

## **St Catherine's Church - Florence SC - Parish Profile**

Who is St. Catherine's -- or maybe it's Who are St. Catherine's?

We are retired college professors, licensed professional counselors, lawyers, retired teachers and librarians, doctors, and business leaders...plus a podcast host, and a good smattering of folks who don't want to be known by their jobs, but simply by their love.

We are an older congregation that didn't want to start our own church, but following the Episcopal schism in 2012 when the Pee Dee Episcopal Churches to which we belonged split from the national church -- and we didn't -- we got together and started our own church.

We draw parishioners from the surrounding counties who believe in the message of Christ's love and that neither it, nor any of the sacraments, should be denied to anybody.

We have feasted and fasted together. We have bonded around a welcoming faith of love. We rejoice in being members of the Episcopal Church. Far from destroying us, the schism has lit the fire of faith in us and has forged us into a unique parish stronger for the experience.

We expect to use that fire as a beacon to attract others who share our faith and vision of a loving and progressive faith. Indeed, our congregation is not shy about issues of justice or mercy. The "same old, same old" presentation of God's word would not satisfy us in dealing with the deep social and cultural issues of American society in 2020.

We had a small Facebook congregation of members who were unable to attend services in person before the plague hit and we have grown it and our Zoom congregation in the wake of the virus. We expect to continue to grow as we are able to return to in-person worship and, once again, work safely out in the community.

We have partnered with Cross & Crown Lutheran Church and participate in an outreach ministry offering food and essentials to the homeless -- the Parking Lot Mission. We also applied for and were awarded a \$10,000 grant to support literacy at our neighborhood elementary school.

Every church, when it wants to grow, always seems to target young families with children, and we welcome them too. We see ourselves today largely as a parish for adults young and old. We are just as happy with a weekend field trip to an art museum or state park as we would be taking children off to a camping adventure.

But, grow we want to. In numbers. In courage. In faithfulness to our Christian call.

There are obvious traits we look for in the ideal Vicar candidate: a sense of humor, practicality, optimism, patience, empathy and deep spiritual hunger.

As we aspire to be a Community of Love, we look for a priest who will help us clarify our vision and make it manifest and who himself\* is eager to live a life of faith that reflects a Community of Love. He will learn that our congregation appreciates our liturgical traditions and possesses a non-judgmental world view. And while we respect our traditions, we prefer a person who is approachable and down-to-earth.

We want somebody who can lead us and inspire us to be better people tomorrow than we were today. We hope for a vicar who is articulate, comfortable in the pulpit and unafraid to relate the lesson to contemporary issues.

We want a priest who can be out in the community delivering our message and who can inspire and encourage us to get out there as well. She will need enthusiasm, drive and energy to lead us in engaging with the larger community. As the local TEC leader, she must have personal maturity and comfortable social skills. She will help us grow our congregation and, thus, be familiar with the manipulation of technology.

We long for a Vicar we can also call a friend. Besides delivering a Sunday sermon that causes us to think, it'd be great if he is comfortable at the dinner table as well as at the Altar Table, game to join in a night of trivia at the local bar, or play a solid hand or two of bridge or Rummikub with fun-loving parishioners. Someone who can laugh with us when things don't go exactly as planned and cry with us when things go horribly wrong.

And finally, given the age of many of our parishioners, our Vicar must be ready to hold our hands and give us what we need to face death with faith, courage and dignity.

We know that the relationship between a parish and its priest is a two-way street. At this transformational time in the life of our parish, our new Vicar will help lead us forward in renewed mission. We are already blazing a path. We will travel together. It will not be easy. It requires passion. This is a tall order, and it could be a GREAT spot for the right person, like the perfect fit in a jig-saw puzzle.

We are certain the greater Episcopal community has such a person. Join us! We will bend over backwards to make sure you are a success.

\*The identifying pronouns are mixed in this paper, and that is by design.