



Rooted in Love

They are like trees planted by streams of water, which yield their fruit in its season.

Psalm 1:3a



Leadership Message

by Darlene Riddle

I owe the spiritual roots I have to my mother. It was she who took us seven kids to Sunday School every Sunday. We grew up on a farm in central Illinois, and I'm not sure why my father never attended when we were young, but it was her steady influence that has lasted and served me well all these years.

I, like many others, didn't go to church all through college and beyond. When my marriage to a non-practicing Catholic ended after eight years, I knew I wanted the same type of solid foundation for my daughter and, at the same time, knew something was missing from my life. The feelings of failure, disappointment, guilt and fear for the future led me to search for a church home.

I was attending a Sunday service in Gordon Chapel led by Rev. William Richard Kerr, the associate pastor at Second Congregational in the early eighties. There is no recollection if this was before or after I joined the church, or what Bible verses the sermon was based on, but I remember like it was yesterday that it was about forgiveness. He asked us to write on pieces of paper what was weighing heavily on our hearts, and they were then collected like the offering. At the front, was a Weber grill – and you can guess the rest. The papers were tossed in the grill, burned and turned to ash.

I'm not sure if I was the only one with tears streaming down my face that day, but that symbolic "letting go" or "lifting up" was the start of feeling that if God can forgive and love me, then I can start to forgive and love myself. The part of the Lord's Prayer "forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors" has special meaning to me and I try, not always successfully, to be as forgiving as God has been to me.

After I joined this church, it was becoming involved in activities that helped me get to meet people and make this my church family. I taught Sunday School for several years, was a parent chaperone for the youth group (Snow Camp was an experience) and have served on almost all the various ministry teams – some several times. It is without a doubt that the people of this church are the reason I stayed when we had some less than stellar interim ministers and I can't imagine anywhere else I would rather be on Sunday morning.