

Our Pilgrim Stories



WELCOME HOME

You might recognize Ryan Mears as the mother of those cute little blonde girls, Delaney and Dylan, who sit down in front at worship on Sunday mornings. If you knew how nervous Ryan was about bringing young children to sit through a church service, you’d wonder why she ever chose to sit near the front.

Perhaps, unknowingly, she was testing the congregation to see how welcoming we would be to a family with “imperfectly behaved” children. She said she felt welcomed and included from the very first day and knew she had found her family’s new church home.

After living and working in Boston and Charleston, Ryan moved back to Lexington, where she grew up, with her husband Tyler and daughters. Both she and her husband were raised in church-going families. While she came from the Southern Baptist faith, he was committed to his traditional Lutheran roots. So, they had to ask themselves what was most important to each of them in finding a church that would teach their daughters the Christian values they had been taught in childhood.

Tyler wanted a church with a traditional service, and Ryan valued an inclusive congregation that showed God’s love for everyone. Traditional and inclusive might seem oxymoronic to some, but Ryan found Pilgrim to be just that.

“We found a non-judgmental congregation here who just loved on us from the very beginning,” Ryan said. “Parenthood can be lonely at times. Many people who come to church are lonely. At Pilgrim, we don’t feel alone anymore.

“When we missed church one Sunday, a member who sits near us asked for my telephone number. She wanted to call me the next time we weren’t there to check and see if we were okay. I told her, ‘By all means, here’s my number.’ I love it that people notice when we are not here!” she added.

Another thing that drew Ryan to Pilgrim is the Prayers of the Church, the time in the service where the pastor makes a series of petitions, and the congregation responds with “hear our prayer.”

She loves hearing the pastor pray for specific things that are going on in the world: the conflict in the Middle East, the recent election, the environment, or, as she puts it, “real things.”

And she appreciates the pastor’s ability to address a controversial topic without being judgmental and without telling the congregation which side is right. Topics are addressed, “as Christians, we value....,” leaving each of us to decide which side of the issue best matches those Christian values.

Ryan contributes her time to Pilgrim’s children’s ministry by being a lead teacher in the “Children’s Time in the Word” on Sunday mornings. By doing this, she is helping to create a warm, welcoming environment for other families who are looking for that same all-inclusive community feel that Ryan values here at Pilgrim.