

Affirmation: The Love Song of CFG Watson

Carole Watson

Unlike some of you, I came to this church already in love with the idea of “church.” I loved the small Episcopal Church of my youth, with its stone walls and old stained glass windows. Jesus looked so sad, yet sympathetic. I was baptized, confirmed, and married in that church. I sang in the choir as a teenager. My husband John and I met there, in Sunday School, when we were 13 years old, and we shared a dynamite Youth Group every Sunday evening through our teen years.

Fast forward to 1980: we had lived in St. Louis for eight years, but we really didn’t church shop until our children were (almost) born. I was very pregnant with our second child, John Webster, when I visited First Unitarian that searingly hot summer (some of you may remember John Webster, a high energy kid: one especially memorable Christmas pageant he played the entire multitude all by himself, and nobody noticed). Anyway, I found the Unitarian church that summer of 1980, THIS Unitarian Church, and the search was over.

For the past 37 years, I have been in love with this church. My involvement in the First Unitarian Church is the most significant institutional relationship of my lifetime – perhaps it is yours as well, or it will become so. This is **my** love song to our church, with no apologies whatsoever to T.S. Eliot, who didn’t recognize a good thing when he saw it.

I love this church because

1. Of the abundance of life-affirming images all around: instead of Jesus expiring in excruciating pain, our sanctuary offers a meditative grove of calming memorial

trees; a banner celebrating our exquisite partnership with a tiny church in Transylvania; and a peeping William Greenleaf Eliot, who reminds us that each of us is now the keeper of his vast dreams.

2. I love this church because every time I walk into the Clark Room, I am filled with Children's Chapel memories of how much the children of this church teach us every day, of how precious their time with us is.
3. I love this church for the immeasurable opportunity it has given me to stretch, explore and grow my own spirituality, through shared study, conversation, meditation, sermons, readings, worship, committee work, and so much more. I have both met the mystic Rumi and learned to make goulash for 100, within these walls.
4. I love this church because it helped raise my children, expanding their knowledge of life, religion, Boston, and even sex education. They still speak of Ola Williamson and Jim Stoien lovingly.
5. When I walk into this church, I immediately feel at home. I see so many friends who are richly woven into the tapestry of my life. I love this church because in times of stress, disappointment, confusion and grief, it has held me like a warm blanket. I have been blessed with your hugs; I have shed many tears and been comforted in this sanctuary.
6. Finally, I love this church of donuts and dinners, highpoints and low ones, diverse points of view that sometimes clash, because it remains an enduring anchor in a battering world. It speaks to me to hold onto the hope for a better world; it prods me to go into public schools and tutor; to make sandwiches and harvest vegetables for people I will never meet; to pray without ceasing for all who suffer and despair. It is my rock.

And so I invite you to share my rock, to immerse yourself in this church open to all, and to count yourself as a keeper of the dream. I invite and strongly encourage each of you today to pledge at least a bit of your money and all of your heart to this miraculous oasis, refuge, springboard, and spiritual path we know as our beloved community – First Unitarian Church of St Louis.