

WHAT CONGREGATIONALISM MEANS TO ME

When I was eight years old my mother took my brother and me to California to visit my grandmother, Grace Andrews. She was adorable, just a lovely person, and we had a great time. The most amazing aspect of the visit turned out to be my visit to Sunday school. The teacher was a charismatic woman who took one look at me and said with conviction that has stuck with me all my life, “God loves you.” Knowing that made me so joyful, I skipped all the way to grandma’s house. That was the beginning of my abiding comfort in my personal relationship with God. The home of that relationship became Plymouth Church.

I grew up in Brooklyn Heights. After we joined Plymouth, my grandmother let me tag along as she offered Sunday dinner to person after person, searching for someone new to the church to ask home for that afternoon’s dinner, which was her way.

I was married at Plymouth Church. After 13 months following my husband to navy bases, I returned home as a widow with my baby. We lived at 12 Clark Street where a neighbor of mine invited me to join a sort of social club that met in the church basement on a weekly basis. That is where I met a group of four young men that lived on Monroe Place and worked in Manhattan. They adopted me, so to speak, and included me and my son in all their gatherings. They were distressed that I had not officially joined Plymouth Church on a personal basis—they encouraged me to do so, and I did.

Plymouth has always been the heart of what I care about. With the support of Plymouth, it allows me to feel safe in loving God. I am endlessly grateful for all the friendships I have made there, grateful for the privilege of striving to enhance such a humble yet magnificent house of worship, and I am grateful for the sanctuary that makes me feel closest to God. At 96 years old my mantra is this: We are all connected. We all need each other. We cannot do it alone.

It is a comfort that Plymouth Church is the core of my life.

~ Grace Gray Faison