

MONTREAT[®]

CONFERENCE CENTER

2023 Annual Report





***This is my commandment, that you love
one another as I have loved you.***

John 15:12 NRSV



The Year in Review

In many ways, 2023 seemed like a normal year. Programming and retreats returned unfettered by the specter of the pandemic, visitors continued to mill about the campus, and friends new and old gathered for worship, fellowship, recreation, and study. We focused on improvements to community spaces where that gathering happens.

As community members, college students, and visitors alike enjoy a meal in the recently renovated café, The Huckleberry, our energy for improving community spaces has only grown. In 2023, we have secured funds and drafted plans for dredging and revitalizing Lake Susan, the literal central gathering space of our campus. The beloved Barn will also get some much-needed amenity upgrades while retaining its rustic charm, and we have broken ground on an expansion to the Memorial Garden that will make that space easier to navigate for those wishing to visit this space. We are also looking ahead at who will be gathered here in the years to come through a year-long strategic planning process.

Seeking new ways to live out our mission and share the joy of Christ's love with all those who visit this special place is a privilege, and we're filled with gratitude for the many ways you demonstrate your love and support of Montreat.

Montreat by the Numbers



Gateway Celebration August, 2023.

\$1,026,943
raised for the
Montreat Fund!

Fiscal year 2022-2023



**Summer
Staff**

115 Summer Staff made Montreat their home last year. Staff traveled from **22** different states.

+9,000 people
participated in Montreat
programming



Donors

1,114 individuals from **32** states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico made a gift to Montreat in 2023



Volunteering

+4,500 hours of volunteered time by individuals on leadership boards and people working in on-site opportunities

260 volunteers

Guests and Retreats

183 total guest groups who visited Montreat in 2023. This includes church groups, bible studies, retreats, and more.

11 states and the District of Columbia were represented



Giving

117 Church Patrons from **19** states in 2023 supported Montreat

Youth Programming

174 total support staff volunteers for the Middle and Youth Conferences in 2023

26 states were represented by Small Group Leaders

+19,000 collective hours worked by Small Group Leaders



Montreat's Clubs and Childcare programs hosted 1,203 participants from 37 different states + other countries.

52 programs
hosted in Montreat

includes partnered and co-sponsored events

The Huckleberry: A Continued Success

One year in, and it's obvious The Huckleberry, fondly referred to as "The Huck," has become the community center we envisioned, taking us from architects' sketches to real life memories. On August 25, 2023, we celebrated The Huckleberry's first birthday and the wrap of the café's first summer. Opening in August of 2022, we got our feet wet and introduced the newly renovated café to our community of residents, Montreat College students and staff, program participants, retreat guests, day hikers, and more. In January of 2023, during College Conference @ Montreat, we got our first taste of what operating with a large event onsite would feel like. This was our best sign of what was to come during the summer months. In May, we hired and trained new staff members who would help us pull off our first summer season, even adding a Montreat Summer Staffer to our workforce. Over the next nine weeks, we scooped almost 14,000 scoops of ice cream, brewed hundreds of gallons of Dynamite Roasting coffee, fried more pounds of french fries than one can count, and gave our espresso machine a workout pumping out lattes, mochas, cappuccinos, and more. Post summer, the chaos calmed but The Huck has continued to be a much appreciated and frequently used space. Be sure to stop by for a cup of coffee and to say hello the next time you're visiting Montreat!





Projects to Watch

The Barn: Updated to Stay the Same

After generations of hosting Clubbies and mountain circle dances, the much-beloved Barn needs to be updated. President Richard DuBose is fond of saying that through these renovation efforts, we are "investing in it to keep it the same," which is what you do with things you love. Work began in the fall, and includes infrastructure improvements, new bathrooms, windows and doors, and enhanced light and sound capabilities. When you next enter The Barn, the hope is that the building will feel as it always has—just a bit more comfortable and sustainable for the next 50 years.



Revitalizing Lake Susan

Whether enjoying a quiet walk on its path, sitting a spell to take in the scenery, or doing some fishing or boating, most visitors to Montreat enjoy the lake at one point or another during their stay. Lake Susan is also the town's largest storm water retention facility. However, the lake's capacity has significantly declined in recent years due to upstream erosion. Now, thanks to a significant grant from the state, Lake Susan will be dredged for the first time in twenty years. This project, slated for the fall of 2024, marks the latest in a series of initiatives undertaken by the conference center to promote environmental sustainability and enhance the well-being of Montreat and the surrounding communities.

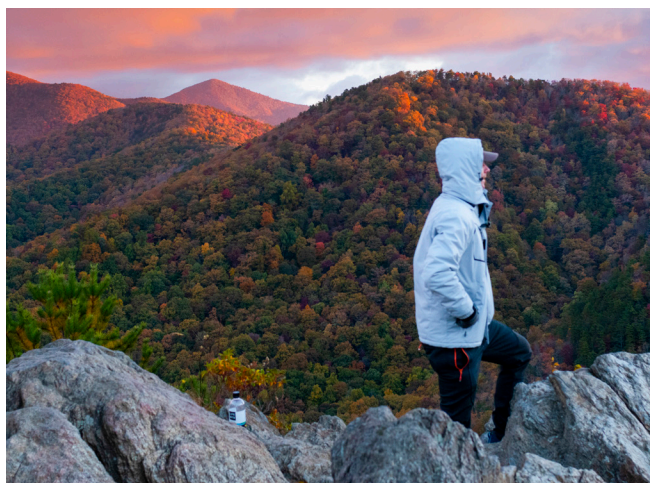


Memorial Garden Expansion

Work began in January 2024 on the Nancy Holland Sibley Memorial Garden expansion. This expansion will expand the scattering portion of the garden and the existing trail will also be made accessible to wheeled devices. A final completion date is difficult to pinpoint, but our goal is for the work to be completed by late spring of 2024.

Reviewing the Montreat Wilderness

The 2,500 acres that comprise the Montreat Wilderness are a popular destination for conferees, residents of the surrounding area, and visitors alike, and have seen an explosion of traffic over the past ten years. In 2023, Montreat Conference Center engaged a firm to assess the use and create a plan for the area to help us better manage this increase.



A New Strategic Plan on the Horizon

Montreat, the PC(USA), the greater Church, and the world have seen many significant changes in the decade since our last strategic plan. Montreat has fared those changes exceptionally well thanks to the grace of God, generous and committed supporters, a dedicated staff, and good planning. In 2023, our Board of Directors initiated a new strategic planning process to reaffirm our mission and discern the institution's strategic direction. This process is set to conclude in the fall of 2024 and will help guide us into the future.

An Update on Montreat's New Lodge

Montreat's need for expanded and updated housing has continued this year. The number of retreat groups and conferees desiring to come here regularly exceeds our capacity to accommodate these groups in conference center housing. After first receiving a permit from the Town of Montreat in 2022, an appellate court ruling has further delayed the project. In 2023, the conference center filed a notice to appeal this ruling to a higher court. In the meantime, we continue to move forward planning and fundraising for development of our property for the critical missional purpose of hospitality.

Program and Event Highlights

Last year, our programming provided space for participants to connect, to examine tough topics, and to seek renewal. Thousands of youth learned to seek joy in their daily lives, and church groups learned to create thriving congregations through coaching and retreats. These programs engaged participants of all ages, from the young to the young at heart. We welcomed those who came to find a sense of the familiar and those who came looking for something new. We were honored to help play a part in the renewal, education, and spiritual growth of thousands of people coming from across the country, whether sitting in the pews of Anderson Auditorium, in a small group circle, or on the side of a trail. We've got a lot more to offer in 2024 and hope to see you again sometime soon!

**Find a program
that fits you!**

Scan the QR code or visit
montreat.org/events.







*And let us consider how to provoke one another to love
good deeds, not neglecting to meet together, as is the
of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more
you see the Day approaching.*

Hebrews 10:24–25 NRSV



The Manna Retreat

Written by Sarah Speed

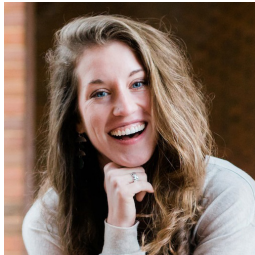
After months of Zoom calls, hours of planning, dozens of team conversations, and long flights, we were finally there. On January 27th of 2023, the doors to Convocation Hall flew open, music pumped through the speakers, and The Manna Retreat began for the first time as 80 young adults in their 20s and early 30s streamed inside. It was a holy moment I will never forget.

The Manna Retreat is an initiative to create a conference space for young adults. For generations, Montreat has done an incredible job fostering the faith of youth and college students. I have witnessed and experienced that nurturing first hand. However, after college graduation, many of those young people never venture through those gates again. Based on my own experience as an associate pastor for young adult ministry, I knew that if we could create a space to nurture the faith of young people, they would come.

So for three days, The Manna Retreat leadership team spent our time and energy pouring into those young adults. Like manna in the wilderness, our prayer was to nurture and sustain the faith that those young people brought through small groups, keynote, worship, late night trivia, workshops, and group hikes.

At the end of the weekend, the entire conference group circled Convocation Hall. We stood shoulder to shoulder,

and looked around the room as we promised and reminded those young people that they were the rock that Christ was building the church on. There were tears and smiles, laughter and hope. It was a holy ground moment that I cannot wait to experience again. So, if you are a young adult and your faith could use some nourishing, I hope you'll join us. We have manna to share.



Sarah Speed is the associate pastor for young adults and membership at Fifth Avenue Presbyterian Church in New York, NY. She is a graduate of Columbia Theological Seminary, a seventh generation Presbyterian pastor, and a part-time poet. Sarah enjoys trying new recipes, visiting local coffee shops, reading on the subway, and any excuse to return to Montreat.



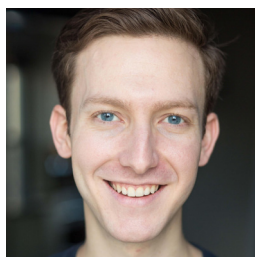


Voices Of Participants



I find that often times the only reason I'm going on retreats is for my students - which is absolutely great. But what about my faith? I believe I can only be my best self for my students and for my congregation when I am spiritually fulfilled. The harsh truth of church work is that it can often feel spiritually depleting. Those in ministry GIVE, GIVE, GIVE, and ask for little in return. It felt amazing to feel thought of - to feel like someone intentionally crafted a weekend for ME. Young adults need their church to invest in them, too! The Manna Retreat does just that.

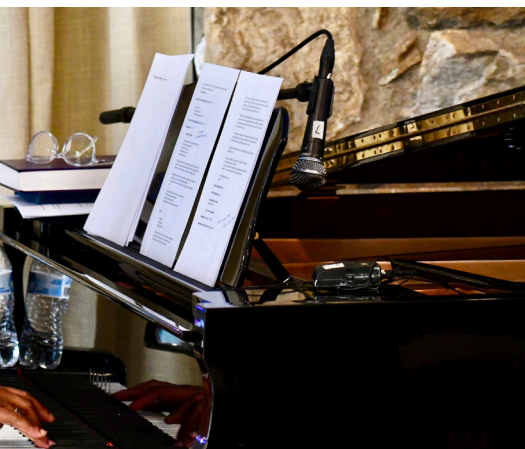
Meredith Orel



I was looking for connection and a place to grow. That can be hard as a young adult! I had also never been to Montreat before, so this seemed like a really exciting opportunity.

Opportunities to connect with wonderful people in a wonderful place don't come often enough. The Manna Retreat was filled with kind people and joyous experiences, and that's pretty hard to beat.

Matthew Anderson



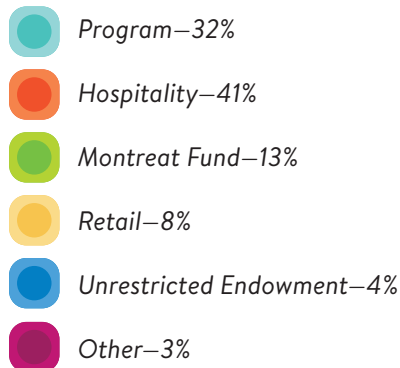
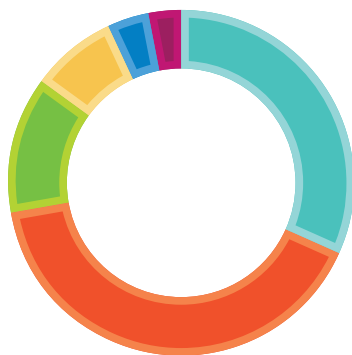
2022-2023 Fiscal Year Operating Fund Report

Montreat's fiscal year runs May 1–April 30.

	FY 2023–2024 <i>(budgeted)</i>	FY 2022–2023 <i>(actual)</i>	FY 2021–2022 <i>(actual)</i>	FY 2020–2021 <i>(actual)</i>
Program				
Conference Revenues	\$2,103,582	\$2,001,529	\$1,563,562	\$409,631
Conference Direct Expenses	(\$879,902)	(\$888,130)	(\$679,128)	(\$57,900)
Program Building Revenues	\$95,746	\$102,486	\$89,343	\$75,597
Program Building Expenses	(\$244,542)	(\$234,112)	(\$240,791)	(\$132,826)
Clubs & Child Care Revenues	\$476,530	\$408,965	\$328,815	\$7,200
Clubs & Child Care Direct Expenses	(\$282,177)	(\$236,057)	(\$212,447)	(\$5,863)
Recreation Revenues	\$50,452	\$47,205	\$45,641	\$5,325
Recreation Direct Expenses	(\$86,152)	(\$80,242)	(\$70,218)	(\$30,060)
Program Department Expenses	(\$819,718)	(\$922,660)	(\$797,869)	(\$633,900)
NET	\$413,819	\$198,983	\$26,909	(\$362,797)
Hospitality (Lodging and Food)				
Revenues	\$3,699,136	\$3,289,710	\$2,368,688	\$441,462
Expenses	(\$2,658,909)	(\$2,247,091)	(\$1,686,497)	(\$1,001,021)
NET	\$1,040,227	\$1,042,619	\$682,191	(\$559,559)
Retail				
Revenues	\$611,815	\$620,437	\$505,316	\$229,261
Expenses	(\$538,212)	(\$510,963)	(\$438,366)	(\$278,314)
NET	\$73,603	\$109,474	\$66,950	(\$49,054)
Development				
Montreat Fund	\$1,050,000	\$1,026,943	\$1,037,507	\$1,033,084
Unrestricted Bequests	---	---	---	\$252,144
Development and Volunteer Expenses	(\$398,709)	(\$402,826)	(\$367,528)	(\$396,125)
NET	\$651,291	\$624,117	\$669,979	\$889,104

	FY 2023–2024 <i>(budgeted)</i>	FY 2022–2023 <i>(actual)</i>	FY 2021–2022 <i>(actual)</i>	FY 2020–2021 <i>(actual)</i>
Communications				
NET	(\$855,494)	(\$758,054)	(\$661,960)	(\$654,610)
Other Revenues				
● Unrestricted Endowment Distributions	\$304,026	\$299,761	\$266,542	\$259,487
● Other Revenues	\$159,075	\$281,170	\$233,681	\$244,324
Forgiven Paycheck Protection Program Loans	---	---	\$634,100	\$750,300
Employee Retention Tax Credit	---	---	\$632,702	\$301,637
NET	\$463,101	\$580,931	\$1,767,025	\$1,555,747
Other Expenses				
President's Office and Board of Trustees	(\$376,974)	(\$352,909)	(\$343,096)	(\$307,801)
Business Office	(\$412,137)	(\$373,426)	(\$370,064)	(\$348,334)
Maintenance Department	(\$446,209)	(\$383,595)	(\$337,226)	(\$359,004)
Shared Services	(\$460,367)	(\$512,856)	(\$752,225)	(\$177,358)
Non-operating Expenditures and Reserves	(\$90,860)	(\$90,995)	(\$90,148)	(\$92,798)
NET	(\$1,786,547)	(\$1,713,781)	(\$1,892,759)	(\$1,285,295)
Revenue	\$8,550,362	\$8,078,205	\$7,705,896	\$4,009,452
Expenses	(\$8,550,362)	(\$7,993,915)	(\$7,047,562)	(\$4,475,914)
Surplus (Deficit)	---	\$84,290	\$658,334	(\$466,462)

Sources of Revenue²



Actual FY Operating Revenue: \$8,078,205

\$1,026,943 donated to the Montreat Fund

\$17,056,521 in Endowment net assets¹

¹ As of 4/30/2023

² Rounded to nearest whole number



It Wouldn't Be Montreat Without You



There are a lot of things that help make Montreat special, but the most important one is your presence here! We give thanks for the thousands of volunteers, donors, staff, and participants that make Montreat Conference Center's mission possible.



*For where two or three are
gathered in my name, I am
there among them.*

Matthew 18:20 NRSV

LAKE SUSAN





Learn more at montreat.org



*We gather people to experience
God's transforming power and
inspire love for the world.*