



Interfaith
Partners for the
CHESAPEAKE

2025 ANNUAL REPORT



**ROOTED IN FAITH
GROWING OUR IMPACT**

15 years: Rooted in faith and united by a shared calling to care for Creation

In 2025, Interfaith Partners for the Chesapeake (IPC) celebrated 15 years of service. IPC deepened its commitment to working alongside partners and congregations to transform sacred spaces at hundreds of faith communities and to provide community resilience and hope.

Rooted in faith and united by a shared calling to care for Creation, hundreds of congregations across Maryland, Washington, D.C., and Pennsylvania have partnered with IPC to plant trees, install native gardens, reduce stormwater runoff, improve energy efficiency, and advocate for cleaner lands and waters. These efforts reach beyond faith community grounds, creating healthier neighborhoods, addressing environmental inequities, and bringing critical resources to historically underserved communities. IPC continues to demonstrate that when people of faith come together, they cultivate change, restore local ecosystems, and inspire lasting impact for generations to come.



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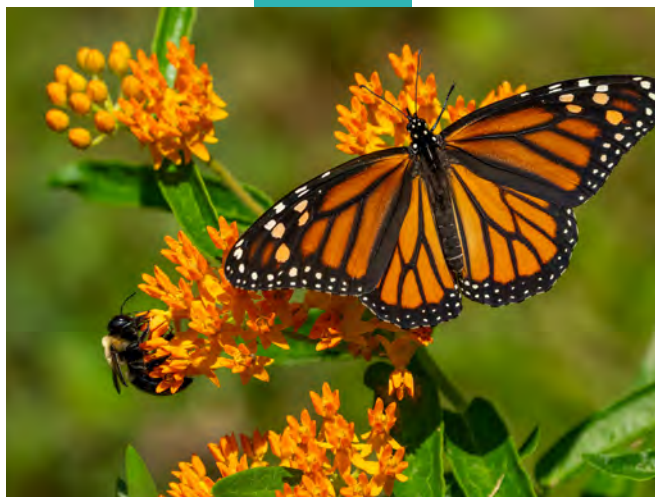
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Letter from Meenal Harankhedkar, Executive Director

Interconnectedness is intrinsic to the survival of an ecosystem. One thing cannot flourish on its own. At Interfaith Partners for the Chesapeake (IPC), we recognize the power of interconnectedness and socio-ecological stewardship for building sustainable habitats and healthy resilient communities.

The ecological health of our local habitats is at a pivotal intersection of stewardship and land ethos. In 2025, IPC collaboratively worked with external and internal stakeholders to develop a new strategic plan to better support interfaith communities caring for the Chesapeake lands and waters. The strategic plan aims to uplift interfaith voices, strengthen and build our capacity to better serve as a connector and, work in collaborative frameworks to provide best resources to faith communities for restoration. Implementation of the new strategic plan will continue to strengthen IPC as a successful connector bringing together communities and shared values to help rebuild the ecological health of our local watersheds.

At IPC, we strive to deeply strengthen the intrinsic connection between stewardship of the lands and waters and community health. But no one thing can flourish on its own. IPC needs you to join us today and support the movement of interfaith dialogue, stewardship and land ethos. IPC invites you to join us in the call for action, to support community engagement to build resilient communities and sustainable habitats for many generations to come. Together we can flourish.

With gratitude,
Meenal



Letter from Mark Wright, Board of Directors Chair

Without you and your ongoing support, Interfaith Partners for the Chesapeake would not be able to fulfill its sacred, unique, and vital mission. So, on behalf of the IPC board of directors, thank you for everything you have done and are doing in service of this organization!

During my almost six years on the IPC board, I've had the privilege of meeting so many people, especially IPC's talented staff and dedicated volunteers, whose commitment and labors have left me awestruck, inspired, and hopeful for the future.

For me, serving with IPC has been a memorable and moving experience. Working with people — like you — who are devoted to loving and healing Creation, continues to be not simply an honor, but also deeply gratifying and meaningful.

Your participation in and support of IPC's work is an antidote to the gut-wrenching headlines we all see in the news every day. This world is beset by so many threats, so many challenges, so many crises, that it can all be overwhelming.

Yet, there you are, working through IPC to heal, to mend, to make common cause with people of other faiths in service of a higher calling. The opportunity to work together with you is at once humbling and inspiring. At the risk of making you squirm, let me simply say: You are the answer to many prayers.

Thank you,
Mark

United in Faith and Rooted in Stewardship

Our Mission

To inspire and equip people of faith to honor, protect, and restore our shared watershed.

Our Vision

RESPECT: Out of love for each other, we cherish nature and strive to protect all of Creation today and for future generations.

ACTION: Our work is rooted in hope and we live out our call to stewardship by taking action.

JUSTICE: We acknowledge existing injustices and work to achieve a healthy watershed for all community members of every socio-economic status and race.

INCLUSION: We strive to build community with all people of conscience, all faiths, all races and cultures, working together for the common good.

ACCOUNTABILITY: We are responsible for the resources entrusted to us and expect the same from our partners.

Who We Are

Interfaith Partners for the Chesapeake works with hundreds of faith communities to care for Creation through environmental stewardship, restoration, education, and community engagement. We envision a future where faith communities across the Chesapeake Bay watershed embrace their shared responsibility to honor, protect, and restore the land and water that sustain us — so that our neighbors and future generations may flourish. The Chesapeake watershed spans 64,000 square miles and is home to more than 18 million people and over 19,000 congregations. Imagine the impact if every congregation joined together in caring for our shared waters. The potential for transformation is extraordinary.

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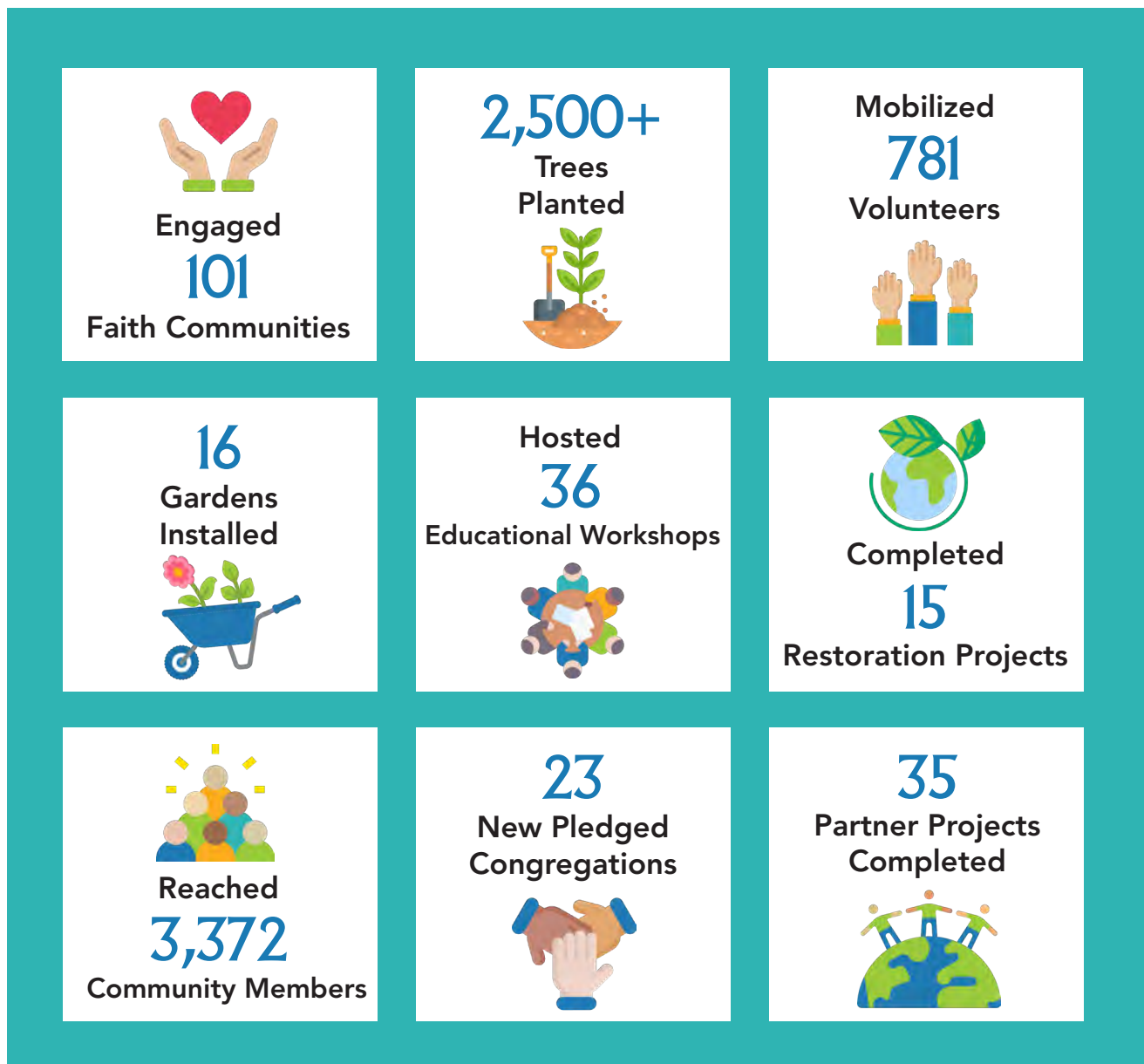
Our Impact at a Glance

This year our growth reflects the extraordinary impact of our community of supporters. We are catalysts for growth, investing in the future and accelerating our mission daily.

Through increased philanthropic investment, expanded partnerships, and a growing network of advocates, we continue this important work of stewardship that benefits the Chesapeake Bay. Every number tells a story — more lives served, more programs delivered, more opportunities created, and more resources invested in the communities we serve. These milestones are not simply measures of growth; they represent meaningful progress toward lasting change to our lands and waters.

Together, our donors, green teams, volunteers, and partners are helping build a stronger future and expanding the reach of our impact year after year. Our congregations are the heart behind Creation care and we couldn't do this work without them.

Here is a look at what we've done over the past year:



Working Together for Creation with a New Strategic Plan: 2026-2028



UPLIFT: ELEVATE FAITH-BASED VOICES AND LEADERSHIP

- Strengthen the capacity of faith leaders to champion Creation care.
- Build understanding of interfaith traditions' approach to Creation care.
- Elevate faith voices in policy, science, and community conversations.
- Engage emerging leaders including young adults.
- Develop green team leadership across collaborative interfaith networks.



BUILD: STRENGTHEN ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY FOR GROWTH AND SUSTAINABILITY

- Invest in staff development and support, including equitable compensation.
- Nurture a positive and inclusive team culture to attract and retain staff and board talent.
- Build expertise in interfaith engagement.
- Diversify funding sources and expand supporter base.
- Leverage user-friendly technology to build effectiveness and efficiency.



RESTORE: EXPAND THE IMPACT OF INTERFAITH PARTNERSHIPS AND COMMUNITY ACTION

- Broaden and deepen the environmental impact of faith communities across the Chesapeake watershed.
- Strengthen relationships with regional faith network leaders and diverse partner organizations.
- Expand engagement with youth, volunteers, and congregations.
- Build connections with academic, scientific, and agricultural communities.

UPLIFT: Inspiring Communities Through Education & Connection

Being a Voice for Leadership, Creation, and Community

We believe lasting environmental change begins with inspired leadership. Through partnerships with faith leaders, congregations, and technical partners across the watershed, IPC helped uplift voices committed to protecting our shared lands and waters for future generations with advocacy initiatives and by bringing together green teams/HUBS across Maryland, Virginia, and Washington, D.C.

Restoring streams, planting trees, reducing pollution, and creating sustainable spaces not only strengthens the environment — it uplifts individuals by supporting wellness, food access, climate resilience, and community connection.

Programs that uplift include:



Faith and Restoration Forum 2025

Faithful Green Leaders Training (FGLT)

With **more than 230 green teams trained**, IPC provided leadership training to hundreds of congregations, youth, and individuals to help faith communities acquire the skills, tools and resources they need to lead their communities in raising awareness and restoring the waters of the Chesapeake region. These trainings gather like-minded individuals in area congregations and connect with environmentally-driven people from diverse faith traditions, providing unity to many underserved communities that need support and resources.

Learning Labs

We take a deep dive into educating faith communities on a variety of environmental and social justice topics in order to help build their knowledge base and improve their communities. **IPC created 10 Learning Labs this year**, both in-person and virtual. The labs brought together hundreds of green teams and leaders to teach, empower, and create initiatives from tree plantings, to sustainable consumption and invasive plants to individuals and their neighborhoods.

Advocacy

Public policy plays a vital role in creating meaningful and lasting change. While our individual choices and institutional actions can either help heal or harm the watershed, true transformation happens when policies support long-term environmental justice and sustainability. We continued to work with our legislative partners this year on the "Bottle Bill" (Maryland Beverage Container Recycling Refund and Litter Reduction Program) and built relationships with leaders that are passionate about our mission and the Chesapeake Bay. We share a moral responsibility to care for our lands, waters, and communities by engaging in the civic process and adopting practices that honor the interconnected web of life. **Together, with over 1,500 volunteers, our voices and actions continue to make a lasting difference.**

BUILD: Strengthening Sustainable Communities



Mount St. Joseph tree planing with the Alliance

Building Hope Through Creation Care

Increasing equity among our congregations is just one initiative we have that will support stronger communities. Resilient communities and a healthy environment go hand in hand. Through community gardens, native tree plantings, watershed restoration, and environmental education, we mobilized hundreds of volunteers to care for the lands and waters that sustain us while bringing faith communities together around a shared commitment to Creation care.

Our signature Trees for Sacred Places program embodies this work, empowering congregations to transform their sacred spaces with native trees that improve water quality, support wildlife, and provide lasting benefits for their communities.



PROGRAM HIGHLIGHT: TREES FOR SACRED PLACES

In 2025, IPC's Trees for Sacred Places program experienced remarkable growth. Through our partnership with the Maryland Department of Natural Resources and the Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay, **we planted more than 2,500 native trees and shrubs at 17 congregations.**

RESTORE: Committing to Action, Justice and Partnerships



Stillmeadow Bioretention Ribbon Cutting

Creating Healthier Neighborhoods

Restoration is more than healing the environment — it is restoring communities and creating a more just and equitable future. This year we continued to take community-driven action, supporting underserved neighborhoods through environmental stewardship, education, and meaningful partnerships.

By working alongside congregations, nonprofits, technical partners, and corporate sponsors, IPC helped bring resources, restoration projects, and long-term investment into communities that are often disproportionately impacted by environmental challenges. Together, One Water Partnership supported healthier living, conservation, cleaner waterways, increased access to green spaces, and stronger community resilience.



PROGRAM HIGHLIGHT: ONE WATER PARTNERSHIP

Our One Water Partnership program builds faith, community, and engagement with regional collaborations of congregations, environmental nonprofits, and government agencies to restore local waterways and lands within the Chesapeake Bay watershed.

Stories of Impact

Chesapeake Champions



Bill Breakey



Charlie Conklin

We celebrated our Chesapeake Champions, and honored Bill Breakey and Charlie Conklin for their service at the 15th Anniversary Celebration.

Interfaith Partners for the Chesapeake began with a simple but powerful question: *What if caring for the Chesapeake Bay was also an act of faith?*

The seeds of IPC were planted in 2004 at the National Council of Churches' Holy Waters Conference in Annapolis. There, a small group of faith leaders and environmental advocates gathered to learn about the challenges facing the Chesapeake Bay and explore the role faith communities could play in its restoration.

Among those inspired by the gathering were IPC Champions Bill Breakey and Charlie Conklin. Though they came from different backgrounds—Bill as a psychiatrist and educator, and Charlie as a lifelong environmental advocate—they shared a conviction that communities of faith could be a powerful force for change. That conviction became the foundation of IPC's mission and continues to guide its work today.

At the time, environmental restoration efforts in the Chesapeake region were largely led by government agencies, scientists, and nonprofit organizations. Bill, Charlie, and their colleagues saw an opportunity to engage another vital community: people of faith. They believed that

caring for our shared waters was not only an environmental responsibility but also a moral and spiritual one.

Over the next several years, a dedicated group of volunteers met in churches, conference rooms, and coffee shops, building relationships across faith traditions and working to inspire congregations to embrace Creation care. Their efforts eventually grew into Chesapeake Covenant Congregations, an early network of faith communities committed to environmental stewardship.

As the movement expanded, so did its vision. In 2010, leaders from Christian, Jewish, Muslim, Quaker, and other faith traditions gathered at Baltimore's Bolton Street Synagogue to sign a declaration called Covenanting for Creation. The event marked the formal launch of what would become Interfaith Partners for the Chesapeake and reflected a defining belief that continues to guide our work today: caring for our environment is a shared responsibility that transcends faith traditions.

What began as a small gathering of committed individuals has grown into a network of hundreds of congregations and thousands of volunteers working together to restore local waterways, build resilient communities, and care for Creation throughout the Chesapeake watershed.

Thanks to the vision that inspired Bill and Charlie to take action, the heart of our work: bringing people together across faiths to transform the health of our communities and the Chesapeake Bay, continues to thrive.

Congregations in Action: Stormwater Restoration



On a hot day in July, five members of Sherwood Episcopal Church visited a stormwater restoration project at another congregation. After the tour, as they sat together, they shared a feeling that would change their community. “We didn’t know how we were going to do it,” recalled Reverend Nancy Hennessey, rector of Sherwood Episcopal, “but we knew we had to do it.”

For years, stormwater runoff had caused severe erosion and flooding on the church’s historic property in Cockeysville, Maryland, and along nearby York Road. Although the congregation had

no legal obligation to address the problem, they saw an opportunity to serve their neighbors and care for Creation.

With guidance from Interfaith Partners for the Chesapeake, Sherwood Episcopal Church partnered with Gunpowder Valley Conservancy and the Maryland Department of Natural Resources to turn that vision into reality. After an initial funding setback, the team persevered, securing a \$60,000 Chesapeake Bay Trust design grant and later \$1.7 million in construction funding from Maryland DNR.

Today, a regenerative stormwater conveyance system featuring 30 step pools captures runoff from 13 acres of surrounding land before it reaches Beaverdam Run and the Chesapeake Bay watershed.

During heavy rains this year, water that once flooded York Road was successfully captured onsite. What began as a leap of faith has become a lasting example of how congregations, communities, and partners can work together to protect both people and the environment.

Congregations in Action: Tree Planting

Prince George’s County Muslim Association (PGMA) is committed to ensuring clean water for all in the community. In May 2025, the congregation planted 40 trees on their property with the help of our partners at the Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay as part of Maryland’s statewide goal to plant 5 million native trees by 2031.

The trees are one of many projects that PGMA is working on with their congregation to address stormwater runoff and other environmental issues. They are also supporting opportunities for members to experience and appreciate Creation through accessible outdoor green spaces.

PGMA is just one of the congregations that have contributed to IPC’s total of 2,500 plus trees installed in 2025.



Fueling Growth Through Generosity

Thank you for supporting IPC. We believe stewardship is both a responsibility and a collective calling — caring for Creation while investing in healthier, more resilient communities for future generations. Together with our donors, congregations, and partners, we continue to grow lasting impact through faith, service and action. This helps the Chesapeake Bay watershed and our communities.

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CONGREGATIONS

Annapolis Friends Meeting
Christ Our Anchor
Presbyterian Church
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Govans Presbyterian Church
Grace Lutheran Church
Homewood Friends Meeting
Little Falls Meeting of Friends
Saint Luke's Episcopal Church
in Bethesda
Seekers Church

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Special Thanks to Our Funders and Sponsors



Leave a Legacy of Faith, Restoration, and Hope

Legacy Giving is an opportunity to leave a lasting statement to your faith and commitment to Creation care.

What legacy will you leave for future generations?

Your tax-deductible gift helps restore sacred lands and local waterways, strengthens communities, advances environmental justice, and equips faith communities to care for Creation for years to come.

Through your generosity, IPC can continue its vital work of restoration, advocacy, education, and community engagement across the Chesapeake Bay watershed.

Together, we can ensure that the lands and waters we cherish today remain vibrant and resilient for generations to come. Thank you for considering a legacy gift that will make a lasting difference.

Protecting the Watershed for Generations

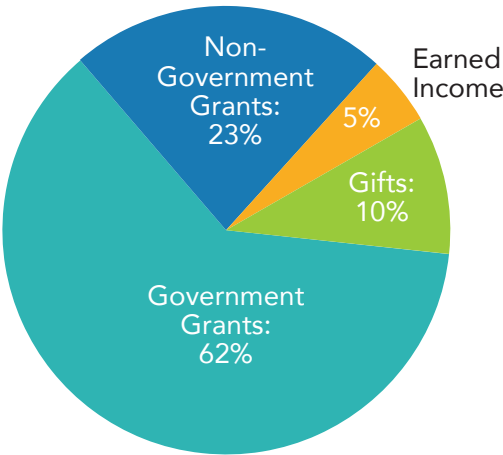


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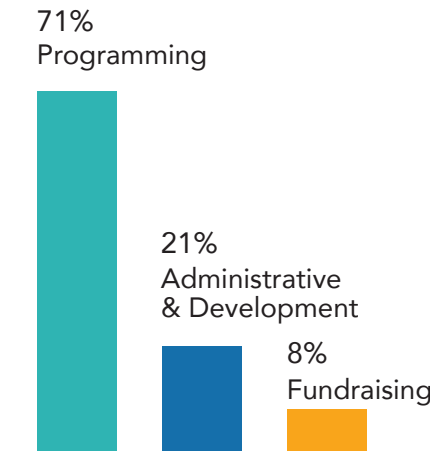


Financial Overview

TOTAL INCOME: \$1,337,331



TOTAL EXPENSES: \$1,306,163



Under formal review by a certified public accountant.



There Are So Many Ways to Support Our Work!



- **Give to IPC's Endowment Fund:** Your gift not only strengthens this vital work, it also helps build our fund, making future gifts eligible for a 25% Maryland tax credit. By giving to IPC's Endowment Fund and the Community Foundation of Anne Arundel County, you are helping our mission and the future of our faith-driven movement to ensure that the next generation inherits a cleaner bay. Please contact Darlene Chapman-Holmes at Darlene@interfaithchesapeake.org for more details.
- **Donate online** at InterfaithChesapeake.org/Donate or scan the QR code above.
- Become a **monthly sustaining supporter**.
- **Donate by check:** Interfaith Partners for the Chesapeake, P.O. Box 6791, Annapolis, MD 21401
- Ask your employer about **corporate matching gifts**.
- **Volunteer, attend events, and advocate for healthy communities.**

Thank you! Together, we uplift communities, build resilience, and restore Creation.

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