



## Journey Church Colorado

### *The Christmas Store*

Each month, Louie Lee of The Lee Team uses this space to shine the light on a nonprofit organization that's making our community a better place to be in with the hope of generating support from those who live here. This month we are proud to highlight: Journey Church and The Christmas Store. If you know a nonprofit and would like it to be featured, please reach out to Louie Lee.

As the holiday season approaches, Journey Church Colorado is gearing up for its 14th annual Christmas Store, an event designed not just to provide gifts but to restore dignity and empower parents and guardians facing financial hardship this season.

Journey Church Pastor Cory Bragg, who has been involved since the store's inception, said the mission is about

empowerment rather than charity. "A lot of organizations purchase gifts and deliver them to families for free, but that wasn't really giving dignity to the family," Bragg said. "Typically, you wouldn't see Dad around because he was embarrassed that he couldn't provide Christmas for his kids. The family they served didn't have dignity."

The Christmas Store addresses this issue by turning the traditional model on its head, offering an immersive shopping experience where parents can purchase gifts for their children at a highly reduced rate. All gifts are valued at \$30 or more. Parents can purchase up to two gifts per child for a total of \$15. Shoppers pay with cash and use a real cash register, maintaining the feeling of a normal transaction. Free childcare is provided to allow parents to shop in secret. This year, the

church is adding a new component: While parents shop, the children will get to shop for a free gift for their parents, teaching them the value of generosity.

Last year, the Christmas Store served 332 families and 1,181 children in the local area. Shopper registration is in high demand, with slots filling in less than five days last year and more than 100 families on the waitlist.

This year, the goal is to serve 350-plus families, who must put down a \$15 non-refundable deposit to ensure they show up. The event, which used to take place at local schools, is now held at Journey Church, which allows for earlier setup and more families to shop.

Beyond toys, the store features an outerwear section, where parents can get coats, boots, hats and gloves for both their children and themselves for a minimal optional donation of \$5 to \$20. Shoppers also receive two free stocking stuffers per child.

"The money we collect, we don't pocket it," Bragg said. "That money goes back into the community to help serve other families in need with rent or groceries, and to help fund our summer Serve Day initiative. Whatever money the shoppers pay with, they're blessing the community they live in." The entire endeavor — comprising brand new toys, new and gently used outerwear and the operational cost — is estimated to be a \$200,000 project, which is funneled back into the community.

**The Christmas Store relies on massive community support and a dedicated team of volunteers.** About 500 volunteers are needed to run the event, with 95% of the spots typically filled within 48 hours. Roles include sorting, inventory, gift wrapping and childcare.

**Collection Sundays for new toys and new or gently used outerwear run from Nov. 16 through Dec. 7. Businesses are also invited to become collection locations or provide financial support, which is tax deductible.** The church will find ways to scholarship families facing extreme crisis, such as a mother of three who lost her husband to suicide last year. "When people donate to the store, they're helping out people in their own backyard," Bragg said. "You're helping serve families."

For more information, or to inquire about ways you can donate, visit [www.Christmasstorecolorado.com](http://www.Christmasstorecolorado.com) or email: [info@christmasstorecolorado.com](mailto:info@christmasstorecolorado.com)



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