

## **“NO MATTER WHERE YOU ARE ON YOUR SPIRITUAL PATH, YOU ARE WELCOME HERE”**

I was raised Episcopalian because all my family including ancestors were Episcopalian. For me it meant I went to church every Sunday and prayed the same thing every week and had Communion. At the time, it was nice to have this routine to learn and start forming my Christian faith. I enjoyed attending Sunday school, participating in Vacation Bible Camp, EYC events and Summer Camp. These activities helped me understand that you can live out your faith as loudly or quietly as you wanted. You can be yourself and God loves you.

After my husband and I had our child, we decided we wanted him to learn about Christianity and have church experiences in his life as we did growing up. This brought us to Plymouth and the Congregational Church. If you had asked me prior to attending what being a Congregationalist meant, all I would have known was the denomination came about with the Puritans. Now I have learned it is about accepting everyone as equals. We all have an equal say on how our church runs. I appreciate that one of the welcomings that is said during our services is “No matter where you are on your spiritual path, you are welcome here.” I love that I am able to be on my path, be supported by our community and learn more about my faith and the love of God through action and scripture.

At Plymouth, I have found specific small groups that have helped me along my path and it has also helped me become a leader in a ministry. I have appreciated being surrounded by smart inquisitive women in the Wednesday Women’s Bible Study. We are reading through the Bible and learning and asking questions about the books.

We also listen for God's words to each of us through our close reading of the Bible and other books we have read over the years. Also, I have loved being embraced by the volunteers of the Underground Thrift Store. Often on Fridays (pre-pandemic) while straightening up the store and sorting through lovingly donated items, we would talk. These conversations have helped me feel spiritually fulfilled and ready to walk my path through another week. Also, knowing we are at the Thrift living our history since we are supporting anti-human trafficking groups in NYC.

Having lived with the isolation of the pandemic, I have come to realize the importance of a church family. The care and consideration given at Plymouth Church to all our members has made my faith stronger and my hope for the world brighter.

~ Elizabeth Snypes