Staff Spotlight on Kathy Talmage
Written by Margaret Shaklee

Margaret Kathleen Talmage, "Kathy," was invited to UCE 45 years ago by Libby Sohn, whose eldest son, Matt, was first in the family to find the church community. On her first visit, she met Dave Woods, who led the visitors' table, then just inside the sanctuary doors, and Kathy joined the visitors' table enclave. Kathy brought children Shannon and Sean with her.

From the visitors' table, Kathy was attracted to the kitchen, where she found a busy group and a hearty welcome. "The kitchen was a warm and familiar place to be, away from the 'front of the house.'" And for 45 years, she made the kitchen experience one of the warmest in the community – not to be confused with "if you can't stand the heat, get out of the kitchen"! When she started her catering business, Kathy left the kitchen to Gini Sayad, who continued the embracing welcome, especially for newcomers. Then, when Kathy retired the catering business, she returned to head up the UCE kitchen experience.

The welcome of the kitchen is the central experience of many UCE newcomers, who start their journey there. Michael Skilton told Kathy that when he first visited, he overheard her swearing (sotto voce!) in the kitchen and said to himself, "I could be comfortable here." And, indeed, he is also most comfortable in the kitchen.

Everybody congregates in the kitchen, says Kathy. And around the coffee urn, which is probably her pet peeve – let's find some way to make more room around the pots – maybe move them around the corner to the east side of the "core."

Folks seek out Kathy for conversation, which makes Kathy's job of managing coffee for Sunday morning Kinship Time fun. And Kathy tells a good joke, although it's not always clean enough for the front of the house!

Kathy remembers the fun events, when we seemed to have time to organize them while we also were managing busy households: Gaslight Days, Lake Geneve Fall Retreat, the Art Fair, Night of the Arts.

Kathy reminisced, "The church has been central to a big chunk of my life – from young mother to grandmother. A church community should reflect the whole of life experience. We were the young people and now we are the old people – This old person was pleased to see all the families joining this last time, stepping in to be the young people we once were."