

WHY I AM A CONGREGATIONALIST

I am a life-long Congregationalist. My mother grew up as a member of Central Methodist Church in Detroit and my father belonged to a Presbyterian church in the Detroit area. They “compromised” and were married in a Congregational church. When I came along in 1951, they went on a quest for a church in Birmingham, MI that had a baby nursery. No luck. So...they joined with other young couples and founded the Congregational Church of Birmingham (CCB). At first, they met in homes and then in 1954 CCB rented a former Methodist church. In 1966, a new church was built. Both of my parents served on many committees and as officers. And of course, my mother took her turn in the baby nursery. There was no question about not going to church on Sundays. But in the 1950s and 60s, unlike today, all our friends went to church. There were even two services to accommodate all the members. Although quite shy, I enjoyed Sunday school, 9th grade confirmation class and senior high Pilgrim Fellowship. The highlight of confirmation class was organizing a week-long vacation Bible camp in a small town in the Upper Peninsula.

I remember having a hard time understanding why my Catholic friend could not accept my invitation to attend my church. Wasn't she also Christian? Was my church going to “infect” her in some way? Didn't God love everyone? In college I ran into the charismatic Christian movement and had fierce arguments about the concept of “being saved”. They didn't like having their beliefs questioned. Again, God loves everyone of all faiths and accepts our questions and doubts.

With this background, I think it was only natural to gravitate to a Congregational Church in Brooklyn. I did not attend church for a number of years when my husband Dennis and I moved to New York.

BUT, like many families with young children, I did seek out Plymouth when my daughter was little and knew I wanted to bring her and our son up in a church.

I feel at home in a non-credal, non-hierarchical church where the congregation is in charge. Plymouth embraces everyone of all backgrounds. I am forever grateful that Plymouth asked my Catholic husband to teach Bible classes. His experience teaching led him to get a masters in religious education from Fordham University. I am sorry that he died before he could put his degree to formal use.

I love that Plymouth is working hard to put members' faith and Jesus' teachings into action through many ministries and small groups. I've personally been involved in the homeless shelter, Habitat for Humanity builds, the Christian Help committee, tone chime choir among other activities and the Prayer Group. I've made many good friends over the years and consider Plymouth central to my life.

~ Nancy Trott