

2024 Journey Church Ministry Report

Journey Church is a new church plant in Fulton, meeting in the old St. Alban's Episcopal Church building. We have been worshipping weekly since March 2023 with a congregation that is predominantly, but not exclusively, low-income. Some are homeless, some have mental disabilities and/or mental health challenges. Some are lifelong Christians, some are now coming to faith, and others are exploring. Our services make the riches of our tradition accessible to our community. For example, while we do follow the structure of a prayer book Eucharist, no reading skills are required to participate, and we provide noisemakers for liturgical responses. Sermons are dialogical in order to lift up the voices of people who so often feel silenced by the world. After the service, we have a meal to help build relationships and feed people in need. Often we hear that our Sunday meal was all a person ate that day.

So what does life at Journey Church look like? A young man who lives in a tent getting baptized. The concentration on servers' faces as they learn to memorize, "The blood of Christ, the cup of salvation." A young mom who is four months sober sharing her testimony and a prayer she wrote for people in addiction and recovery during worship. A gay man saying he feels so much judgment in this town, but here in church he feels loved. A homeless woman sorting piles of donated clothes and profusely thanking me for letting her serve. A homeless man who says he "isn't into religion" nonetheless sitting in the back pew, dumping a handful of change in the plate and whispering, "Sorry it's not more. It's all I got."

This year we have struggled and persevered in getting remodeling done after a burst pipe caused major damage. After dealing with several contractors who turned out to be scammers, we finally found a fantastic one who is getting us on track. We are using volunteers to hang drywall, paint, etc. We are thankful for friends from Calvary Columbia and Grace Jefferson City who will help with these tasks. We look forward to how a remodeled building will help us engage more partners and offer more to the community.

Our calling to be in community with people in poverty means we can always use outside support. Beyond diocesan support, last summer we received a \$30K grant from New Episcopal Ministries and anticipate it being renewed in the next cycle. We also received a \$14K New Ventures grant last year to supplement Church Insurance proceeds that we have enough to add a shower and laundry facilities to our remodel. A \$3K grant from the Hunger Task Force helped with food. Nonprofits in our area have given us supplies, food, computers, and furniture.

We especially give thanks for the support of the Jane Dey convocation. Parishes have collected items so we can give care packages to people living in motels and homeless encampments, with hygiene items, snacks, information about the church, etc. The generosity of the Jane Dey churches has empowered our people to be a blessing and make new friends. We also give thanks for the meals Calvary, St. Mark's-Portland, Grace, and the Rev. Heather McCain have served at Journey Church. These meals help feed people in need physically and relationally and they help our parishioners, all of whom are new to the Episcopal Church, understand we are not alone, but part of a diocese and a connection bigger than any one congregation.

Would you like to connect with us? Find me at convention, send me an email (jessicabwachter@gmail.com), give me a call (417-229-7585), or visit our Facebook page. We worship Sundays at 4pm at 6 W. 9th St. in Fulton and love visitors.

Submitted by the Rev. Jessica Wachter