

Journey Church

By Laura Tayman



Forget the traditional! Think out of the box!

It is not often you hear that when talking about a church, but that is just what pastor Robby Ott wants you to think when you learn about The Journey Church. In fact, he wants people to "lose their religion" when they first attend, or at least their perception of it.

"Maybe you think going to church means being scolded, subjected to boring sermons, and having your wallet emptied," explained Pastor Ott. "We don't blame you. In fact, we think one of the biggest barriers to getting to know God has been the church itself."

The Journey Church family began a few years ago as Journey Fellowship a "planted church" meeting at Crofton Meadows Elementary School. (Church planting is a process by which new churches are established with help from a denomination, a church planting center, a local church, or a network.)

Pastor Ott joined from South Carolina in 2006 as associate pastor, believing he had been called to do such work. He was first introduced to Journey through the brother of the first pastor, Roy Jacques, who convinced him to come up and join his effort in Maryland.

Last summer, Pastor Jacques went back home to South Carolina and the congregation was at a crossroads. Pastor Ott and his family prayed and decided he was meant to take the reins. He did so, and the church family has supported him in his efforts to do things a little differently. Ok, a lot differently.

First, the church agreed to meet at its sponsor church, The Church at Severn Run in Severn, but on Saturday nights. "I didn't think that I was going to like church on Saturday night, but I really do," confessed member Linda Caddenhead. "It's great family time, and we always do something fun afterwards often as a group. It's very weird but I'd rather go to church than to the movies!"

"A few folks had conflicts with things like sports, but for the most part, families were staying home anyway," explained Ott. "We are finding that members enjoy having a more relaxing Sunday morning, where they don't have the stress of getting the family up and dressed. And a lot of our members go out to eat together afterwards, having a great social time with each other."

Member Erika Cornett said the Saturday nights are just an example of the casualness the church has toward worship. "You don't have to get dressed up, you are welcomed as who you are," she said.

Member Angie Rossi agreed. "Belonging to this church is belonging to a family," she said. "It inspires us to grow in our relationship with the Lord and encourages us to do life together as God intended. It's more than a church, it's a home."

The worship experience is also a little – different. Take his recent series of sermons on "Bringing Sexy Back" – a series discussing what the Bible had to say about the topic and what it really means to be sexy.

During the service, you're likely to hear modern live music, enjoy free snacks and coffee, and experience the Bible preached in an interactive and visual way using technology, like video and lighting, to enhance the message. Even teens enjoy the evening. "It is a place I enjoy going to, and the message is always delivered in a fun and entertaining way," said Crofton teen Matt Caddenhead.

Upcoming church-sponsored events are also a Robby Ott-kind of activity, like their June 22nd flag football tournament (all ages, men and women, prizes, but no religion emphasized) and an October Candy Drop event including a family fun day topped off with a real helicopter dropping thousands of bags of candy for attendees.

If this sounds intriguing, Pastor Ott and other local Journey members say before you write church off completely, give The Journey Church a chance to change your mind.

"We realize you could do a thousand other things on a Saturday night. So can we. But we've found a group of people who are willing to be real with us, to walk with us, to support us, and to give us a church experience that's anything but boring. There's something different here," he promised.

For more information about The Journey Church log on to their website: <http://journeychurchmd.com/>



Above: The church's band performs contemporary music during the Saturday service. Courtesy Photo.

Top Right: The Journey Church pastor Robby Ott leads a church with a welcoming message. Courtesy Photo.

Middle: Members of the church's youth program perform. Courtesy Photo.

Bottom: Events like an ice cream social promote the "family" spirit of the congregation. Courtesy Photo.