joseph Catholic Church & America’s Hauling for Hope
St. Maria Goretti High School
St. Mark’s Episcopal Church
St. Mark’s Lutheran Church
St. Paul’s Lutheran Church, Funkstown
St. Paul’s Lutheran Church, Smithsburg
The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints
Trinity Lutheran Church, Hagerstown
Trinity Lutheran Church, Smithsburg
Unitarian Universalist Church
Williamsport United Methodist Church
Zion Lutheran Church
Zion Reformed United Church of Christ



Learning Parties make learning *fun!*

In May, 13 families participated in a 4-week Learning Party series at St. Mark's Lutheran Church, which focused on "Language & Literacy."

Learning Parties are fun, interactive programs for families and their 3-to-4-year-old children, with hands-on activities and tips that promote young children's development of school readiness skills.

One of our refugee families from the Refugee Welcome Network participated in this Learning Party and shared that this was the first time since they arrived here that they "felt like real family."

Thank you to St. Mark's Lutheran Church for hosting, and to the Judy Center of Washington County for teachers and co-coordination.



Can you help?

We are always in need of houses of worship to host Learning Parties, and volunteers to make them happen. If your house of worship would be interested in hosting a fun and rewarding Learning Party, contact HARC at **301-842-4272**.



Meetings with Mayor lead to new after-school program

In April, a delegation of HARC members began meeting monthly with Mayor Tekesha Martinez to discuss common goals for the City of Hagerstown. Mayor Martinez invited the faith community into partnership, and the fruitful discussions led to several houses of worship in the downtown area collaborating on an after-school program for children.

A special team was formed to focus on this project, including exploring options for funding, hiring of a coordinator for the program as well as other staff.

Administrators at Washington County Public Schools (WCPS) are as excited as we are to get this program started in 2024!

Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs), building resilience

Adverse Childhood Experiences, or ACEs (a.k.a. childhood trauma) are common, and present likely the greatest health crises of our time. There is a scientifically proven link between ACEs and many health and social problems, including mental illness, suicide, substance abuse, obesity, to name a few.

But there is hope. Our faith communities are uniquely equipped to help with prevention and healing. HARC offers training workshops to groups and organizations in our community to build awareness, understanding, and to provide practical tools for healing and building resilience. If your group is interested in hosting an ACEs workshop, contact the HARC office at **301-842-4272** or email **director@harccoalition.org**.

ACEs information and resources are also available on the HARC website under the “Resources” tab:

harccoalition.org

WE BELIEVE

**all people have equal value
and are loved by God.**

**We seek justice for those who are
not treated equally or given equal
value by our broken world.**

**We strive to lift up the unique
gifts and abilities of people
and empower them to be
who they were made to be.**

Refugee Welcome Network

In January, HARC partnered with the Islamic Center of Hagerstown and many other area organizations and houses of faith to create the Refugee Welcome Network (RWN) of Washington County, Md.

Throughout the year, the RWN continued to grow, with additional houses of faith, volunteers, and resources joining our efforts to help refugee families get settled in the community.

And the community has been incredibly generous in helping our refugee friends become settled and self-sufficient. Thanks to all who have been and continue to be a part of the RWN through your contributions of time, treasure, and talents!



The work of the RWN

Under the auspices of HARC, approximately 15 community members meet at least once a month to facilitate support for our refugee community. We help procure affordable housing, jobs, school enrollment, household items, health care, and applicable social services. We assist families with applications for asylum, Temporary Protected Status (TPS), and Employment Authorization Documents (EAD).

Fortunately, God led a retired immigration lawyer to our team, so we do not have to pay for legal counsel. However, the path to eventual citizenship, which each of our families ardently desires, is costly. The fee to apply for TPS and EADs for a family of four is \$1,200. But the RWN and the families we assist have enjoyed success along the way. Gradually, refugee family members have received work permits and been granted asylum. So our work continues.

Making a life here

Our refugee families continue to rebuild their lives in our community. At left, a birthday party in City Park celebrated a child turning 4 years old.

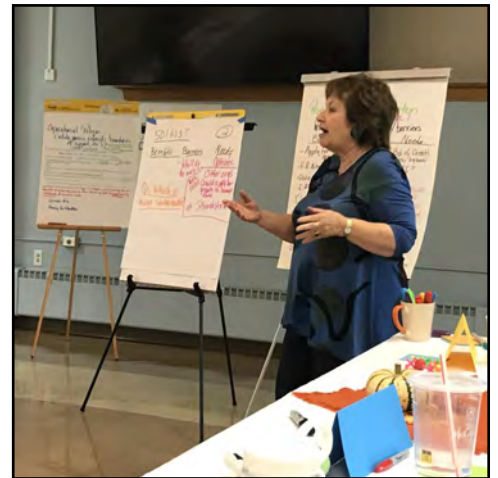
At right, a refugee mom from Haiti gave birth to Georges, a blessed event that her older son, Windsor, was obviously excited about!



ALL PEOPLE HAVE EQUAL VALUE & ARE LOVED BY GOD



RWN members spend the day strategizing and planning the path forward.



Paulette Lee presents her group's ideas during the RWN planning workshop.

RWN planning workshop

In November, the RWN held a planning workshop to help discern our path forward. Rental assistance for multiple families and current economic realities are daunting. However, we've repeatedly experienced God's grace in providing talents and treasures when needed.

Can you help?

Your prayers for this mission are sought and appreciated! If you are led to make a monetary donation, you can donate on HARC's website, right from the homepage. Just click the orange DONATE button and be sure to designate your donation to "Refugees."

You can also write a check to HARC and write "RWN" or "Refugees" on the memo line. Send to HARC, P.O. Box 1158, Hagerstown, MD 21741-1158. Your donation is tax-deductible and would be so appreciated!

Volunteers are also needed

We're always in need of volunteers, so if you'd like to become involved, or if you have any questions, email the RWN at refugeewelcome@harccoalition.org or call 301-842-4272.



Pam Bradford and Jane Powell share lunch during the RWN planning workshop in November.

To learn more about the RWN and the planning workshop, visit:
harccoalition.org/refugee-welcome-network-plans-for-growth/

Or scan this code:



The Racial Justice Team

HARC's Racial Justice Team realized a major goal in 2023 of forming the **Washington County Black Professionals Network (WCBPN)** to provide opportunities to connect, as well as fostering support, safety, belonging, and economic prosperity for people of color in Washington County.

The mission of the WCBPN is to provide professional networking opportunities and to attract and retain under-represented professionals in the community by establishing connections for Blacks of the African diaspora in Hagerstown

and surrounding areas.

The WCBPN held several networking events in 2023, and developed the **Black-owned Business Directory**, which continues to expand.

With help from a \$15,000 grant from the Episcopal Diocese of Maryland, the WCBPN is poised for continued growth in 2024.

The WCBPN also created a Facebook page, which has continued to grow its followers by regularly posting news and events of interest to Black professionals and entrepreneurs in the community.



Samuel Key and Tania Anderson, Executive Director of the Washington County Black Professionals Network, are shown at the inaugural WCBPN event held in February.



Teresa Peek of The Elder Group speaks at a networking event hosted by the Washington County Black Professionals Network.

**WASHINGTON COUNTY
Black Professionals
.....> Network

Black-owned
Business Directory**



To view or download your copy of the **Black-owned Business Directory**, visit www.harccoalition.org/black-owned-business-directory OR scan this code:



ALL PEOPLE HAVE EQUAL VALUE & ARE LOVED BY GOD

Another goal of the Racial Justice Team is to advocate for more educators in Washington County who are from under-represented ethnic groups and to support retention efforts. In addition to encouraging people of color to apply to Washington County Public Schools (WCPS), the team partnered with WCPS and the Education Foundation of WCPS to provide direct support to aspiring educators.

The **Equity in Education Scholarship**, launched in 2022, awarded scholarships for 2023-2024 to five African American women to pursue degrees in education. This scholarship program:

- Removes financial barriers for racially minoritized people to pursue degrees in education

- Increases the number of diverse educators in our public schools
- Supports retention of diverse educators through mentoring and resources
- Ultimately helps children, especially children of color, do better in school.

The 2024 scholarship application period will be open from February 1 through March 31, 2024. Scholarships are awarded annually ranging from \$1,500 to \$7,000. If you'd like more information about the Equity in Education Scholarship, including how to donate to the program, visit: harccoalition.org/justice/equity-in-education-scholarship/

Donations can also be made through HARC at www.harccoalition.org/donate.

Scholarship recipients for 2023-2024 were honored at a special reception in June.

From left are Tiffany Shepherd, Kamilah Scott, Xenia Diaz, Gabrielle Desir-Pierre, and Cayla Mayo.



Celebrating Juneteenth

HARC financially sponsored children's activities for the annual Juneteenth celebration and participated in the Believers Unity Walk. We also had a table set up at the event, offering information about HARC. Member houses of worship covered the table for one hour each and offered a variety of activities for children.



WE BELIEVE
in equipping one another
to create stronger
houses of worship.

We build relationships among clergy and people of faith, and support and encourage one another. We provide information, resources, and connections to enhance the work of congregations, ministries, and community organizations.



Denotes video of this meeting is on HARC's YouTube channel.

At our monthly meetings, you can...

Connect, learn, share

One of the ways we **equip one another** is by presenting informational programs at our monthly meetings. These programs are relevant to faith leaders, houses of worship, and our other member organizations. Programs are geared to faith leaders and members, but anyone is welcome to attend. Our meetings are also a fun place to network, catch up with old friends and meet new ones! Below are program topics from 2023.

JANUARY: At our **Annual Meeting**, we voted on and welcomed new Board members. The **Interfaith Team** shared events and activities planned for 2023, and the **Racial Justice Team** promoted the inaugural event of the Washington County Black Professionals Network to be held in February.

FEBRUARY: “Dialogue that Enlarges: Bridging Ideological Divides Through a Faith Lens”

Rabbi Mark Perman and **Kathy Powderly** led a workshop created by The Better Arguments Project, a national civic initiative created to help bridge divides. Attendees explored better ways to handle conflict, with the hope of taking this program back to their congregations and organizations. This resource is available on the HARC website under Non-violence and Peacemaking Resources.



MARCH: Presentation by the **Department of Social Services (DSS)** of Washington County, Md. DSS Director **Tiffany Rexrode**, along with **Amanda Bishop**, and **Josh Bond** gave an overview of programs and services, highlighting some ways the faith community can support their work, and answering our questions.

APRIL: Panel discussion by **Black entrepreneurs** in Washington County. **Eddie Peters**, **Cherish McMillon**, **Ladetra Robinson**, and **Sommer Gilliam** shared their successes and challenges as Black business owners, and ways the faith community can help.

MAY: “The Rise of Antisemitism and What We Can Do As a Faith Community” featured a presentation via Zoom from the **Anti-Defamation League (ADL)**.

JUNE: “Migration Then & Now in the Jewish & Islamic Faiths” Speakers: **Basheer Azizi**, president of the Islamic Center of Hagerstown, and **Rabbi Mark Perman**, Congregation B’Nai Abraham, talked about historical migration among Muslims and Jews worldwide, and in our area.



Tiffany Rexrode, DSS Director

CREATING STRONGER HOUSES OF WORSHIP

HARC's monthly meetings do not take place in July or August.



SEPTEMBER: Speaker **Chief Paul Kifer** of the Hagerstown Police Department, shared his background, his community focus, and information on transformative programs and initiatives taking place in the HPD. Chief Kifer was joined by **Danielle Staley**, program coordinator of Ending Needless Violence with our Youth (ENVY).



OCTOBER: Speakers **Victoria Sterling** of the Washington County Health Department, and **Carrie Tressler** of the Washington County Mental Health Authority provided extensive information on “**Mental Health Challenges, Programs and Resources**” in our community.



NOVEMBER: A diverse panel of clergy from different faith traditions discussed “**Challenges Religions Face in Today's Society.**” Panelists were, from left, **Rabbi Mark Perman**, **Rev. Dionne Hall**, **Rev. Les McIntosh**, **Imam Nazir Faruki**, and moderator **Dr. Sohrab Shahab**.



DECEMBER: Speakers from San Mar Family and Community Services explored “**What It Means to be a ‘Healing Community’**” and the role the faith community can play. We heard from **Jerica Washington**, LCSW-C, Deputy Executive Director and Director of the Jack E. Barr Center for Well-Being; and **Jennifer Lewis**, LCSW-C, Director, Treatment Foster Care.

thank you

HARC would like to thank the houses of worship and community partners who so graciously hosted our monthly meetings in 2023. Providing meeting space, AV equipment and set-up, and dedicated volunteers who made and served delicious buffet meals for around 40 people each month are all commitments to service that we so appreciate. *Thank you!*

January: Otterbein United Methodist Church

February: St. Mark's Lutheran Church

March: John Wesley United Methodist Church

April: Grace United Methodist Church

May: Congregation B'Nai Abraham

June: Reach of Washington County, Md.

September: Highland View Academy Church

October: Reach of Washington County

November: Islamic Society of Western Maryland

December: Beaver Creek Church of the Brethren

We are always in need of monthly meeting space. If your house of worship or organization would be interested in hosting a HARC meeting in 2024, please contact Kathy at director@harccoalition.org or call 301-842-4272.

harccoalition.org offers a wealth of resources

The HARC website provides a wealth of resources and information to address many different kinds of needs people may have in our community. Under our “Resources” tab, we keep updated lists of where help can be found for:

- Food, Clothing, Personal Care
- Children and Families
- Housing and Shelter

Agency information, referrals for crisis needs, including a list of organizations in Washington County that provide assistance to people in crisis, along with the type of help each offers. Faith leaders can find resources to help people with various needs.

Vacation Bible School & Summer Activities for Children: Each summer, HARC compiles a list of free or low-cost activities for children.

We also offer: Clergy services, congregational vitality resources, faith-based counseling services, racial justice resources, information and resources on adverse childhood experiences and building resilience, nonviolence and peacemaking resources, and much more!



[harccoalition.org/
Resources](https://harccoalition.org/Resources)

*Weekly
Bible
study*

Wednesdays at 9 a.m.
at **Safron Bakery Café**,
287 Eastern Blvd. North
in Hagerstown.

HARC's **Weekly Bible Study**
for pastors is a time to dig into
scripture with other pastors.

Typically follows the Lectionary, so it also can help you prepare your sermons a week ahead if you follow the Lectionary cycle. If interested, contact Kyle Powderly at acts2024@gmail.com or just show up.

*HARC's
Trivia
Team*

Wednesdays from 7 to 9 p.m. at
TGIFriday's, 17840 Garland
Groh Blvd. in Hagerstown.
HARC's **Trivia Team** is a great
opportunity to laugh and be
yourself outside the bounds of
your congregation. This is NOT

“Bible trivia,” it's regular trivia and only our team is faith-based. Interested? Contact Kathy Powderly at director@harccoalition.org or 301-842-4272.

LOOKING
FORWARD
to
2024

Faith Leaders Support Group

Ministry can be challenging, isolating, even confusing. Let's get together to share what's going on in our spiritual communities, what's working, and what areas are calling for something more. Let's share support, ideas, and camaraderie from those who really understand. Together we're better!

Interested? Contact Rev. Sandy Boyer at sandy.boyer@gmail.com.

Start date to be determined once a core group is formed and the best day/time is decided.

Note: Faith leaders do not have to be members of HARC to participate.

THE HARC HIKE FOR HUNGER & HOPE

for HUNGER & Hope



Every year, HARC's biggest fundraisers are its Hikes for Hunger & Hope: the Main Hike and the Challenge Hike. The proceeds from these two events benefit HARC programs, particularly Micah's Backpack, which provides nutritious food to food-insecure school children on the weekends in Washington County (to read more about Micah's Backpack, see page 7).

On June 10, nearly 100 people came out to hike 4K, 10K, or half-marathon distances on the scenic C&O Canal Towpath. It was a beautiful day with great fellowship, exploration of nature, and wonderful food! Another 13 people participated in a "Virtual Hike," hiking at a day and time of their choosing, either on their own or with a group.

Four weeks before, on May 13, 17 hardy individuals hiked 20 miles on the Appalachian Trail for our Challenge Hike. This hike took a good 10 hours of dedicated hiking on rocky ground, with periods of rain that did not dampen anyone's spirits. All were motivated by the camaraderie, the cause, and the accomplishment!

Everyone who participated or sponsored a participant helped to make this year's event our most successful yet, with more than **\$33,500 in proceeds** – *thank you!*



More on
the Hike



THE HARC HIKE FOR HUNGER & HOPE

thank you

To the amazing HARC Hike Event Planning Team: Ed Poling, Beth Johnston, Sue Wert, Ed Maloy, Kelly Conrad, Kathleen Wood, Butch Eigenbrode (with Antietam Radio Association), and Kathy Powderly.

To our many wonderful volunteers who helped on event days. We could never pull off either of these hikes without your invaluable hard work and dedication!

To our Top Fundraising Individuals & Teams: Hebron Mennonite Church; Mary Dunn & Mike Martin Century Bike Ride; Walking on Sunshine; Sole Sisters; WCPS Hikes; Becky Fritts; Tammy Love; Elizabeth Paul; Ed Maloy.

To our business and faith community sponsors! Your generosity and commitment to community inspire us every year. A complete list of Hike Sponsors is under “Donations” at the end of this report.

LOOKING
FORWARD
to
2024

**Mark your calendar
for our 2024 Hikes!**

◆ **MAIN HIKE:**

Saturday, June 8

at Shepherd's Spring
Camp & Retreat Center and
the C&O Canal Towpath

◆ **CHALLENGE HIKE:**

Saturday, May 18

20-mile tri-state challenge
on the Appalachian Trail

Challenge Hike warriors

at the completion of 20 miles on the Appalachian Trail in Maryland and West Virginia



HARC welcomes new Board members in 2024

We are grateful for the many gifts and talents these new members bring to our Board of Directors.



Rev. Dionne Hall

Dionne has lived in Washington County for more than 15 years. In 2017, she transitioned from her career as a school teacher to part-time licensed local pastor and full-time seminary student at Wesley Theological Seminary.

A huge sci-fi fan, Dionne loves all things Star Trek, as well as Marvel Comics. She loves to read and believes at this point in her life, she's likely "halfway to having read a small library of books."

"I look forward to assisting HARC in its work," Dionne says. "It is a joy to join a diverse coalition whose mission is to serve the community."



Ashlee Harris

Ashlee has lived in Hagerstown since 2012. She currently serves as Communications Outreach Director for the church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints. She is also the Just Serve coordinator for the Hagerstown area. Previous service roles for the church include Regional Youth Camp Director, and Children's Choir Director for the Hagerstown area. Ashlee is the owner and president of Blinds by Ash, a blinds and window coverings company. She also has taught voice and piano lessons for more than 15 years and is an accomplished singer. Ashlee and her husband, Jonathan, have four children, ages 10, 14, 17,

and 19. She enjoys trying new foods and recipes, the outdoors, boating, and spending time with friends and family.



Rev. Suzanne Jones

Suzanne grew up in Keedysville, Md., and is the pastor of two churches: Benevola United Methodist Church (UMC) in Boonsboro, and Salem UMC in Keedysville. She and her husband, Jeff, have been married for 17 years. They have a kitten named Gracie.

Suzanne holds a Master of Arts in Humanities: Drama and Literature Studies from Hood College in Frederick, Md., and a Master of Divinity from Wesley Theological Seminary in Washington, D.C.

"The connectivity of HARC is what appeals to me the most," Suzanne says. "It connects ministries and shares resources and support to the community."



Dr. Sohrab Shahab

Dr. Sohrab Shahab is the president of the Islamic Society of Western Maryland. A resident of Washington County since 2009, he moved to Hagerstown after finishing his residency training as an ear, nose, and throat surgeon. His practice is in Martinsburg, W.Va. Sohrab and his wife married in 1999 and have three boys.

"I'm looking forward to working on the Board to further HARC's commitment to service in the community."

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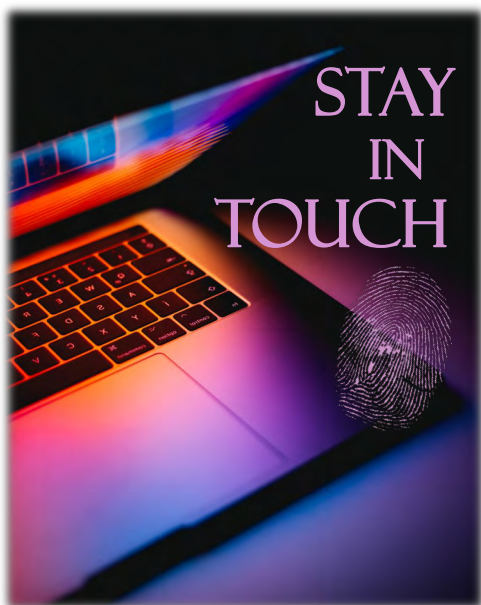
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~ This report was designed by Kelly Z Conrad ~

Kathy Powderly, Executive Director
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