

Why I Give To This Church by Shari Carrano

My first day attending worship at MCC was one of the joint summer services we hold with St. Peter's. When I walked in from the parking lot I recognized a few people going in so I went in with them. I very much enjoyed the service that Pastor Jenn led.

The following week I attended worship again. Betty Heiney, who had spoken to me the week before, now realized that I was not with St. Peter's. She was very welcoming and asked right away if I wanted to join MCC. She introduced me to Pastor Jenn. I got to meet several of the church members at coffee hour and they made me feel very welcomed.

A few weeks later, Pastor Jenn set up a time to meet me at my home to tell me about the church. She asked me why I decided to come to MCC. I was baptized into the Roman Catholic Church. When I was about three years old, my father passed. My single mother worked at Fairfield Hills "state" at this time. She worked the graveyard shift from 11pm to 7am so that she could be home during the day with my sister, brother, and me. On Sundays she could get in a nap if we went to Sunday School at the nearby Trumbull Congregational Church, which is where my first faith lessons began.

Fast forward to 1981, and I was getting ready to marry my second husband living here in Monroe. Both of us were divorced Catholics, and we did not want to confront the church's policies about that. I decided that my experience in Trumbull as a child with the United Church of Christ was so wonderful that I would approach the Reverend at the Monroe Congregational Church, who at the time was Luther Pierce. The one bit of advice Luther gave us was: If your family questions it, tell them "I will not argue the Catholic's theology on divorce being a sin. But in our church, God forgives sin."

In August 2013, my husband of 32 years died suddenly one morning of a stroke followed by a heart attack. Because of this loss, and other personal family issues, I realized I needed a faith community in my life.

Just a few months after my husband's death, a nice group of young people – called Senior PF – came to my house and helped me with my leaves on a recommendation from the Monroe Senior Center. Once I found out what church they had come from – and realized it was MCC – I knew it was a sign that I really had to come to a service. I wound up joining MCC in August 2014, thanks in part to those young people.

Since I have my own home, live on a limited income and try to keep up with bills etc., I knew when I joined that I could not commit to a large financial donation. Pastor Jenn told me that was OK, and I learned

that I could get involved with different groups and volunteer my time – which was something the community really needed too. She told me that there was a place for me here at MCC.

This summer I lost my well water. My two grandsons were trying to help me figure this out. We thought we knew what the problem was but couldn't afford a plumber. I knew that I had other big issues with the house that were going to be costly. I decided to wait for a friend of my late husbands who had helped me with other plumbing problems and would only charge me for the parts needed. It would take time to get them, so I would have to be patient.

At the Summer Sunday coffee hours, the ladies would ask me if my water was back on yet. For two weeks my answer was no. My neighbor let me use the hose in the yard to fill a five gallon bucket as needed. One coffee hour in late July, Pastor Jenn sat down with us and heard about my water problem for the first time. She called me aside and asked me if I would like her to help me get it resolved. Later that day we filled out an application that she sent right out to Westbridge, one of the outreach organizations this church supports.

My friend Rob McClenathan, who volunteers with Westbridge, came to my home with another man. They looked at all my other problems too, some of which I didn't realize were so fixable. They set out a plan to help me. And they did so much more than I ever could have

imagined. Most importantly, two days after I applied, I once again had running water.

The following Sunday I told Pastor Jenn that it was “Divine Intervention” which brought me to MCC. I am so grateful for everything I have received from the Monroe Congregational Church in the way of friendship, acceptance, and support.

I will always make sure I keep up to date with my pledge, as modest as it may be. I know that when it is combined with yours, my gift makes a difference. And I will continue to volunteer as much as I can, whenever I am asked. I hope that you can join me, by making your annual pledge and getting involved in something that will help spread Jesus’ love.

Thank you MCC! I love you all!