

Gratitude for a Life Lived at Community Church of Durham

I was a child in this church in the 70s. It was a place of safety and love. When my mom came to meetings, I would wander freely and explore the library. I sang in the newly-formed Rejoice Choir. I learned that God loves me (*"Jesus loves me, this I know..."*), and that God loves everyone else too (*"Jesus loves the little children, all the children of the world..."*). I learned to trust the adults around me (the father who taught us "trust-falls", and the older woman who took us to her vacation home for a week when my mom needed to go away). This church helped me to love beyond my family.

When I returned to Durham as a young mother in the 90s, this church provided essential support. When our young family was in crisis, people here loved and supported us whether they knew our inner turmoil or not. And when I was exhausted and disheartened, this church gave me love and also a space to sit and think of the world beyond me. Through sermons and songs, I could step out of my own small overwhelming world.

Now that I am in mid-life, the church continues to sustain me and help me grow. Now that my children are well launched, I can look outward more and participate in our church's outward mission and take a place on committees, in addition to the choirs that I always love! In mid-life, church helps me maintain connections to others, and service beyond my family.

I haven't yet reached old age, but this church has given me many wonderful examples of the kind of person I want to be in old age: someone who continues to care about those around them, who maintains a sense of humor, and who shows God's continuing love to us all. And I hope that in old age, there will still be younger people around me who will know my name and look forward to seeing me on Sundays!

Through my fifty-some year relationship to this church, the building has changed a lot. The stage in Paine Auditorium where I had a dance recital is gone. The daycare in the space below Paine Auditorium that my child attended is gone. Even though the structure has changed, the importance of having a welcoming, loving, safe place has not. As we work to update and maintain our space, we continue to show ourselves and others that God loves us, and everyone else too.

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