

TESTIMONIALS 2009

Barbara Hall

What the United Church of Christ in Keene means to me

Our daughter's baptism
Our son's confirmation
Our daughter's Christmas Eve solo at age 6
Our son's years at Horton Center

Serving lunch at Christmas fairs
Serving Communion

Hosting Coffee Hour
Hosting a Couples' Club Scavenger Hunt

Taking a star off the Giving Tree
Chairing a committee to resettle two Bosnian young people in our community

My husband singing at the "Messiah" sing
Our son singing with him at the "Messiah" sing
Our daughter singing with me at the "Messiah" sing

Serving on the Diaconate
Serving on the Council and committees too numerous to mention

Watching my husband as one of the "Wise Men"
Watching our son take his place as one of the "Wise Men"

Hearing our teenage son explain how moved he was by a Youth Mission trip

Singing in the choir
Crying every time we sing "Here I Am Lord"

Finding lifelong friends
Finding God

Jan Royer

The UCC in Keene has been our family's church home for about 25 years.

This lovely old building and the members herein provided the foundation for our children's Christian education. They were nurtured and loved in the nursery and learned the stories of the Bible and how to care about others in church school. Now out in the world, they know about God's love and the importance of church life for a family. I treasure the time they had in here and am grateful for the solid Christian foundation they received.

In this stage of my life, the UCC is a spiritual haven for me. As I strive to be a Christian, this is where I get nourishment for my soul on Sunday mornings. Small groups offer opportunities to gather with friends. The outreach and mission activities fulfill my need to reach out beyond church walls and provide ways for me to put God's love into action.

The United Church of Christ in Keene is a very special community of faithful people who show support and love for each other and that resonates strongly with me. This is my church home where I feel that Christ's spirit is alive. It is a place of peace ~ and one of hope, where God's love is ever present.

Diana Worcester

The UCC in Keene has given me great comfort for many years both prior to becoming a member and after. It has a great welcome and serene feeling for me that lets my thoughts and visions prosper. It enhances my belief and hopes of god while feeling the closest to him at his house. Through the challenges I've faced in life, always looking for the answer when things are not so clear and patience is needed, learning that prayer will bring the answer to me in many ways .

The UCC is helping with the continuation of my spiritual journey and growth and the challenge of ongoing learning through various committees (stewardship, finance, the pleasure of the visitation committee, training for Stephen Ministry) as we all work together in God's house to build and grow a better world. There are fun times through fellowship, entertainment, missions, and just laughs and memories with friends.

It is a place to be thankful for and reminded of all it has given me, and to pass on to others so they have the same enjoyment, happiness, love, challenges, and trust to have a deeper, enriched life going forward.

Kevin Beck

As a new member of the Keene community and UCC member, UCC is an opportunity to support change. My family moved here in June 2008 and found the environment of UCC welcoming. The charm of the classic feel of Central Square with the old white church at the top or as my daughter called it "the same church on the signs welcoming us to Keene." But, as beautiful as it is, a building doesn't make a church, people do.

UCC, just like our family as well as our own world around us is changing. Gordon seems to be ushering in another chapter in the church's long history. I see some of the same things that I appreciated at our church in Ohio, a welcoming presence, cross section of people and a church in change. We really enjoyed a progressive attitude of the members of our old church, even in rural Ohio, to build stronger youth activities and develop a contemporary service. Changes that many struggled with and I'm sure UCC will in some ways will also. One of the keys to a sustaining community, whether it is a city, a neighborhood or even a church is to build an environment that attracts new members, young and old, but especially youth to continue the journey.

Some change is responding to and even embracing change especially that which has been brought on by tough decisions we all are facing in this tough economy. I hope all of UCC

members keep the needs of the church in mind and help with continuing to support our church community.

Bill Watt

Where in a bewildering modern world does one find meaning? When the claims and clamor of every day living exhaust us how do we find purpose and fulfillment? Do we join the crowd who seek to outdo their neighbors in acquiring and spending all we can? Will we find it in achieving some professional accomplishment with status that goes with that? Or do we silence any such questions when they might come up by engaging in activity or entertainment that puts the issue out of mind until we have time for it later? Does the search for activity become our way of totally avoiding the question?

After a time of searching – there was a time when the search was frantic – I found the answer in a commitment to Christ. When I say I found the answer, I do not mean to imply that all the issues disappeared. There are new issues all the time. The difference is that they come in the context of the Faith

A vital component of Faith is the Church. Within the Church, there are opportunities to talk over matters of concern with fellow Christians. In the Church we have an opportunity to talk with others, to learn of their experience in similar situations, to find you are not alone in handling a problem. Coming to Church on a regular basis, hearing the preaching and talking with others about the Faith provide s guideposts for Faith formation. That is what I find in the United Church.

Linda Mangones

I really love this church. I love seeing it every time I drive up Main Street.

I find that going to the Sunday service in such a beautiful sanctuary with wonderful music and inspiring words is the best way for me to start the week. Most of all, I love the people in our church.

We live in a world which has a disturbing lack of long-term thinking, increasing polarization of views even with easier communication, and a decreased willingness to confront problems thoughtfully, honestly, directly, and with respect for differences of opinion. I find our church to be a refuge from that world. At the same time, I find hope and inspiration in being surrounded by people who are respectful of tradition but are also constantly striving to improve our church, our community, our nation, and our world. It increases my confidence that that we will find a way to confront and solve the long-term problems that face this country.

I also believe that our church and others like it can truly help parents raise children in a world which poses some obvious dangers to them. In the absence of this sense of community and purpose, it is all too easy for children to get lost in a world which often emphasizes materialism over conservation, competition over teamwork, and irresponsible or illegal behavior over more thoughtful pleasures. Obviously, it is possible to raise responsible children without belonging to a church—it is just easier to do so in a church environment like ours. And children who learn to feel at home in our church can always find a home in a church wherever they are.

Finally, I love our church's emphasis on welcoming everyone. When I found out that my child was gay, I was immediately thankful to belong to a denomination which had ordained the first gay pastor. I know that there is a range of opinions in our church and the UCC itself about the rights that gay people should have; at the same time, I am also always confident that our church has a message of love and inclusion, which is, unfortunately, not the case at all Christian churches.

Jane Lane (no speaking in service)

It is very fulfilling to work as part of the leadership of the United Church of Christ in Keene, helping to provide resources for the worship of God in our community. The dollars people contribute are stretched in so many ways, especially in the weakened economy we are currently experiencing, and we are challenged to propose a budget that will meet everyone's needs as well as heed everyone's pocketbooks. The history of our city and of our church clearly shows how generous we have been over the years to people in need. I feel blessed that I am able to help in some small way to continue our support of people near and far. In addition and not insignificantly, our support for our beautiful building at the "Head of the Square" in Keene is important, not only to us in this congregation, but to the whole Monadnock Region because of the landmark this building has become.

I had the wonderful opportunity to travel to Mexico last year with other members of our congregation and it certainly brought home to me how blessed we are to live in Keene, New Hampshire. The nature of our trip and the educational and spiritual experiences we shared certainly made me realize that we have so much more to give. Even though we face challenges, our spiritual and secular worlds provide safety nets that are unheard of for the communities we visited. I highly recommend that trip to anyone looking to broaden their own spirituality and you will be challenged to think about how you can give back with time, talent and treasure through the United Church of Christ in Keene.

Betsy and Bob Yacubian

We have been members of the UCC-Keene for over 28 years. Over those years it has meant many things to us, both as a family and as individuals. We began attending here two years after moving from a very active and supportive church when our two older children were five and eight years old. We had been searching for a church home that had a vibrant children's ministry as well as strong pastoral and music programs and felt we had finally found it. For the most part, although many changes have occurred, all of these aspects have continued to exist and have offered provision for continued growth in our faith.

Bob and I come from different church traditions and the UCC invitation to come wherever we were on our faith journeys was very welcoming then and still is. The opportunities to question and grow in our faith are a strong backbone of this church. Our children found it in their confirmation classes where they weren't forced to memorize a catechism or body of beliefs but rather were encouraged to learn, question and build their personal faith. In youth group experiences they learned the value of service to others, now reflected in their careers as adults. Our church strongly supports peace and justice ministries which are important to all of us. Music has always been an important scaffold in my own personal worship experience, stemming

from hearing my Mennonite relatives singing hymns in four part harmony and listening to my parents' church choirs sing famous oratorios, masses, and anthems. Although I love meditative silence as well, I would be lost without uplifting music.

Finally, UCC-Keene has been a family for us, a place where we have joined with fellow church members in mourning the deaths of our parents and in rejoicing over the births of grandchildren and celebrations of our children. We cherish the fellowship of board and committee meetings, working with other people who love this place as much as we do on the mundane and major challenges this church has encountered. We enjoy the friendships shared over cups of coffee and pot luck meals and strengthened by caring greetings before and after worship.

Art Simington

When Lynn and I moved to Keene in 1973 we went to housekeeping almost 400 miles away from our families in Central Pennsylvania. Like most newcomers to Keene we were very busy with the move, and when we were decently unpacked we did what most newcomers did--went church shopping. It didn't take us long to settle into the United Church of Christ, and for those early years before kids, the UCC in Keene really BECAME our away family. But as rewarding as those friendships and kindnesses were in the early years, it was when Jenny and Ben arrived that the Church really hit its nurturing stride. From baptisms through nursery school, Sunday School, Youth Groups, Horton Center, mission trips youth drama events and even a wedding, this congregation has served as add-on parents to our kids, serving as spiritual guides, models and support--to both our kids and to their parents. After 35 years of membership and now empty-nested we look back at our Church family with great love and gratitude, and still on our spiritual journies we look ahead with great anticipation.

Howard Leatherman

When I have some spare time, I love to go fishing. I am not a great fisherman but I love to be out on the water. Another thing I love to do is volunteer to help people solve a problem, reach a goal together. Fishing gives me time to think and just relax. There is no one to ask me to do anything, no "honey-do" list, no cell phone to answer. Sometimes I like to just turn off the motor and drift, especially when there are no other boats around to interrupt the peace and quiet. On my boat, I have all of the stuff that you need to fish, fishing equipment, lights, fire extinguisher and an anchor.

The church does the same thing for me. It gives me all of the equipment to see my way through life. It anchors me by keeping my feet on the ground while giving me the light to see my way. I have many dear friends here at the United Church of Christ. A church with a rich history of being here where people can find solace and understanding. A church without labels attached to it. It's the United Church of Christ. Where everyone is welcome because we are Christ centered. Christ showed people how to make their life more meaningful, centered around what really matters. This is what our church means to me.

Ken Stewart

There are several dimensions to what the UCC in Keene means to me in my faith journey. The church setting creates time and a place to step back from busy daily activity to contemplate, pray, enjoy fellowship and music. Sometimes this is comforting; other times it is challenging and

uncomfortable. For me, this setting includes worship, board and committee activities I have become involved in, a bit of bible study and the daily reading of the UCC devotional each morning.

Each day, I find that the experiences at our church have changed and continue to change the way I look at and think about life. Once in a while, I find the courage to act and live a little differently than I would have otherwise.

Margot Abbott (no speaking in service)

My family and I moved to Keene in 1974. We attended the UCC quite honestly hoping to “get lost in a big city church” for a while. That very first Sunday, Rev. Bob Curry welcomed us warmly. Shortly after that, Bob started a “young couples club” which we attended. The original 8-10 couples in that group are still our nearest and dearest personal friends. It wasn’t long before Bill was singing in the choir and serving as church treasurer, and I was going to Women’s Fellowship, chairing the Fair Committees, serving on Council, and so on.

I have experienced many high points in the life of this church: hosting the State UCC Annual Meeting, the 250th Anniversary Celebration in 1987, serving on the Executive Committee of “That All May Come” to name a few.

When Bill was injured so severely in 2002, we weren’t sure he’d survive. The prayers and loving support of this entire congregation and the love of God carried me along and helped him recover.

I am so glad we did not “get lost” as we had wished. This United Church of Christ and its congregation are truly my church home and family.