

2023 Senior Pastor Charge Conference Report

These last several months have felt like an answered prayer. Every week, I meet people who are excited to be at Central UMC and are looking for a way to serve Jesus and love others. We've seen so many new faces or faces that are familiar but have been absent for a season. There is such a sense of joy and excitement about being the Church without all the messiness of the last few years.

The lay leadership of Central is truly a gift to this community. They have been such a blessing and support to me as I've stepped into this role. Our team of staff members have helped create cohesiveness on campus, working together and creating a discipleship pathway that begins at birth and journeys all throughout life. As an added blessing, the congregation has stepped up in many ways. People are proud to be a part of Central. I hear testimonies of members "looking forward to worship" for the first time in a long time. People are inviting friends to come and see what Christ has done and is doing within our church family.

Some of my favorite highlights so far:

- Milestone Bibles - We continued CUMC's tradition of passing out age appropriate Bibles to 3 year olds, Kinders, and 3rd Graders
- New Member Sunday - We have welcomed 46 people into membership since June, including 1 delayed confirmation
- World Communion Sunday - We utilized languages around the world in both worship services for prayer and in music
- Laity Sunday - We celebrated the leadership of the laity throughout the year

There is a renewed interest in serving our community from our campus on Dickson, with the separation of Genesis (historically our mission arm). We host 2 community meals a week at Central averaging 100 people per meal. This is an **entirely lay-led, lay-funded mission project** that has a deep history in our community. We are also evaluating our mission partnerships and finding ways to continue our investment in local and United Methodist causes that make a difference in lives in NWA and around the world.

The only area we've had to give any concern to is our financial status. In response, we launched an end of year campaign called **Now is the Time** to raise the money to fully fund our ministries at Central United Methodist Church for 2023. We need to raise an additional \$400,000 on top of weekly giving to meet our goal, and in the first week, we already have commitments in new or raised giving totaling \$175,000. I'm confident we will finish Q4 strong. Every day, I thank God that I'm the Senior Pastor at CUMC. It is a privilege to be sharing the love of Christ alongside these people and in this community on Dickson Street. As we like to end every worship service by saying: *Jesus loves you. It's not complicated.*

Grace and Peace,
Rev. Jennie Williams