



Stories of Our Neighbors



We meet many new neighbors for the first time at Street Church on Wednesdays. Emily had been to a string of churches looking for a welcoming community. We invited her to join us the next day at Morning Prayer. Now Emily is one of our most active volunteers. She manages the laundry service several days a week, leads recovery meetings, does intake with new neighbors, and helps those who are ready get into addiction treatment programs.

Jared came to Memphis to find a fresh start, but upon arrival, he faced one obstacle after another. Jared found that Tennessee would not honor his home state's Medicaid; he resorted to duct taping himself together for lack of essential supplies. Constance Abbey procured emergency supplies and helped Jared regain access to his benefits. We advocated for Jared when an old legal beef resurfaced and he was denied due process repeatedly. Most recently, we helped him find housing. Jared has become our volunteer Mr. Fix-It and donates from his own income to help us help others like him.



When Montrele's son was born, his attitude toward life began to change. He'd been through addiction treatment programs, but now he took the idea of sustained sobriety seriously. He began to cultivate dormant interests in history, sociology, biology, and religion. It was during this dynamic period that Montrele began to get help from Constance Abbey. He soon began volunteering and proved himself so resourceful and perceptive that we hired him as full-time staff. Montrele now works and lives independently. We still see him every week at Street Church.





Leo was ejected from the family home when he became open about his male identity. Dealing with homelessness is difficult for anyone, but Leo faces even greater challenges. Because of his gender, the homeless shelters won't allow him in and employers won't hire him. Even his peers on the streets still hold the discriminatory attitudes they were raised with here in the Bible Belt. Constance Abbey is one of the few places that welcome Leo as he is. In spite of adversity, Leo remains a gentle, loyal, brave man.

Flak and his son escaped from his son's addicted mother and came to Memphis hoping to get back on his feet with a little help from family. When a family member endangered the child and showed no remorse, Flak gave up his family's support for his son's sake. They lived in his car until it broke down. With no money for child care, he couldn't work. Soon, DCS intervened and Flak lost custody of the person he cared about most. Around this time he met us at Constance Abbey. Thanks to our shower service, he could get and keep work. At his request, we vouched for him several times at court proceedings. He was so good at helping other guests that we brought him on as a resident staff person. He formed and manages a street team that keeps the neighborhood informed about community dangers and events. After a year of jumping through hoops for the state, Flak was reunited with his son in late 2017.



When Tori met us, she wasn't homeless, but, like 19 million Americans, she was "housing insecure," meaning her rent cost more than half of her income. Tori became a dedicated and versatile ally: hostess, advocate, secretary—she even welcomed stranded people into her own tiny apartment for shelter. Constance Abbey became her mission field for the faith that she'd learned from childhood in the church around the corner. When someone from Tori's past began to stalk her, we tried to help her secure legal protection, but failed. Tori found work out of town and relocated. Though her departure pained us, we helped her make the move. She will be a blessing to her new neighbors as she was a blessing to us and ours.