

# Fall 2024 High Plains Region Grant Report

## Holy Companion (Sterling Ranch Church Plant)

The High Plains Region's generous grant of \$25,000 has helped make it possible for me to devote myself to the ministry of church planting on a quarter time basis. After a year of nurturing this emergent community, there is much growth to celebrate, as we continue to follow the Spirit's lead in our neighborhood.

### **Worship:**

- We have held 10 worship gatherings since September of 2023, meeting in four different homes and, as of our August 24 baptism, two parks.
- We will begin meeting 2x/month in September, with a more structured liturgy taking place in a rented space in our community (having outgrown living rooms!) and a more freeform gathering, such as a nature prayer walk, an outreach or service event, or an interfaith opportunity like visiting another faith tradition, occupying the second time slot.
- We average ~20 people at each of our monthly worship gatherings, with a dozen families committed to this being their church community and 50 people actively engaged (meaning they have attended at least one worship service and have expressed interest in being on our e-newsletter and coming back again).
- We typically have 10-15 children and youth at each of our gatherings. We are constantly discerning how to involve them as full participants in worship, which involves experimentation with Godly Play and other methodologies.
- We look forward to celebrating the baptism of the Rev. Kendall Batten-Kalantzis's son, George, at our August gathering. Kendall (who is a chaplain for a retirement community) and her family live in Sterling Ranch and have been enthusiastic participants in our ministry.
- I collaborate with a talented musician, Richard Ash, who works with me to plan music and who has been building a team of volunteer musicians.

### **Formation:**

- We are kicking off a series of conversations called The Gathered Table this month. This biweekly dialogue series is our answer to the catechumenate, with themes drawn from questions asked by members of our community about the Bible and sexuality, Jesus and the cross, interfaith dialogue and more.
- Six people have enthusiastically said yes to bringing their gifts to bear on the leadership of this community. We meet monthly for spiritual formation, visioning and strategy, and leadership development. This group is the embryonic form of a Bishop's Committee, which can begin to take shape officially once we are granted Special Congregation status.

### **Outreach:**

- A few of us attended PrideFest to represent Holy Companion and share God's love with our LGBTQIA siblings. This is a vital witness for our queer-celebratory community.
- We recently launched our website, [www.holycompanion.org](http://www.holycompanion.org), with the design expertise of ESC alum and St. Peter and St. Mary member Stephanie Whitehouse, and the artistry of St. Tim's member Tess Vonfeldt-Gross. We also have an Instagram account (@holycpanion). Internally we make use of a monthly e-newsletter and a Discord server for regular, informal communication amongst the community.
- I met with a representative of the Sterling Ranch Development Company about building an Interfaith Center in our community on the property designated for a church, and we are eager to continue in conversation, along with interfaith and ecumenical partners.

I look forward to sharing with you more stories of how this ministry continues to emerge and evolve, as together we walk with Christ, our constant Companion on the Way. – Lauren+

**Thank you for your support!**





A few photos from our July Evening Prayer liturgy and cookout. We celebrated the Feast of Mary Magdalene with Evening Prayer, followed by dinner and s'mores around the fire. Our musicians graced us with surfer tunes during dinner!





Holy Companion participated in the affirming churches booth at Douglas County PrideFest on August 4



Our second Joy in Creation nature prayer walk at the Audubon Society in July. We walked along the Platte River using our senses to notice God's love present with us. The children loved it! One of our youth said, "I like this better than sitting church."