



State of the Church

Central United Methodist Church, Florence, SC

Charge Conference – November 18, 2018

Meg Bryce Jiunnies

Central UMC continues to be full of life and action. It seems like on any day you can walk in the door and find all sorts of ministry happening in every corner. I enjoy walking through the church each day, experiencing the different sights and sounds, from the Shepherd's Center working on craft projects, to children laughing, the squeak of basketball shoes, and the aromas of good meals. I love watching as one of our youth helps an older member down the stairs. I enjoy listening to the organ practice and greeting the adults as they go toward Bible study and choir practice. It thrills me to see our children and youth speak confidently from the pulpit about stewardship, and listen to our Confirmation class ask intelligent and thoughtful questions about God interspersed with the normal teen conversations.

We don't always look tidy and organized, after all, there's a bed sitting in our Commons, lots of tables for signups for blood donations, a bake sale, classes, and basketball; not to mention the wheelchairs waiting behind the stair door to help people join in the community. It's not always picture-perfect and neat, but each of these indicate that we are a thriving, multi-generational Christian community. What makes us interesting is that we are quite different from one another. What makes us a Christian community is that overall there is respect for those differences.

I am constantly touched by watching our church family care for one another, from the encouraging words in the marriage classes, to the prayers lifted up at the Prayer Service and Sunday school rooms, to the tears of shared grief.

Central is settling well into its niche of ministry within Florence, finding the balance of answering the needs of the community while utilizing the spiritual gifts of its congregants. The Spirit-filled worship services encompass styles unique to this church, each well-planned and intentional. The quality educational programs, vital partnerships with the community, and outstanding music programs in large part define Central, but nothing so much as the joyful worship and the abundant outreach.

We are all at slightly different places on our faith journey, and Central is doing a wonderful job of offering classes, activities, and worship experiences for all. We've learned that worshipping God doesn't just happen in a particular way, so we listen to great old hymns and contemporary Christian music while kids color on paper tablecloths. We experience the awe of worshipping God with the beauty of liturgy and rituals that we find in our traditional worship. And, at both places, is the sacrament of Holy Communion, whether it is having a six-year old hold the cup for her mother or a retired elder in a robe and stole lean over the chancel rail, we feel the presence of God in community with one another.

We are blessed with people who love to study history and the Bible, and so we can offer formal courses in Bible Study or choose to sit in a darkened room with others seeking sabbath and learning the spiritual discipline of prayer. If you look around at the handmade altar cloths, banners, chair covers or even the altar table itself, you can see the results of hours of work spent in creating items used in worshipping God.

I love this church and especially the people within it. They have nurtured my faith, taught me about God, grieved with me, and laughed with me. I am grateful for the past connection, but most of all, excited for the future and all the ways that Central continues to grow and evolve into faith-filled disciples.

I am very proud to be part of a wonderful team of people who work hard to provide the means for our congregation and community to worship and minister to others. I am extremely thankful to work with some of the finest pastors I've ever met. Whether retired or active, Central is fortunate to have these clergypersons here in ministry. Our associate, Rev. Derrick Cattenhead is a generous and encouraging colleague who never fails to provide support. Our senior pastor, Rev. Will Malambri is the example of pastoral leadership that I work to emulate, and I have enormous respect for Will, for his ethic of hard work, his commitment to excellence in ministry, and his constant care for God's children.

I remain extremely blessed to serve this congregation.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Meg Bryce Jiunnies". The signature is fluid and cursive, with "Meg" and "Bryce" on the first line and "Jiunnies" on the second line.

Rev. Meg Bryce Jiunnies, Minister of Faith Formation and Discipleship