



THE CENTER FOR
jubilee practice

ANNUAL REPORT

2022

www.jubileepractice.org 

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Introduction

The Center for Jubilee Practice seeks to accompany religious communities as we confess the harm we have caused and foster the healing of our communities through concrete practices of full inclusion, reparations, and care for creation.



Early in 2021, Rev. Ashley DeTar Birt and Rick Ufford-Chase began meeting with Larry Beasley from the Presbytery of Utica. The trio entered into weekly conversations about the future of the church and how to help Christians learn to make amends for the harm that has been done in the name of Christianity. Those conversations led quickly to discernment with the entire Presbytery, which voted by a significant majority to fund the start-up of The Center for Jubilee Practice, a non-profit ministry focused on healing and repair, restorative justice, and reparations. By June, the organization was incorporated under the direction of our founding Board of Directors, and by the beginning of 2022 we had our first contracts with Madison Ave. Presbyterian Church in New York, NY, Kirk of Kildaire Presbyterian Church in Cary, NC and Olympia Presbytery.

The Center for Jubilee Practice seeks to accompany congregations on their journeys towards reparations and restorative justice. What does accompaniment mean? CJP's role is to reflect back what we discover in the congregation, direct a process of historical research, support engagement with cutting edge justice work in the broader community in an effort to build relationships of confidence, and encourage the development of a concrete action plan for redistribution of resources in acts of healing, repair, and reparation. We seek not to do the work for anyone, but rather to guide and assist congregations in their work.

The past year has truly been a journey for us. Read more to learn about it.

Message from Our Co-Directors

In May of 2022, Ashley preached at the presbytery meeting in Utica for what we celebrated as our first anniversary. Leaping from the stage to the floor (literally), she reminded everyone of what is possible when folks come together in liberation and love. Later on in the meeting, a pastor announced that, inspired by a class taught by CJP, the presbytery would be taking a collection for RIP Medical Debt. Rick then spoke to an overture we created that put considerations of racial reconciliation and reparations at the forefront of presbytery work. Another pastor in the room commented it was the first time as a Black woman she had seen the Church do such a thing.

In looking back on this day, we realize that moments like these encapsulate why we do this work. As a queer Black woman and a straight white man, folks sometimes question what we have in common, yet it is the faith and knowledge that action can be done to make the world more equitable that unites us. We also know that our differences help us see God in each other and therefore in everyone and everything we encounter. This is the lens through which we see every client, every partnership, every person we engage with. This is what fuels us on the journey to jubilee. We invite you to join us on it.



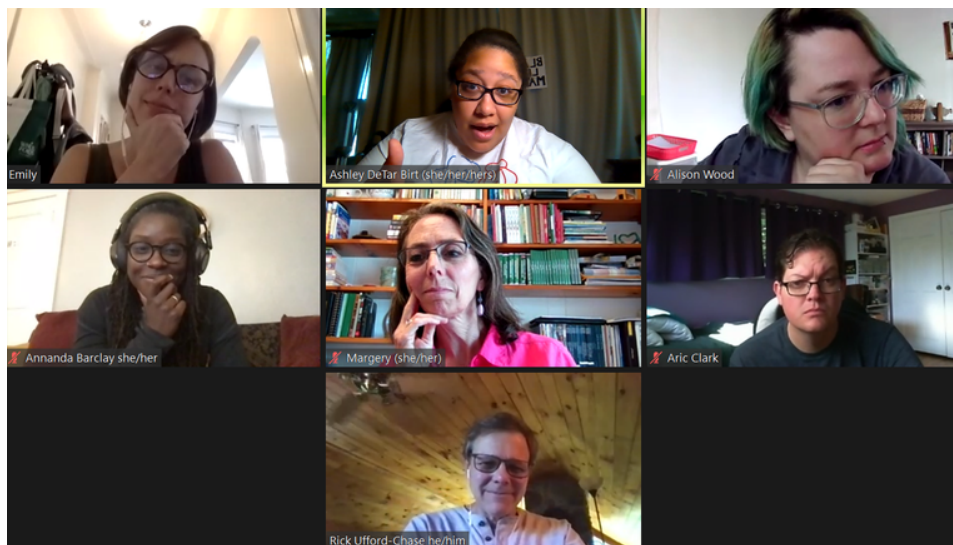
Co-Directors Rev. Ashley DeTar Birt (she/her) and Rick Ufford-Chase (he/him)

What We Do

The Center for Jubilee Practice seeks to be a bridge between the exciting movements for justice related to gender, sexuality, race, climate change, immigration policies, economic globalization and cultural homogenization on the one hand, and the traditional congregations that desire to engage those justice movements and exemplify biblical justice values on the other.

We seek to:

- help church judicatories and governing bodies rethink their rules of engagement related to the appropriate sale and disposition of property and other assets in order to create intentional opportunities for reparations, healing, and new life
- support congregations and judicatories to take direct action to accomplish healing, repair, and reparations with Black and Brown communities and in direct relation to harm we have caused to creation
- create brave spaces of welcome in which those who have been most impacted by historic patterns of oppression can gather to support and encourage one another



What We Offer

Our accompaniment work with congregations and communities involves a variety of elements and tools. We take an intersectional and comprehensive approach to our work, recognizing that each situation is unique and may require a different combination of resources and considerations. We work closely with each task force to tailor our offerings to their context and empower their work. Our services include:

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

Utica Partnership

As our initial funders, the Presbytery of Utica has a special relationship with The Center for Jubilee Practice. They serve as partners not only financially, but in thought, theology, and exploration. Here are a few ways the Presbytery of Utica is special to us.

Preaching and Teaching

From the start of the partnership, Ashley and Rick have preached for congregations and presbytery meetings, both in-person and virtually. In 2022, they preached in Lowville, Cooperstown, and the May Presbytery meeting which celebrated the first anniversary of CJP. The Presbytery of Utica also participates in educational opportunities offered by CJP.

Abolitionist History

Beginning our journey in The Presbytery of Utica offered an unanticipated opportunity. This region of New York state was a hotbed of abolitionist organizing in the mid-19th Century, and Presbyterians were deeply engaged on all sides of that debate. Some church leaders participated in the underground railroad. The Oneida Institute, founded by Presbyterians, was the leading institution of higher education of its time for Free Black Men. The Town of Peterboro, located less than an hour from Utica, is the home of the National Abolition Hall of Fame and Museum, which focuses on the rich historical record of abolitionism and on modern day efforts to abolish prisons and question the underpinnings of police structures that have tracked African Americans and other people of color into the prison pipeline.

Working with the Presbytery

Part of our responsibility to the presbytery has been regular meetings with the Stated Clerk, reporting to their Coordinating Council and occasional participation in presbytery meetings. This work has made an impact in the presbytery and beyond. In September, The Presbytery of Utica passed an overture that lays the foundation for the Presbytery to consider the possibility of concrete acts of healing and repair when property becomes available due to church downsizings, mergers, or closures. This overture has been shared across the denomination.

Accompaniment Work

The majority of our work this year has been accompanying churches and presbyteries on their journeys towards restorative justice, healing and repair, and reparations. Other than the Presbytery of Utica, we had three main clients this year.



Madison Ave. Presbyterian Church

Madison Ave. Presbyterian Church was the first group outside of the Presbytery of Utica to approach CJP. In January, we began a six month “discernment” contract that resulted in an ongoing contract to accompany the congregation as it lays the foundation for clear acts of healing and repair. That work, under the excellent direction of the Racial Justice Task Force established by the congregation, is likely to continue through the end of 2023.



Olympia Presbytery

Olympia Presbytery invited CJP into ongoing consultation to develop a unifying proposal for the Presbytery’s consideration regarding the future ownership and operations of Sound View Camp, located on Puget Sound. These conversations, involving multiple parties and various perspectives, are ongoing and have been productive.



Kirk of Kildaire

The Kirk of Kildaire asked CJP to help them explore their potential for restorative justice and assess whether their community was ready for action steps around racial and social justice. While the CJP and the Kirk’s Justice and Equality Team mutually agreed that now was not the time to move forward, the Kirk’s passion and eye for intersectionality is noteworthy and we hope to work with them in the future.

Teaching/Partnerships

Starting with a *What IS Jubilee?* class in September 2021, CJP has offered educational opportunities whenever possible. Be it through writings, podcasts, or partnering with groups to offer classes and workshops, we seek chances to teach and learn with others on issues of Biblical and present-day justice.

Nuns and Nones

Ashley and Rick led three online sessions on the theme of Jubilee for the “Jubilee Praxis Circle” organized by the community “Nones and Nuns”. Their sessions were part of an extended course on biblical liberation practices and focused on themes of agriculture, debt, and the legacy of liberation within Leviticus 25.

Synod of the Northeast Pre-Assembly

In November, Ashley and Rick attended the Assembly of the Synod of the Northeast in order to offer a workshop on Jubilee, and Rick preached at First Presbyterian Church of Brooklyn on the theme of abolition of prisons as a critically important part of the work of healing and repair that faith communities must embrace.

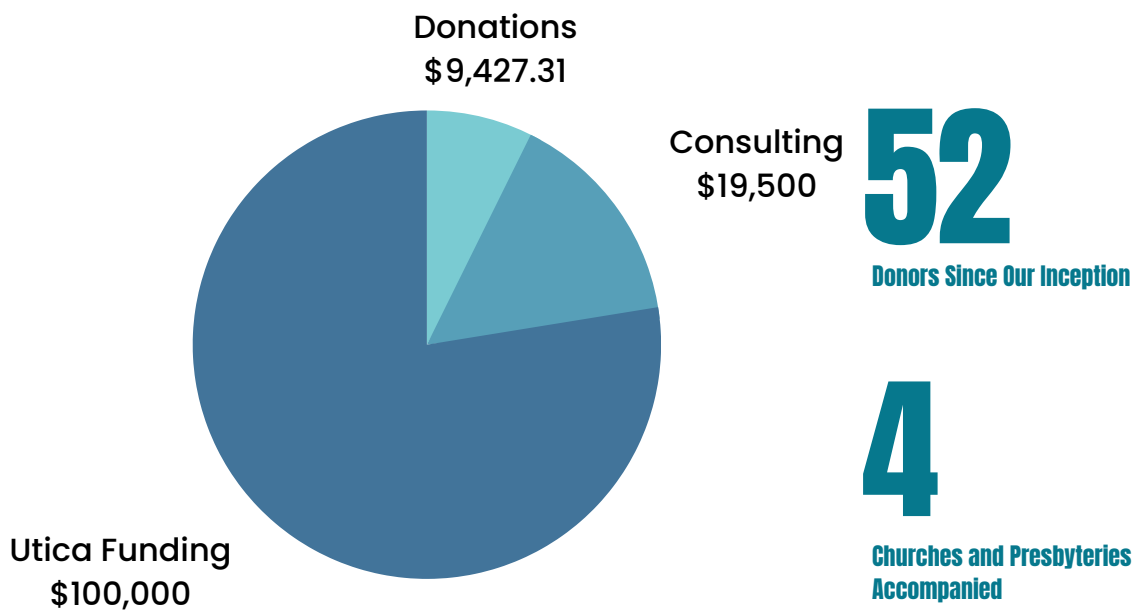
Podcasts and Articles

Ashley and Rick have been able to share the values of CJP outside of classes as well. They were both featured on the podcast [“A Matter of Faith”](#) and Ashley’s piece [“Brittney Griner: Queer, Black, Woman, Waiting”](#) was featured on the website Unbound. Articles about CJP, such as [“Can anything good come out of Utica?”](#), have been featured in The Presbyterian Outlook.

Financials

2022 was a great year for CJP from a financial perspective. We have just completed the 6th of 12 quarterly grants of \$25,000 from the Presbytery of Utica. This year, we took in just under \$20,000 in consulting fees, and about \$10,000 in donations, for a total income of just under \$130,000.

Revenue (Total \$128,927.31)



Donations came from a variety of places. In December 2021, we held our first and so far only letter-writing campaign, which brought us some of our first non-Utica donors. Starting in February 2022, we began taking online donations via a portal created through the Presbyterian Foundation. This also allowed us to begin accepting recurring donations.

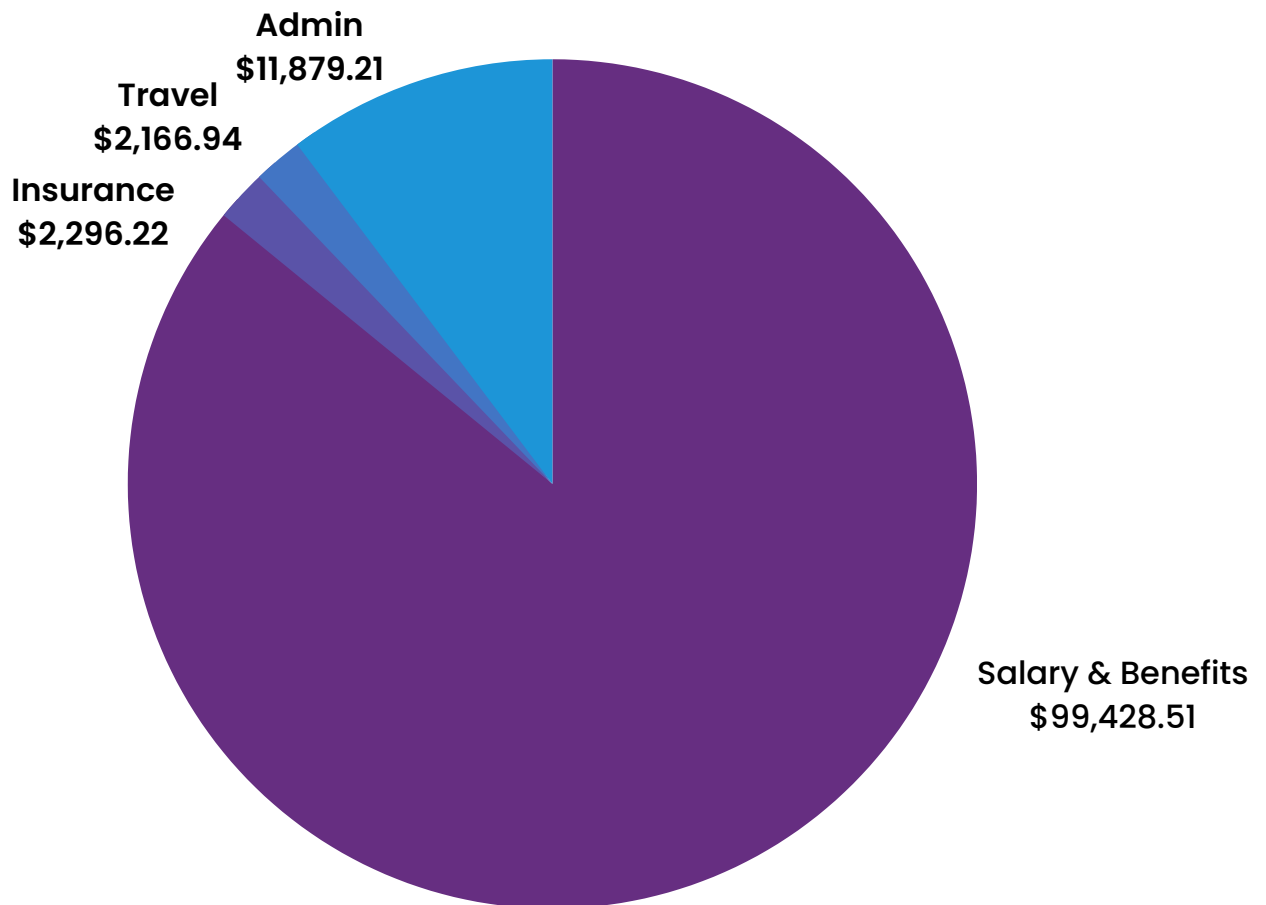
In November 2022, we held our first ever crowd-sourced donation drive thanks to our Co-Director Ashley. This effort raised \$1025 in funds.

52%

Donors gave for the first time thanks to our initial letter-writing campaign.

On the expense side, we have kept our overhead extremely low. Half-time salary and full benefits for our Co-Directors make up approximately \$105,000 of our \$115,000 in expenses. As both of our directors work from home and much of our work is virtual, our only other expenses are appropriate insurances and software to manage our projects.

Expenditures (Total \$115,743.88)



Our financial goal for 2023 is to increase from three to six accompaniment contracts. By the time the last grant from the Presbytery of Utica comes in the second quarter of 2024, we expect to have a minimum of six months operating budget in reserve and a clear path toward our operating capacity of 8 - 10 contracts. We are deeply grateful for the remarkable gift from our Utica partners that has allowed us to grow into the experience of providing accompaniment in a way that feels Spirit-led.

The Future

Looking back, 2022 was clearly the year of learning how to accompany our partners through a process of discernment about their readiness to engage in serious work of restorative justice, healing and repair for historic harm, and considerations of reparations.



Looking forward, 2023 is shaping up to be a year of journeying with partners that have the capacity to push their own bodies into specific and concrete action. Based on early indications, this will entail helping our partners understand how to be clear and firm about commitments with their own members, build relationships with community partners led by people of color and dedicated to addressing foundational justice issues, and do a creative and deep analysis of the assets that are available to carry out reparative action. It will also involve exploring how we can best support people of color including our *Pastors of Color in Predominantly White Spaces* project which we have already begun.

Acknowledgements

While Ashley and Rick may be the only employees of CJP, they are certainly not the only reasons this past year has been such a success. From our incredible Board of Directors to our primary partners to the individuals, churches, and presbyteries who donate to us, our work is truly a team effort. We are grateful to everyone who has helped make The Center for Jubilee Practice a reality.



Annanda Barclay,
Co-Chair



Jocabed Gallagos,
Co-Chair



Sarah Dunne Pickrell,
Treasurer



Deb Mullen,
Equity & Awareness Mod.



Sam Pendergrast,
Secretary



Kevin Johnson,
Board Member



Tamara Razzano,
Board Member

Acknowledgements, cont.

Primary Partners

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

Donors

- Annanda Barclay
- Larry Beasley
- Phil Beck
- Tony Beyer
- Kelli Booher
- Ryan Booher
- Willie Bryan
- Carla Jones Brown
- Caroline Cargo
- Jennifer Damelio
- Kathy Dean and Susan DeGeorge
- Ashley DeTar Birt
- Emily DeTar Birt
- Sarah Dunne Pickrell
- Janet Edwards
- Elaine Enns and Ched Myers
- Leah Falk
- Carolyn and Mark Fugate
- Liz Fugate
- Morgan Hawkins
- Ethel Hornbeck
- Kevin Johnson
- Susan Joseph Rack
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- Thia Reggio
- James Rushin
- Heather Schoenewolf
- Catherine Scudera
- Donna Scully
- Joanne Sharp
- Michael Tino
- Mark Tomczak
- Kitty and Rick Ufford-Chase
- Elaine and Otto Zingg
- First Presbyterian Church, Cooperstown
- First United Presbyterian Church, Tarentum
- Hudson River Presbytery

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



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Want to learn more about The Center for Jubilee Practice? Interested in accompaniment? Ready to donate? Use the links below.

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Ashley](#)

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