

On behalf of the Presbytery of Newton, we wish you a wonderful anniversary as you celebrate 60 years of service to the church as a united congregation. Thank you for ministry to the community of Flanders and the surrounding area. Your service and worship has transformed lives and has led many to know Jesus Christ is a new and deeper way. May God continue to bless your ministry and guide you into the future with joy and hope.

-Jeanne Kodak, Newton Presbytery Leader

To my friends at Flanders UPC: Greetings from Bend, Oregon! My husband Tom and I have been here for two years and I am living out my call as an ordained Lutheran minister by planting a new church. I pastor particularly to people who haven't found a place in traditional church or who have been wounded by church. We are seekers and spiritual-but-not-religious people who are deeply faithful, invested in community and active in social justice in our city. I LOVE THIS WORK. And I think often of the saints there in Flanders who formed, loved, taught and inspired me. Thank you for seeing my call and nurturing it and for being a church where I knew I was loved just as I am. I see now that was an experience not everyone has, and I'm grateful for it. I am excited that in April, Tom and I will welcome our first baby into our family and into a community that shows that kind of unconditional love.

Grace and peace to you, all you saints! Congratulations on 60 wonderful years.

Erika Spaet

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Rev. Erika Spaet
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Dear United Presbyterian Church Members:

At the end of the summer in 1988 I was at the playground at Tinc Rd. school with our young children, and I thank God all the time for placing us there at that time. We met Barbara Vazzana and her boys; as we began to talk about kids, etc...she asked me if we had a church and at that time we didn't. She told me how much she loved UPC and said we should attend. I went home and told my husband, Chuck, and he agreed.

The first Sunday we attended was what you used to call "Friendship Sunday" and I think it may have been Labor Day weekend. As soon as we walked in, we saw familiar faces, I knew some women from the Newcomer's Club, Chuck knew 2 men he worked with and it only got better. We found out Rev. Cotter was from MI; we are from MI! He talked in his sermon about adjusting to NJ, we'd been there done that! There was a feeling of friendship and love from the congregation in addition to the most important feeling of spirituality and unity of sharing belief in our common faith.

We joined the following January and have not looked back. Our best friends we met through this church; we have such fond memories of Couple's Club activities, I taught Sunday School, our kids went to Fun 'n' Friends, Church dinners, lunches, breakfasts, Session Retreats, choir and choir parties. The kindness and cards of everyone when family members passed, the care and more cards when I had some surgeries, so much love its hard to explain how grateful we were and still are.

The hardest part of our move was leaving UPC, my very good friend Carol says, "This place is Hallowed Ground." And she is correct as I've not had the same experience at any other church.

Rev Rick, we are so happy you are there for this anniversary; our church went through some tough times and you brought us back together. When we were members, we felt very blessed to have you as our pastor .

Happy 60th UPC and here's to many, many more!

Love,

Cheri and Chuck Miller

~Treasure~

That's what comes to mind when I think of UPC and the 25 years we spent in the embrace of this small but powerful community of faith.

Yes, I know Matthew 6:20 says we should lay up our treasures in Heaven but hey, UPC is almost Heaven isn't it?

I think about the treasure of 25 years of Christmases, Children's pageants, Easters, Maundy Thursdays, Advent Afternoons, summer picnics and Apple Festivals spent here. Then there are the mission trips taken by others to the DR, Haiti, Kenya and Appalachia and I reflect with admiration on the many souls who dedicated themselves to all of those events year after year with Christian love.

I think of the members that Carol and I have known and broken bread with and with whom we have shared both laughter and tears...some of joy and some of sorrow. And the kids, too many to count, that have passed through those semi-permanent classrooms in the Christian Education wing, not to mention all the saints who taught them about the Bible and what it means to be a Christian. Just think of how many are now adults, others just entering adulthood and the countless numbers who are so well prepared for the life ahead of them. That foundation surely sticks with them and sustains them in ways they probably don't even think about. It is what the power of love in Christ can do and is reflected so well at UPC. And then...there are those walls! Taking down, putting up, taking down, and putting up. Rinse and repeat...how many times I can't count. But all done out of love for this wonderful treasure - this family of faith.

These are indelible memories that will last our lifetimes and remain deeply imprinted on our hearts. I suspect in yours too.

We continue to follow UPC through texts, emails, the UPC Messenger and UPC Weekly and this helps us to stay connected. We are members of a very large congregation here in Ann Arbor but I can't help comparing things back to UPC - God's little engine that could!

Happy Diamond Jubilee Anniversary!

In Christ,

Jeff