

## CHATTAHOOCHEE VALLEY EPISCOPAL MINISTRY

Malinda Shamburger, Executive Director

**Chattahoochee Valley Episcopal Ministry, Inc.** (CVEM) proclaims the Good News of God in Christ by engaging Episcopalians and our neighbors in the Chattahoochee Valley to learn, connect, and act to fight inequity and build strong communities. Grounded in our Baptismal covenant, Episcopalians are invited to join one another outside the walls of our parishes in compassionate service to and with our neighbors throughout the region. Since 1980, CVEM, a Jubilee Ministry of The Episcopal Church, has provided assistance, advocacy, and empowerment to our neighbors, especially those living in poverty with few or no resources and support. CVEM programs and activities also include cross-cultural and interfaith experiences for all ages.

In the past year, our **Direct Service** program has added additional means to assist our neighbors when they seek assistance. We have partnered with the Family Center of Columbus, which helps with financial counseling and budgeting; Ellie Mental Health provides mental health assessments and counseling services; Circles of Columbus works one-on-one with families trying to break the cycle of poverty, Better Work Columbus, assists individuals with job counseling and search. Our partnership with the United Way of the Chattahoochee Valley is our most significant endeavor. We are sub-grantees with their HUD Prevention Grant; this allows us to assist more people with more services. With our Direct Service funds, we assisted **172 unduplicated households—314 children and 190 adults—in Muscogee, Harris, Troup, Marion, Chattahoochee, and Webster counties in GA and Lee and Russell counties AL** with **more than \$68,922** in financial assistance toward **Housing** (rent, mortgage); **Household Essentials** (refrigerator, beds, furniture); **Transportation** (driver's license, tires, car repairs, insurance, payments, registration; bus passes); **Medical Needs** (eyeglasses, dental services); **Education and Employment** (application placement test fees, tuition, licensing exam fees, work clothes, birth certificate, background check, State I.D.); and **Utilities**.

### **2023 Outreach and asset-based ministry highlights:**

- Moved to the Beallwood Area Neighborhood Development Community Center. In Beallwood, we are currently connected with Corinth Missionary Baptist Church and Greater Beallwood Baptist Church. Every Tuesday, we welcome neighborhood seniors to the center for bingo. We are working on strengthening our relationship with our fellow churches in the Chattahoochee Valley and our adopted family in East Alabama.
- We began a partnership with the Muscogee County School District Social Work team and United Way Community Schools in identifying families that need services not offered by the district.
- Joined with other direct service providers to form the Benevolent Ministry Development. We work on ways to collaborate that benefit families in Columbus.

### **2023 Interfaith Initiatives**

- 2023's "Rockin' around the Rainbow was a joyous TAP (**Thompson-Pound Art Program**) week! Forty children ages six to 12 (with the guidance of teen interns/mentors and 40+ adult volunteers) learned how different faiths view rainbows. Instead of "critters," this year's group learned about the importance of plants. We welcomed experts from the botanical gardens to talk about the different varieties of plants. Tappers even learned about carnivorous plants. As always, we included leaders from other faith traditions to share their

faiths and cultures. TAP's Celebration ended with a celebration of our beautiful rock garden housed at the children's department of the Columbus Public Library. TAP always promotes Unity and Understanding among diverse people.

### **2023 Dismantling Racism Highlights**

- Sponsored and participated in the annual Colgay Pride Festival
- Partnered with members of St. Nicholas Episcopal Church and the City of Hamilton as they work on their Community Remembrance Project in partnership with the Equal Justice Initiative.
- Helped sponsor the first annual Juneteenth Celebration in Harris County
- Our monthly Striving for Justice Series hosted conversations and guests to discuss Anti-Semitism and Creation Care.
- Sponsored students from Tuskegee University working with the Harris County Remembrance Project on a trip to the Legacy Museum and Peace and Justice Memorial.