

Advent Shares Hope Out Loud

Support from the HOL! (Hope Out Loud!) Capital Campaign saw Advent members participate in dozens of projects – some new, some one-time; some existing ministries were expanded or refreshed. The dedicated members of Advent who truly care about people in need were very active and supportive. One member shared: *“When I had some tough years, my church came through for me! That experience changed me in big ways. I vowed that I would get involved more and “pay it forward”. Helping others has really made me a happier Christian.”*

There are so many completed (and ongoing!) projects. These ministries are wide-ranging and varied – food, clothing, shelter, blankets, books, prayers. Cookies at Christmastime. Advent members help men, women, babies, children, people in prison, people in recovery from addictions, people who are hungry - in our community, our country and around the world. Members have said that they feel joy in providing the services and the looks on the faces of the recipients reinforce joy there too. Some of the projects receive seed money from Thrivent Action Teams.

Some of our favorite ministries and activities are: Bombas Socks donations, books and Bibles for Berks County Prison, Christmas Cookies for Common Ground, the Hungry Yard Sale, Family Promise, our Little Free Library and Little Free Pantry, the (new in 2020) Prayer Team, and the many clothing drives.

As one example of the positive impact in the community: The Little Free Pantry has been filled and emptied in the same day. (see *attached photos*) We cannot keep it filled fast enough. Through our \$250.00 Thrivent Action Team sponsorship by members of different committees we can grocery shop and fill our shelves in Advent’s grocery shelves. We fill up my grocery cart three times a week and go outside to our Little Free Pantry. Within hours it had been emptied. Praise God for Thrivent and Advent’s church members in helping fill our community’s bellies with happiness through our wonderful blessed givings!

Another goal of the HOL! Campaign was to increase the use of technology in our church life. In the middle of the pandemic, we premiered a fresh, beautiful, new website to tell people about Advent – reaching out in a modern way to share God’s word and work with our neighbors, friends, and people who want to learn about God. This new website increases our visibility in the community and provides valuable information for members and visitors alike. It brings joy to see new people attend and join our church, creating more of a sense of “community”.

We continue to be inspired by: 1) Jesus’ examples of sharing, healing — “love our neighbor as ourselves”, (2) a thirst for learning about our faith through study and worship, (3) the need for support in our local and global community, (4) Reflection on our blessings and those less fortunate, (5) and, socializing with others while providing service. Members think Advent’s sermons and services explicitly help to keep us inspired and filled with the joy of serving.

Helpers stock shelves to keep the pantry full. Other helpers made the pantry outdoors accessible and welcoming. Doing God's Work with our hands was then dedicated with blessings.

Story and photos submitted by George Freestone, a member at Advent West Lawn

