

Rockwell House Episcopal Campus Ministry Convention Report 2022

Campus ministry is a life-giving and joy-filled ministry of the church. Rockwell House in St. Louis is a bright example of the Holy Spirit hard at work in community. The Rev. Hope Welles Jernagan accepted the call to be Rockwell's permanent chaplain in April 2022. Rockwell House also celebrated the building's 20th anniversary last spring.

A new era at Rockwell House began in August of 2021, with a new chaplain and the ability to participate in in-person events. Over the course of the 2021-2022 school year, we saw a strong in-person community emerge, with 15-20 students regularly attending weekly events. Students often express gratitude for the friendships that they have made at Rockwell—several students who met at Rockwell last year are now sharing apartments or campus housing together. We regularly organize field trips around St. Louis, and students are eager to show up to each other's events—plays, presentations, art shows, etc. Students find Rockwell House to be a place of welcome and nonjudgment.

Over the summer, we said goodbye to our Deaconess Anne House intern, Erin O'Rourke. We are thankful for her hard work and active participation in our community. In Erin's place, we hired a part-time administrative coordinator, Kelsey Comer. Turning the internship into a permanent paid position allows Rockwell to have stronger stability and continuity, with less year-to-year transitions.

Our fall semester started with great momentum. One highlight of note is that we have been building a closer relationship and mutual ministry with our next-door neighbors, LuMin, the ELCA Lutheran and Methodist campus ministry. We have partnered together for many events, including an orientation week dinner that served over 100 first-year students (we were expecting 20!), a monthly shared Sunday meal, and an overnight fall retreat. This partnership has strengthened both ministries and has allowed us to have a more robust presence on the Washington University and St. Louis University campuses.

In early October, we came across a major obstacle to our ministry. An electrician found a safety hazard at Rockwell House and we immediately needed to vacate the house in order to shut off electricity and make plans for repairs. Electrical repairs will be extensive because of old knob-and-tube wiring in many parts of the house. At the writing of this report, we are seeking bids for repair as well as assessing other repair and renovation needs at the house.

Since vacating Rockwell House, we have been welcomed with open arms by our neighbors at LuMin. We are now doing the majority of our weekly programming at the LuMin house, while still utilizing our outdoor chapel in Rockwell's backyard. We are ever the more thankful for our partnership with LuMin, as it has made the transition to shared space seamless. Sharing events and space with LuMin has also brought up potential discernment questions around even more shared ministry or perhaps merged ministry in the future.

Despite the current building challenges we are facing at Rockwell, our community remains strong and resilient. The students show great concern for the future of the building because the house is such a meaningful part of their college experience. Students continue to show up steadily for Sunday worship and our Wednesday Feast (dinner + compline). We are thankful for the students humor, creativity and resilience.