



## “What UCC Norwell Means to Me”

### September 25

*Growing up I had two homes: 122 Central Street and 460 Main Street. When my parents helped found this church in 1963, I was in second grade. Growing up, I didn't always want to leave 122 Central to come to 460 Main, but staying home was not an option in our family. Later when my parents delivered me to youth group each Sunday, I was a reluctant participant. Not overtly rebellious, but not sharing or contributing much.*

*At 21, it was my turn to decide, and I drifted away from the church. I chose to return later, but then lived in California and Tennessee over the years. Most recently, my husband John and I based our home purchase decision in large part on wanting to be part of this church community. UCC Norwell has made real for me what the poet Robert Frost claims: "Home is the place where, when you have to go there, they have to take you in." That has been my experience here. I have needed to be here, and folks welcome me back like I never left. It's not passive comfort, but active discipleship that inspires me and calls me to return, always. And to step up, share, and contribute as much as I can.*

—B.

### September 18

*We have been married 41 years and UCC Norwell members for 36 years. UCC is special to us for many reasons including the worship services, music, pastors, and treasured friendships. We lived through the ups and downs of the church, took a ten-year sabbatical, but never gave up our church membership. Our adult children grew up in the UCC family. We served on many boards and committees over the years because of our love for UCC.*

*Since retiring two years ago, we started a new UCC ministry, which is to raise awareness of human trafficking (HT), due to our concern for social justice and freedom for these individuals. UCC Norwell has been a leader of social justice issues from letter writing to building Habitat for Humanity homes. When we learned about HT, we immediately thought of UCC as a partner to help expose this injustice.*

*Our faith grew when members and friends of UCC attended HT events, joined the planning team, and our Community Engagement Fund and Mission & Outreach awarded grants for this project. The love and support our UCC Christian brothers and sisters have given us throughout the years is why UCC is important to us.*

— MFC

**September 11**

*I believe UCC Norwell helps me to be a better person and Christian. It was because of UCC that I left a world where I did not volunteer or do much to help others. Thirty years ago there was a call from the pulpit at UCC that led to my interest in homelessness and to South Shore Habitat for Humanity (SSHH).*

*Before then I did not believe a few people could make a difference but, through SSHH, over 56 families on the South Shore have bought decent affordable homes and over 180 homes have been built with a tithe from SSHH to Habitat El Salvador. An inspiring message from Dr. Vicky motivated me to travel to Central America to witness the hardship and joy of the poor in rural El Salvador.*

*UCC Norwell is a place where we are called to action and where so many are answering in so many different ways. It is inspiring for me to be part of a church where all are welcome and where so many step out in faith to help God's children in need. I believe UCC is Christianity in action.*

—J.

**September 4**

***It's More Than Coffee and Punch....***

*It could be seven or eight (or more) years that I have been involved in Coffee Ministry. No matter how long, I thank Lois Arnold who asked me to join her “just one Sunday a month to make, serve and clean up--it's fun and easy,” she said with her warm smile! She was right! . . . Without coffee and punch, who wouldn't just head to their car and be on their way into the busyness of the week ahead and life?*

*Our Coffee Ministry is more than the cups, serving and clean-up. At UCC Norwell, it has become a meaningful weekly gathering of members of all ages to enjoy fellowship, foster existing and create new connections on faithful, personal and/or professional levels. It's an opportunity to reach out and share with one another for many reasons.*

*Our wonderful, long-term team members truly enjoy being part of the ministry, and we always welcome new members to serve with us during this special time of fellowship.*

*Maybe coffee/punch is another ‘table gathering’ that brings us together so that we may become better disciples of Jesus in the week ahead!*

—D.

**August 28, 2016**

*The United Church of Christ, Norwell is a very positive addition to my life. (Growing up in another faith it was hard to feel a part of my faith or a real participant. I felt that my ideas were at times not valued. There were a lot of rules and regulations that did not make sense to me. Also there were a lot of doctrines that I did not agree with.) Now I feel more in sync with my beliefs and more able to participate in my faith. . . . UCC Norwell is an open and affirming church welcoming all. This is practiced sincerely in*

*services and in church activities. A core value is appreciating all people not only for their similarities but just as much for their differences.*

*UCC Norwell exudes a positive and hopeful spirit which I feel is at the heart of what our community should embrace. It is fun to meet other members in different walks of life and I look forward to more diversification of the membership in coming years. The music ministry adds a positive component to our services and is also enjoyed by the wider community at concerts held during the year.*

*As a member of the Mission & Outreach Ministry Team I have been able to learn a lot about the various organizations that we support as a church. Members volunteer at many of the organizations and have started initiatives that have blossomed over the years. These efforts have a direct positive impact on the lives of people locally, nationally and internationally. Our members' lives have been enriched tremendously as well!*

—M.

### **August 21, 2016**

*Through both its teachings from scripture and its music programs, UCC Norwell provides guidance on how to properly respond to life's processes and challenges. I was asked to write about the Music Ministry. What I have found most rewarding about participating in our choir and music programs (aside from sharing with the many wonderful people involved) is the opportunity to . . . develop and to express my faith through the music we sing.*

*The hymns and anthems which Karen selects for services provide guideposts for important decisions in life because each is a prayer expressed through music. Each helps me to think more clearly about the choices with which I am faced each day, and helps me to resolve the questions and to cope with the concerns which arise in life. In rehearsing music for upcoming worship services, memorial services, and concerts, we learn how to offer prayers to God of thanksgiving and praise, and requests for guidance and help. Practice follows us throughout the week, of course, so as we sing these musical prayers over and over in our heads and out loud, the lessons to be drawn from them become a part of our lives. In this way, the music programs and the Music Ministry at UCC Norwell provide strong anchors for me.*

—K.

### **August 14, 2016**

*This church means a lot to me because of the attitude and actions that I see in church and out of church. I have been coming to UCC for 12 years and like me the church has grown in many different ways since then. Dynamic means to change or moving forward, and that is one thing I see the church embracing. The church is vibrant and living unlike other churches. You will always feel spiritually vibrant after leaving this church and going out into your week ahead.*

—C.

**August 7, 2016**

*In writing this statement, I looked at five pieces of writing I've done over 30 years: three Prayers of the People, a thanksgiving reflection and an overview of our church's history done for an anniversary celebration. I found a consistency of emotions, namely, that UCC Norwell is a safe, loving, inclusive, trustworthy community of spiritual inquirers who have . . . . impacted my faith by the steadfastness of their presence.*

*I've been a part of many groups here at UCC: small groups exploring inner journeys, Christian Education, Council, Project 2000, Chapin Garner's search committee and recently the Community Engagement team. Each experience reflected attentiveness to each other as well as God's will. During the leadership changes of the early 1990's, the church felt sorrow and anxiety. We struggled together. God wrapped His loving arms around us, healed us and brought new life.*

*I came to UCC looking for connection with spiritual people with whom I could feel safe, nurtured and challenged. I have stayed as God has provided this safe haven for my spiritual growth. I flourish in this Christ-centered, imperfect, loving, embracing environment which I call my spiritual home.*

—K.

**July 24, 2016**

*UCC Norwell is my church family. It began when I was in middle school and my friends invited me to attend Youth Group each Sunday night. My parents were not members of the church and my mother attended a different church but that didn't matter, I was accepted into the groups as I was. . . . I loved being with my friends but I also loved taking time from the week to learn about how God and Jesus lived in my daily life. We played games, we sang songs, we shared lots of laughs and made memories.*

*Now my experiences at UCC Norwell have come full circle. Over the last few years I have taught Church School on Sunday mornings to our youth. It's an amazing feeling when you can sit with a group of children and smile, laugh, and play while learning about God's love. I watch my own children make friendships and memories that I know will impact them for years to come.*

—C.

**July 17, 2016**

*It's the combination of so many factors that make UCC special to me. Everyone is genuinely supportive of one another, even people you may not really know. While this is partly due to the amazing Ministry of Caring and the Prayer list, it goes well beyond that. For me personally, . . . the Gifts and Call process was deeply meaningful. Another important aspect for my family was the Youth Service Project trips each April. Both my kids went all five years - they wouldn't pass them up even for school trips to Europe. Lastly, I would mention how amazing the music is. I knew that UCC Norwell was the place for me when I attended my first Christmas Concert here and they sang a forgotten, but loved song that I had sung in my Cherub Choir as a child. There are many special people of UCC and things that will enrich the life of anyone who participates in our community of faith.*

—E.