

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. We also have Bible study with dinner weekly, Thursday hangout day where people drop by, hang out, volunteer, etc., and fun activities— going bowling, a dance, a game night, etc.

What does life at Journey Church look like? A man who in recovery from alcoholism who says volunteering at the church gives him a sense of purpose and keeps alcohol far from his mind. A man with a disability whose family has been hateful to him who says our church is his family. A very quiet homeless man getting baptized, saying, "I renounce them!" to the question about resisting evil with force and passion, and playing the guitar every Sunday during Communion. A person who hears voices every day, which say condemning and hateful things, but finds the voices are silenced at church. A homeless woman who delights in organizing our clothing ministry, who says "This is the only place in this town who cares about people like us."

The past year we have made a lot of progress in renovating our building. Much of the work was completed by volunteers, which brought our community together, engaged new people, and empowered many. One homeless woman who painted our kitchen cabinets said, "Today I was thinking about using drugs. Instead I decided to come paint, and that's been so much better." We now have a kitchen where parishioners cook our Sunday meals and other meals, a shower, a washer and dryer, and a room filled with clothing donations on racks like a clothing store. We have a room we are in the process of turning into a kids' space.

Our calling to be in community with people in poverty means we can always use outside support. Beyond diocesan support, we just received a \$17K grant from New Episcopal Ministries. A \$3K grant from the Hunger Task Force helped with food. Nonprofits give us supplies, food, computers, and furniture. The Alumni Group, a local recovery group (which began as alumni of the drug treatment court program) has donated expert labor and materials in installing drywall and trim and flooring in our building. Callaway Physicians, a local medical group affiliated with MU health care, has begun visiting our building to talk with people in need of help accessing health care. A nurse offers people in need help with foot and nail problems.

We especially give thanks for the support of the Jane Dey convocation. Calvary Columbia has brought us many meals and supplies. St. Mark's Portland has filled our clothing room with so many nice clothing items. These gifts 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](mailto: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.