



October 6, 2011

When I heard Dick Burns speak last Sunday regarding “what First Church means to me,” I thought, “Gosh, I wish they would ask me to speak, since I have so much to say!” I know many of you feel the same way that I do.

My family and I moved to Simsbury over three years ago. As a single mom raising five wonderful children, I have certainly taken “the road less traveled.” Working a full time job to support my family and completing a Master’s Degree, I have had little time for social activities. Consequently, the only people I have grown to know since I have moved here have been the people I have met through this church. This church community is really all I have. That is to say, I have a great deal, and for that I feel truly blessed.

Since arriving at First Church, I have had to remind myself several times that I am not a longtime member, since I have personally experienced the First Church words of welcome, “No matter where you are on life’s journey, you are welcome here.” I will never forget the day I ran into Jonathan and told him I was going to give the Women’s Praise Choir a try. He was thrilled, of course. When I walked into the choir room, I had to look behind me to see if someone had walked in with me, because the welcome I received was one attributable to a long lost friend, with words of “Welcome!” and “We are so happy you are here!” I now consider all of them to be my dear friends.

Each Sunday, what a wonderful gift it has been for me to have Jonathan, Alison, or Kevin offer their own unique perspectives and styles of preaching as they deliver their messages regarding life with a loving and forgiving God. I always find that I leave with a word, a phrase, or a concept that I have never really considered before, or that I just needed to be reminded of. I find that it completely shapes the rest of my day, my week, and even sometimes my whole life. Isn’t that what this is all about?

Although I have always embraced my sense of independence and have preferred not to ever ask for help, when my life began to “get away” from me recently, I was left with no choice but to say “I need help.” Not surprisingly, my first inclination was to turn to this church community. When I asked for your help, the only response I received was a resounding, “Of course we will help you, just tell us what you need.”

When I try to give back to this church community in some way - giving rides to teenagers, chaperoning a mission trip, working on a healthcare clinic – I find I gain so much more than I ever gave or could have given, through the people I meet, and the resulting relationships that mean a great deal to me and my children.

When I come to this church on Sunday, when I come to a board meeting, when I attend a prayer group or practice with the Women’s Praise Choir - I feel at peace, I feel safe, I feel loved. I feel I have found a place where my children can grow into the compassionate adults I want them to become, through the guidance and care they receive from this church community.

Thank you all for welcoming us into your community. I wish you all blessings, and a wish for peace for all of us.

Karen Callahan