



Christ  
House

# Day by Day

## Celebrating 35 Years of Healing and Hope



*Founding members pose with their families in front of Christ House in 1986*

Constructed over one hundred years ago and abandoned in the 1970s, 1717 Columbia Road became a resting place for people experiencing homelessness long before it was Christ House. Dr. Janelle and Rev. Allen Goetcheus first came to Washington, DC in 1976. Janelle, working at Columbia Road Health Services, would pass the building often and see people sleeping on the front steps and building fires to keep warm. She spent each day addressing the medical needs of

patients who would then go back to the streets or shelters. Having to endure harsh conditions, inadequate rest and poor nutrition, patients often returned to receive care in a worse condition days later.

On a cold winter day in 1983, Janelle treated a 74-year-old man experiencing homelessness. He wore a wet coat on bare skin with trousers and shoes soaked through. The day was spent making phone calls in an effort to find a place for him to go other than the

shelter. He stayed the entire day, ate, and was given dry clothes. Finding him a place to stay proved impossible causing him to go back to the men's shelter with a plan to return the following day. That evening, he died from hypothermia in a phone booth on the streets of Washington, DC.

With awareness of this and other preventable deaths given a warm and safe place to recover, the dream of Christ House was officially put down on paper. The original mission



The mission of Christ House is to provide comprehensive and compassionate health care to sick and homeless men from the District of Columbia, and to assist them in addressing the critical issues to help them break the cycle of homelessness.



*Continued*

group comprised of Allen and Janelle Goetcheus, David and Marja Hilfiker, Sr. Marcella Jordan, and Don and Ellen Martin envisioned a place where the most vulnerable among us, the sick and homeless, could rest and recuperate.

With support from Rev. Gordon Cosby and an anonymous \$2.5 million donation to purchase the abandoned building, the work began to create the first residential medical facility for people experiencing homeless in the United States. Through prayer and hard work, Christ House was able to welcome its first patient, a 67-year-old gentleman with congestive heart failure, on Christmas Eve 1985.

Christ House has had over 9,273 patient admissions in the last 35 years. Patients have ranged in age from 18 all the way to 88 years old with

a wide array of health conditions. Our Kairos program, a permanent housing program based on spirituality, community, and recovery that began in 1992, has seen over 209 members. As one Kairos member who has been part of our community for 12 years shared,

***“Christ House gave me a new beginning. I spent 42 years drinking and saw things my way. I wasn’t open to suggestions until I met the staff at Christ House. I’m grateful for the physical healing I received but also for what the staff taught me. I could go anywhere and live but I just like what Christ House and the Kairos program are doing. I’m a part of a place that does good things for others and***

***that means a lot to me. I believe God dwells in Christ House on a daily basis.”***

The resilience embodied by the Kairos members, the patients who fill the halls with strength in the face of uncertainty, and the presence of a dedicated staff create a tangible atmosphere of hope here at Christ House. Today, with the support of hundreds of volunteers and donors, patients continue to receive dignified care in a warm and safe space.

As we humbly reflect on our history, Christ House recommits to our mission of comprehensive and compassionate care for sick homeless patients with unwavering resolution.

Thank you for being a part of our journey in the last 35 years and for walking alongside us in the years to come.





# A Path To The Polls

## Empowerment Through Voter Registration

Voting looks a bit different this year for people across the U.S. as many voters turn towards mail-in ballots due to the COVID-19 pandemic. While this may make voting more accessible for some, it can make voting even more challenging for people experiencing homelessness. Many individuals who are homeless do not have a valid ID or a permanent address to receive registration information or their ballot. At Christ House, we assist patients with securing IDs and also allow patients to receive mail at our address during their stay.

Alison Maurice, the Kairos Program Director, has been encouraging residents at Kairos House to make sure they're registered to vote for this year's presidential election. Kairos members have reduced barriers to voting since they already have valid IDs which are necessary for housing paperwork, and their own permanent addresses. Even still, Alison has assisted many



with making sure their registration information is up-to-date.

For Pedro, voting this year takes on extra meaning. Pedro became a permanent resident in the U.S. in 1999, applied for citizenship in 2017, and officially became a U.S. citizen this past February. "Christ House helped me with filling out the papers for immigration," he recalls. Pedro's application and interview were both in English, his second language, which he studied for in advance. He was very thankful for the Christ House staff and volunteers who accompanied him for his swearing in ceremony in February. Gloria Gomez-Tinney, the Medical Care Coordinator at Kairos House, who assisted Pedro throughout the process and attended the ceremony said, "I

am inspired by Pedro's perseverance and courage to see his goal of learning English and becoming a U.S. citizen through. He did it with a lot of effort and persistence."

Since then, Alison has helped Pedro register to vote in the upcoming election. Pedro says there were 113 people becoming citizens alongside him on the day of his ceremony, and though he's not sure if all of them will be voting, he knows he certainly will be. He says,

***"It is very important for me because many people like me don't have opportunities for everything. I want to participate. If I'm living in this place...it is my responsibility."***

# Give the Gift of Hope

Here at Christ House, holiday preparations are underway. Each year on Christmas morning, our patients wake to a bag full of presents. There is great joy all around, as the patients know that others were thinking of them and wanted to make their Christmas special. The collection of gifts this season is complicated by COVID-19. Now more than ever, your monetary contribution gives our patients hope for brighter days. Please consider making a donation at [www.christhouse.org/donate](http://www.christhouse.org/donate).

\*The end of our Fall Matching Challenge is quickly approaching. Don't miss out on the opportunity for your funds to be matched dollar-for-dollar through October 31! **With 3 weeks left to go and \$85,000 left to raise, we are counting on you to reach our goal of \$250,000!**



## Holiday Wishlist

Help make the holidays extra special for Christ House patients and Kairos members by purchasing wish list items that ship directly to Christ House from Amazon! To find the link to our Amazon wish list, visit our website or search for "Christ House DC" on Amazon.

- Small handheld radios
- Headphones
- Batteries (AA and AAA)
- Men's sweatpants (sizes M-3XL)
- Crewneck sweatshirts (M-3XL, no logos)
- Winter gloves
- Winter hats
- Travel size shaving cream
- Men's deodorant

