



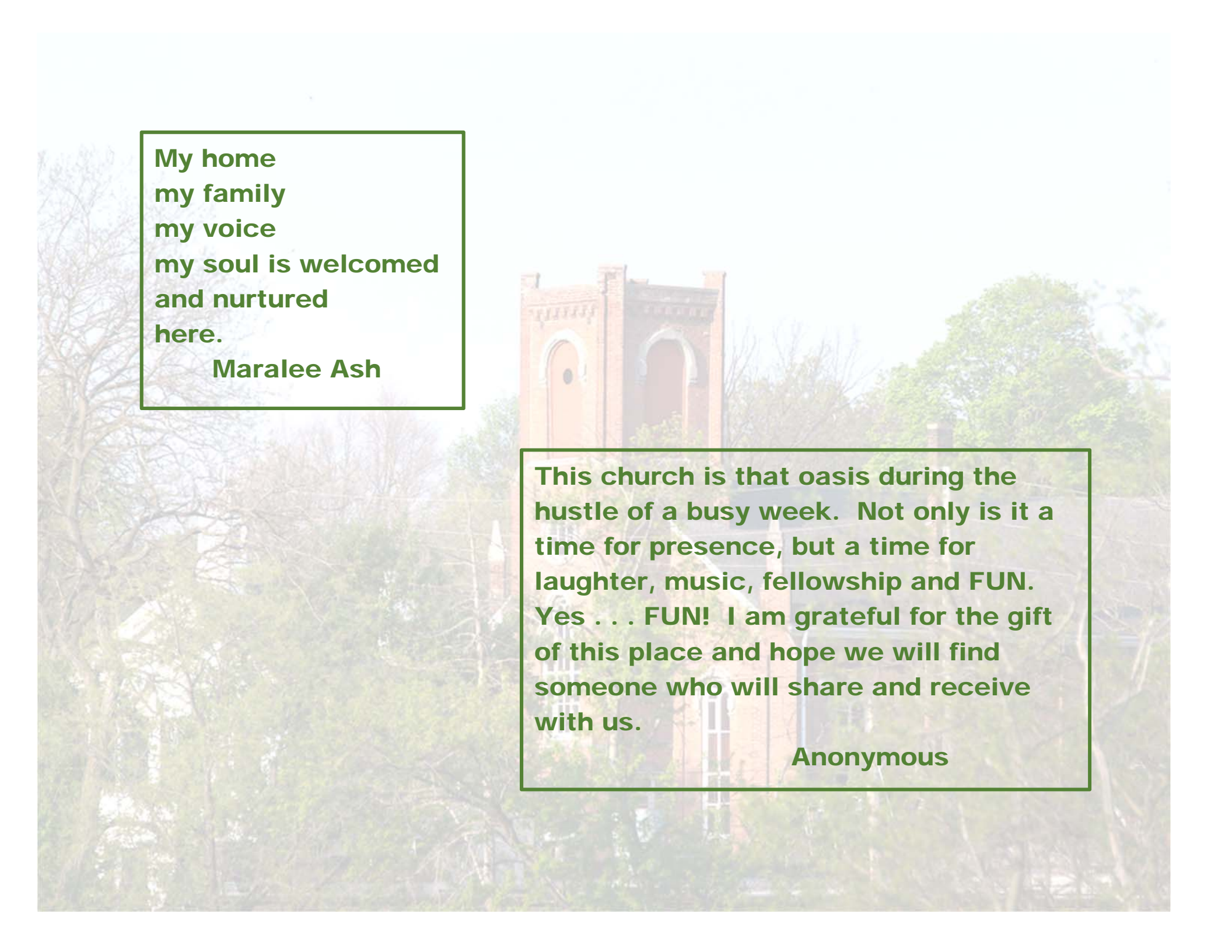
# *In Our Own Words:*

From Members, Friends, and Staff of the UUCK

The Ministerial Search Committee provided an array of opportunities for the voices of the community to be heard. Words found here illustrate how we see our community, our identity, and were drawn from:

- *The Voices of the UUCK Project.*  
Interviews, focus group discussions, and open-ended questionnaires asked participants to reflect on how they see the UUCK, its strengths and challenges, its desires in a new minister, and its hopes and dreams for the community. The Survey included an open-ended question.
- *In Our Own Words.*  
The committee asked the community to reflect on the question: "The UUCK: How Do I Love Thee?" by writing a letter or a sentence (or 2 or 3).





My home  
my family  
my voice  
my soul is welcomed  
and nurtured  
here.

Maralee Ash

This church is that oasis during the hustle of a busy week. Not only is it a time for presence, but a time for laughter, music, fellowship and FUN. Yes . . . FUN! I am grateful for the gift of this place and hope we will find someone who will share and receive with us.

Anonymous

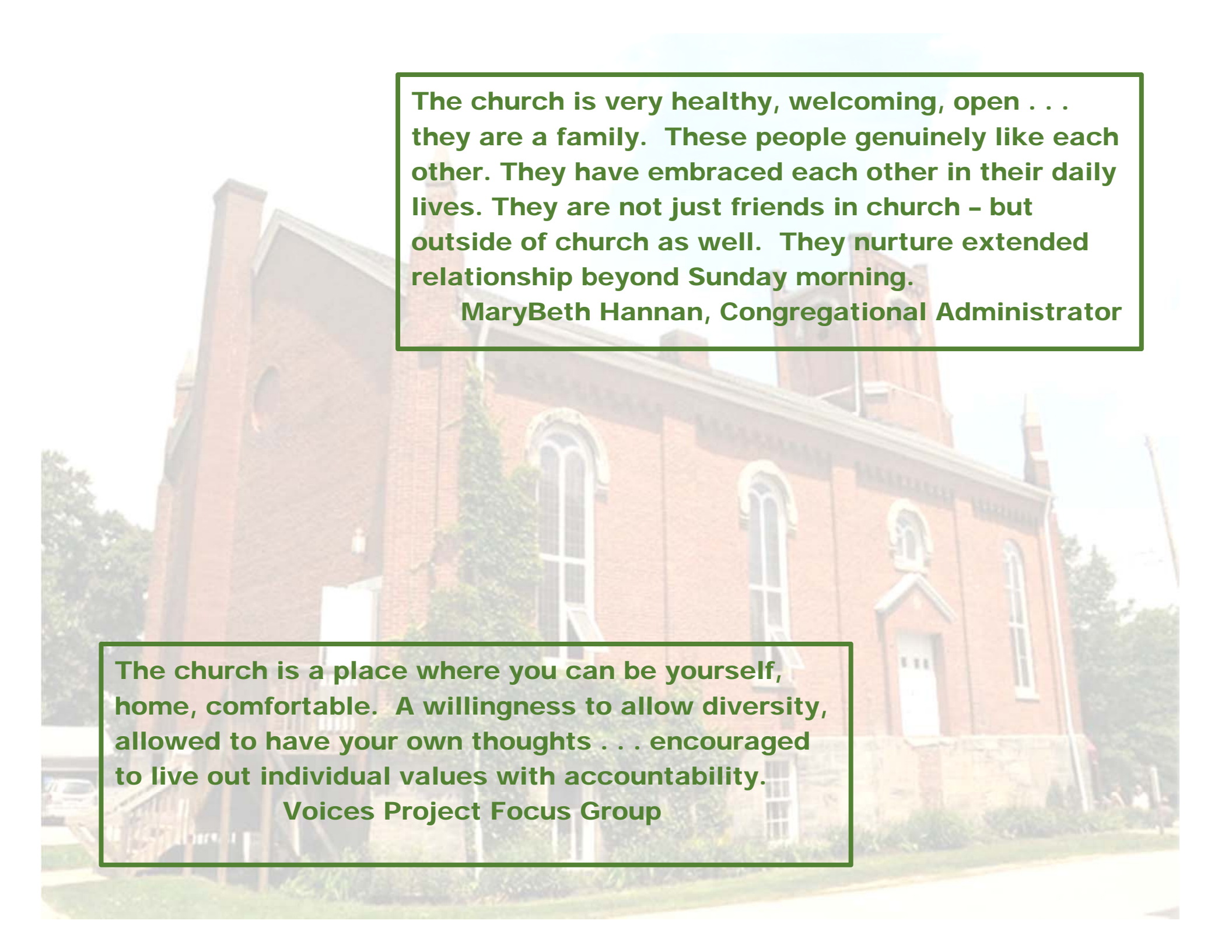


The church is a home away from home for me.  
Voices Project Interview (Staff Member)

We engage in a free and responsible search for truth and meaning. It's a place where it's safe to be questioning, a refuge for people who don't buy into popular fundamentalist dogmatism. An 18-year old said: "Other churches taught me what to think. This church teaches us how to think."

Voices Project Focus Group



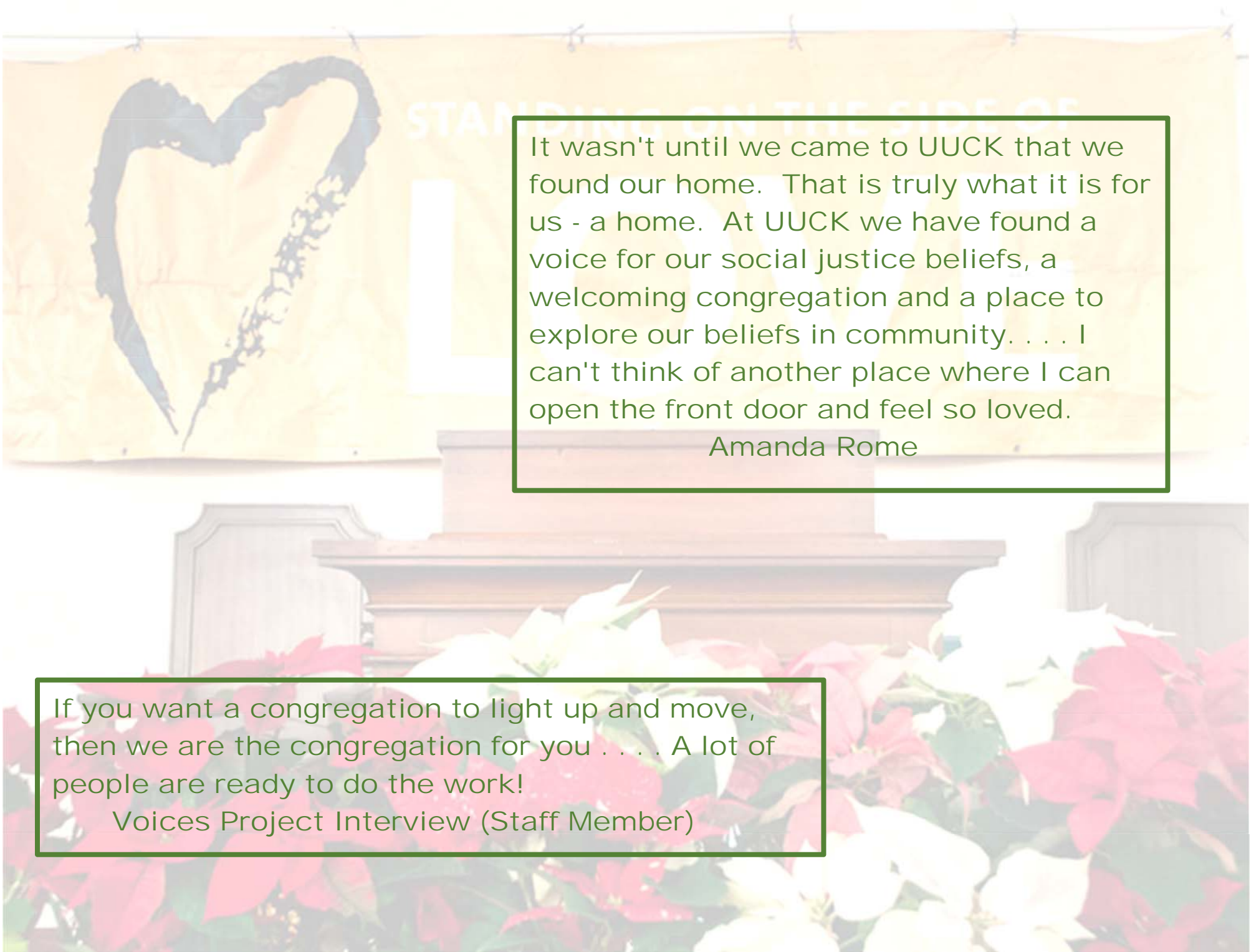


The church is very healthy, welcoming, open . . . they are a family. These people genuinely like each other. They have embraced each other in their daily lives. They are not just friends in church – but outside of church as well. They nurture extended relationship beyond Sunday morning.

MaryBeth Hannan, Congregational Administrator

The church is a place where you can be yourself, home, comfortable. A willingness to allow diversity, allowed to have your own thoughts . . . encouraged to live out individual values with accountability.


Voices Project Focus Group



It wasn't until we came to UUCK that we found our home. That is truly what it is for us - a home. At UUCK we have found a voice for our social justice beliefs, a welcoming congregation and a place to explore our beliefs in community. . . . I can't think of another place where I can open the front door and feel so loved.  
Amanda Rome

If you want a congregation to light up and move, then we are the congregation for you . . . . A lot of people are ready to do the work!  
Voices Project Interview (Staff Member)





After wandering in the wilderness of NE Ohio for 6 years, when I walked into the UUCK in 1996, I realized I had found "my people." That influenced me to stay in Kent rather than continue my wanderings. I've been comforted and supported through the years. I've made great and lasting friendships. . . . Here I can truly be myself. . . . Because of this community I have never felt alone. I see the minister as our partner and also our personal support. There is always someone to turn to for help - including our many ministers.

Heidi Shaffer

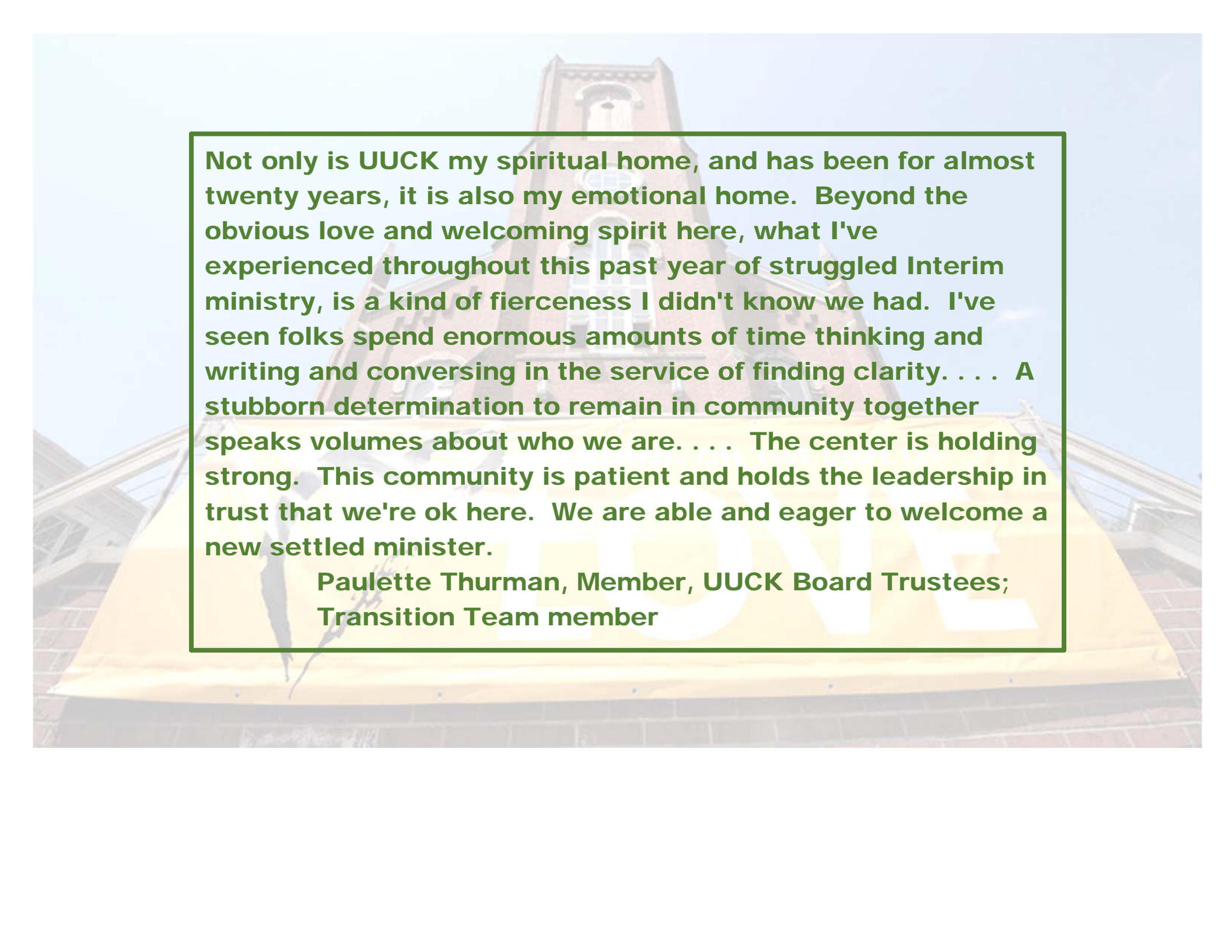
A stone monument with a tree carving and text: UNITARIAN-UNIVERSALIST CHURCH, ERECTED BICENTENNIAL, 1868.

This congregation is a group of people who work on practicing kindness. We welcome differences: the image of an open circle comes up again and again in our songs and conversations.

Carolyn Andrews Schlemmer

We are brought together not by how we think but by how we want to be together. . . . Church is where friends are . . . and a place where you can practice being one's best self or the person you want to be.

Voices Project Interview



Not only is UUCK my spiritual home, and has been for almost twenty years, it is also my emotional home. Beyond the obvious love and welcoming spirit here, what I've experienced throughout this past year of struggled Interim ministry, is a kind of fierceness I didn't know we had. I've seen folks spend enormous amounts of time thinking and writing and conversing in the service of finding clarity. . . . A stubborn determination to remain in community together speaks volumes about who we are. . . . The center is holding strong. This community is patient and holds the leadership in trust that we're ok here. We are able and eager to welcome a new settled minister.

Paulette Thurman, Member, UUCK Board Trustees;  
Transition Team member



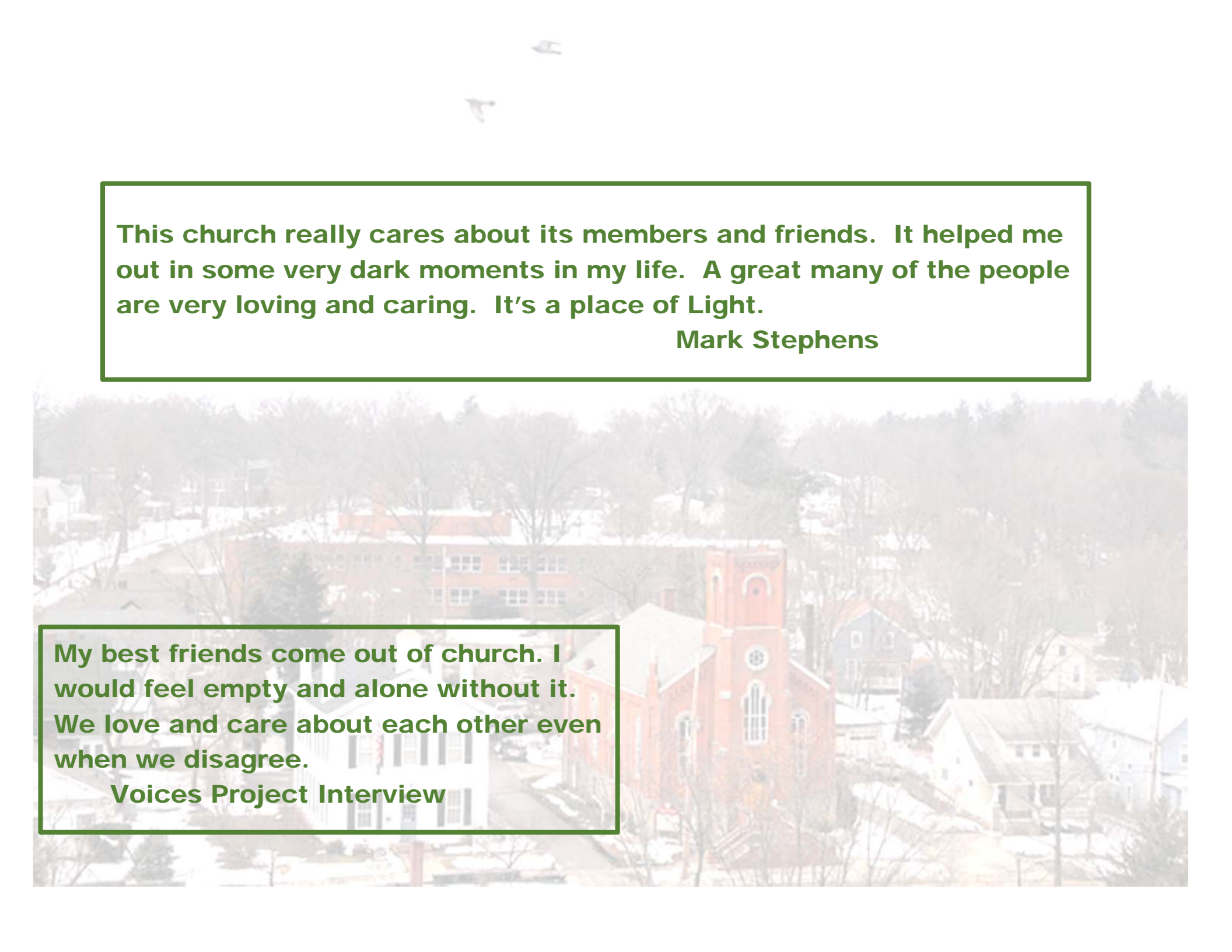


This is a warm and loving place.  
Making it easier to seek or offer  
support.

Jane Krimmer

We are a liberal community of musicians,  
scientists, and poets . . . and gardeners  
and artists.

Voices Project Focus Group



This church really cares about its members and friends. It helped me out in some very dark moments in my life. A great many of the people are very loving and caring. It's a place of Light.

Mark Stephens

My best friends come out of church. I would feel empty and alone without it. We love and care about each other even when we disagree.

Voices Project Interview





I come to church to get recharged.  
Voices Project Focus Group

We are: Very crunchy granola  
Birkenstock wearing hippies.  
Voices Project Focus

And the journey is with friends,  
supportive people.  
Voices Project Focus

From our first visit, we were drawn in by the easy sense of comfort and warmth you could feel in the sanctuary's atmosphere. The people were genuine - you just knew it! Hal Walker's music - his song-writing, lyricism, folk-improv style was a "wow". Any one of his songs is an entire sermon. And the choir! There weren't that many people - but the sound that came from an assorted lot of every-day voices - was amazing.

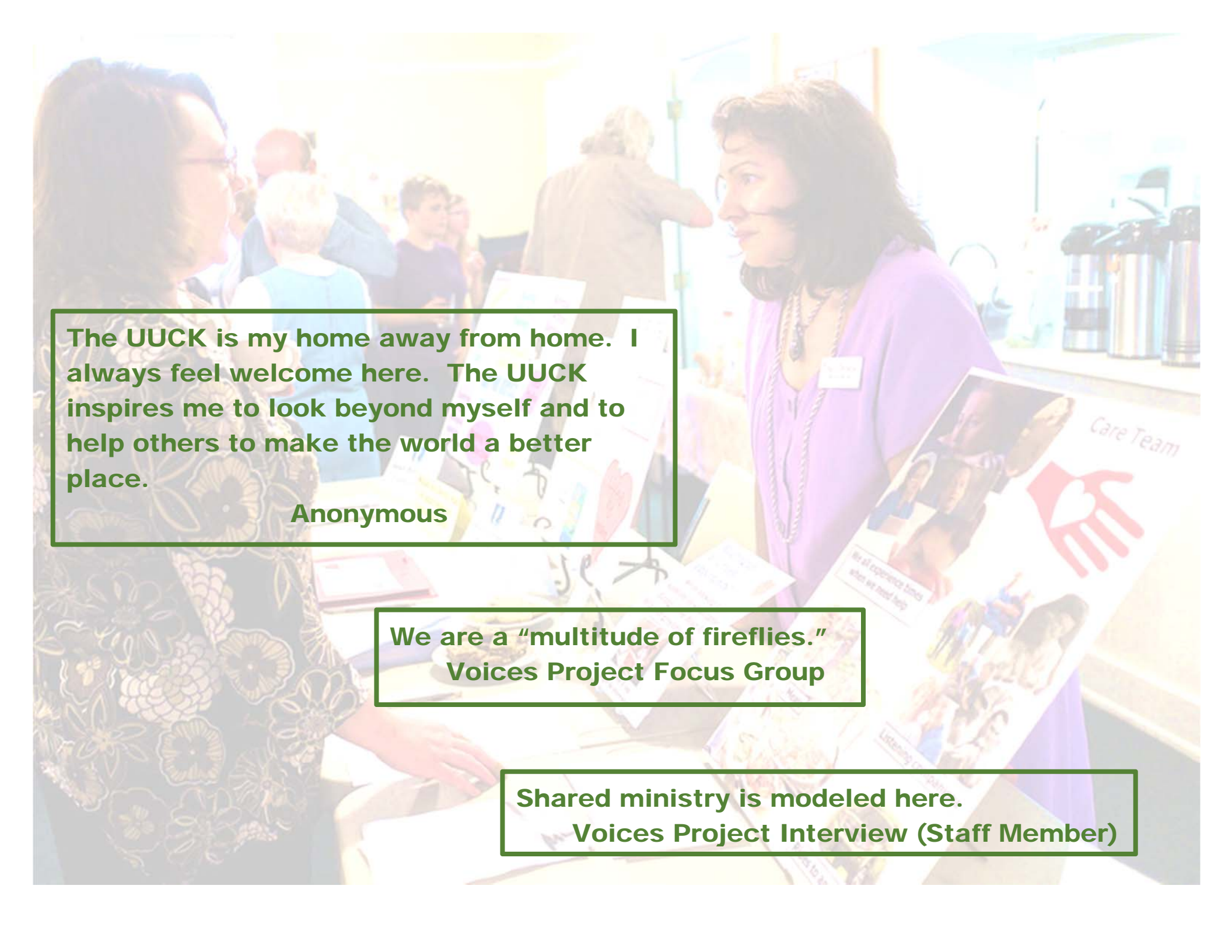
And yes - this church loved their minister, as did we. She was the rock that helped hold the other elements to the ground. So - when the rock was removed, some instability understandably takes place because we are first and foremost - people!

We are people who care deeply about one another and the church itself. There are so many varied gifts among our members, and we know because they willing share them! Our many diverse worship associates - people who take the time to not only reflect deeply, but stand up in front of everyone to share their thoughts! People to organize camping trips, song-circles, game nights, huge auctions (we raised how much?!!!), perform in skits, play a myriad number of musical instruments and sing, create programs for kids of all ages, engage in community outreach activities, and committed people to fill the endless number of committees needed for a church to function.

So, while we may founder a bit during the transition to our new settled minister, we are all willing and wonderful people, looking forward to welcoming our next leader to hold us to our very best for each other, ourselves and the world at large.

Diana Watt





The UUCK is my home away from home. I always feel welcome here. The UUCK inspires me to look beyond myself and to help others to make the world a better place.

Anonymous

We are a "multitude of fireflies."  
Voices Project Focus Group

Shared ministry is modeled here.

Voices Project Interview (Staff Member)



Our church is a refuge.  
Voices Project Focus Group

The UUCK: How do I Love Thee? By  
joining friends in giving time and  
money to good causes.  
Anne Andrews

We are wonderful seedlings looking  
to be watered – from young children  
to older members.  
Voices Project Interview

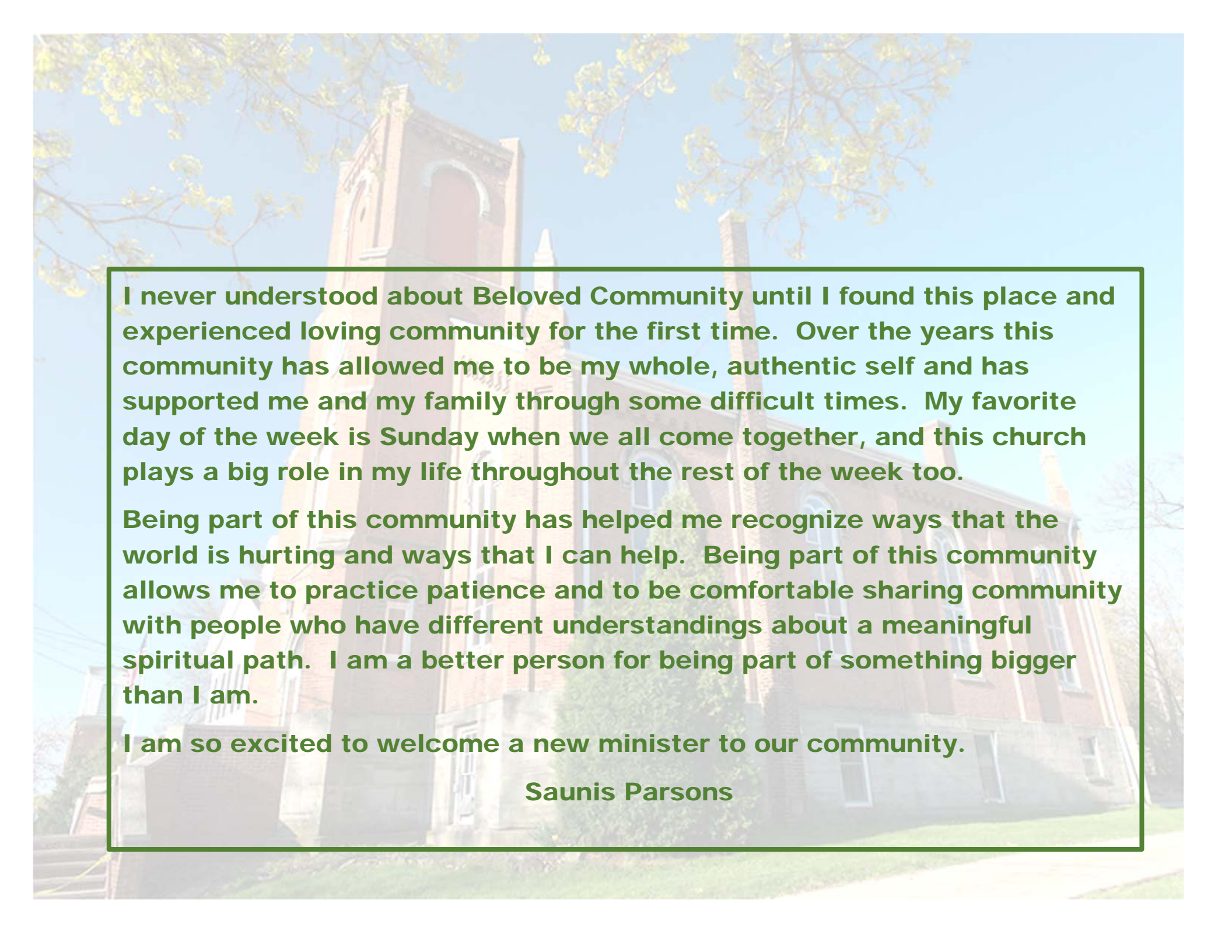




We are a garden, not just one rose.  
Voices Project Focus Group

We place strong emphasis on our youth  
hoping to prepare them for the coming  
responsibilities of adult life.  
Voices Project Questionnaire

This is a very loving and caring  
community. A fine place for families  
and friends.  
Voices Project Questionnaire



I never understood about Beloved Community until I found this place and experienced loving community for the first time. Over the years this community has allowed me to be my whole, authentic self and has supported me and my family through some difficult times. My favorite day of the week is Sunday when we all come together, and this church plays a big role in my life throughout the rest of the week too.

Being part of this community has helped me recognize ways that the world is hurting and ways that I can help. Being part of this community allows me to practice patience and to be comfortable sharing community with people who have different understandings about a meaningful spiritual path. I am a better person for being part of something bigger than I am.

I am so excited to welcome a new minister to our community.

Saunis Parsons



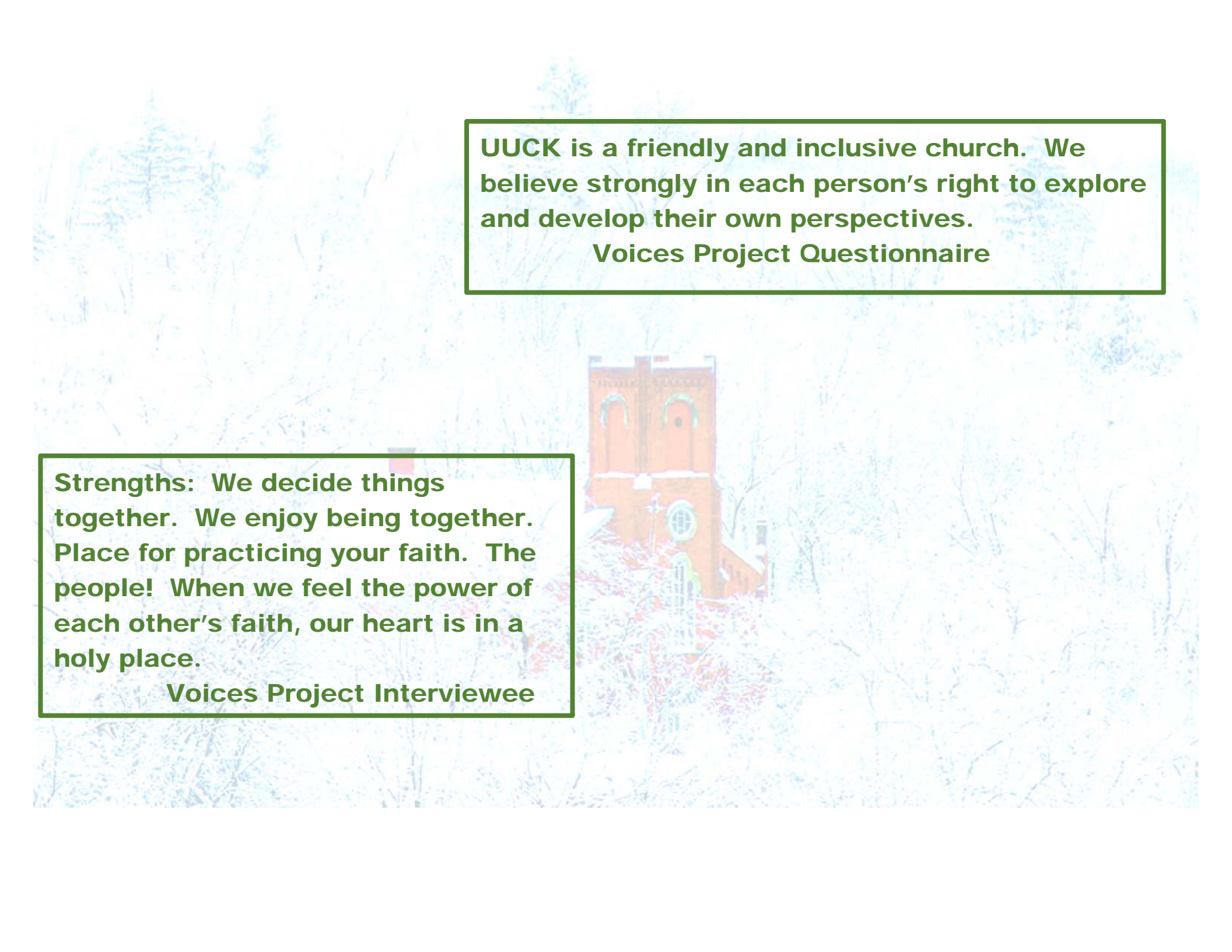
A photograph of a church service. In the foreground, the backs of several people's heads are visible as they sit in pews. In the middle ground, a choir of people is seated at a table, some holding lit candles. In the background, a woman stands near a decorated Christmas tree. The room is warmly lit, and a speaker is visible on the right wall.

Our distinct norms and values include a great emphasis on the power of music and group singing, environmental stewardship and nature connection, and using our creativity to bring all generations together.

Voices Project Questionnaire

You are free to be yourself . . . encouraged to find your own path. People aren't just together on Sundays, but make it a point to be together outside church. Enough have worked on relationships that the friendships are woven into the fabric of the community. The people are my friends. . . . The church is the people.

Voices Project Interview (CLM)




UUCK is a friendly and inclusive church. We believe strongly in each person's right to explore and develop their own perspectives.

Voices Project Questionnaire

Strengths: We decide things together. We enjoy being together. Place for practicing your faith. The people! When we feel the power of each other's faith, our heart is in a holy place.

Voices Project Interviewee



A photograph of a church service. In the foreground, many people are seated in wooden pews, holding up small white cards. In the background, two women are standing at a podium on the stage, one of whom is speaking into a microphone. The church has light-colored walls and a large window on the left.

The members and friends are thoughtful,  
compassionate, kind people of all ages  
and backgrounds.

Voices Project Questionnaire


We recognize disruptive behaviors  
quickly and know what we don't want.  
Healthy, don't talk trash about each  
other.

Voices Project Interviewee

I love the UUCK because this community has become my spiritual home. Here, I have grown into, and understand, my evolving Unitarian Universalism in a context. It is my jumping off place. I feel safe here. I enjoy the love and support of others on the journey as we openly explore (and rehearse for potential amendment) just what, exactly, it is that we embrace, what it is that is contained in our center, and how to translate these understandings into a meaningful life. I have made lifetime friends here, friends that care where I came from and “where I’m comin’ from,” friends that include me, that I could call on when I need a friend, day or night, who would call me if they needed someone. The love and support of these kind people sustained me as I carried the grief of the death of my beloved husband. I can’t think how I could have managed without this precious love. I love to come early to make coffee. I love to pop in to the Office to check in. I love a Chalice Group discussion. I love a work day, helping make our space our place. I treasure these chances to give back. I love gathering to worship together, to raise our voices together in song, to hear together stories of discovery, insight, wisdom, and history together. My attitude sounds really sappy, but I feel so strongly that I want to care for and safeguard this cherished community for the benefit of others that they, too, may feel sustained and loved.

Claudia Miller



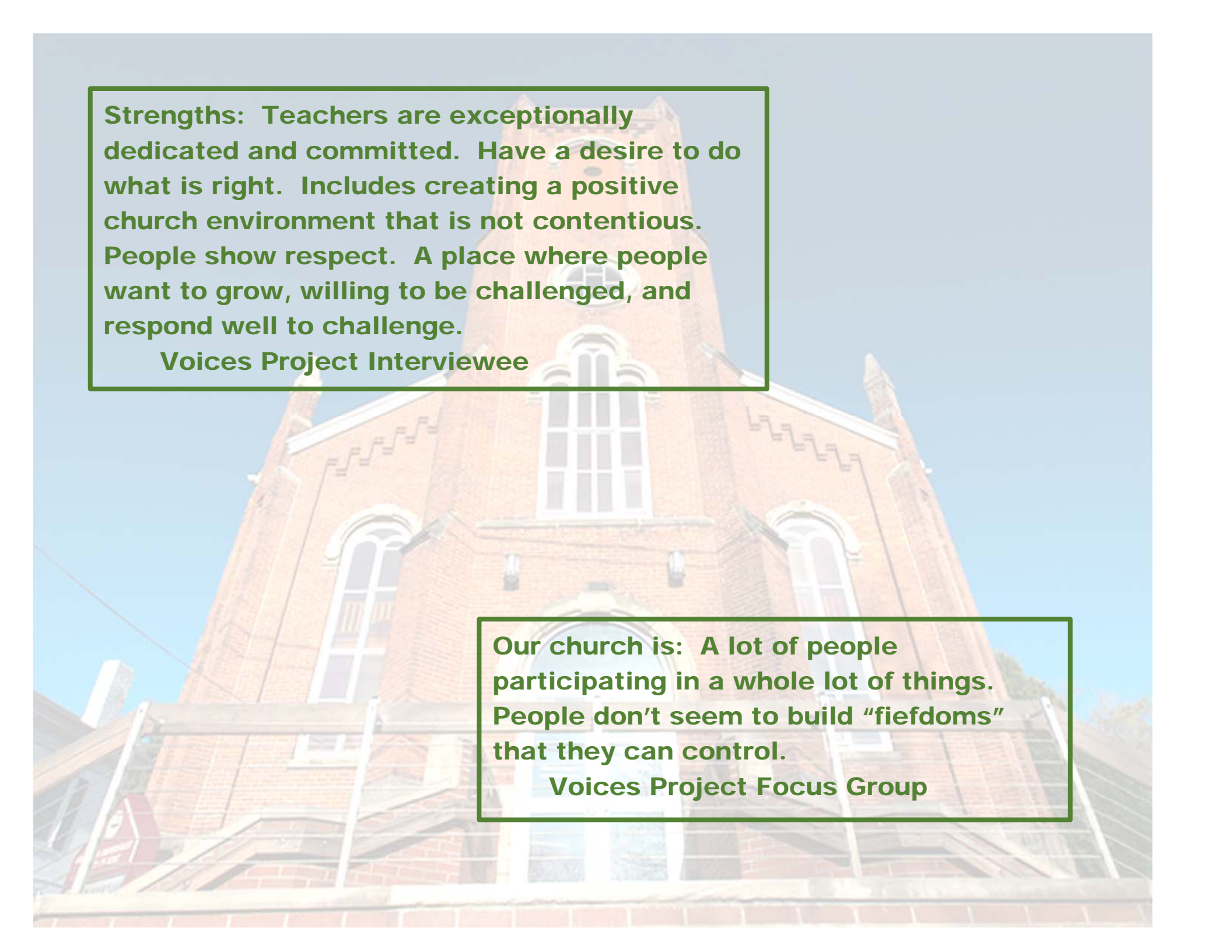


Whoever is chosen, they must be prepared to receive lots of love from the people here, who are full of love!

Voices Project Survey

I think the strengths of the UUCK lie in its members and the accepting nature of the congregation. I often feel inspired by what I experience during the services.

Voices Project Questionnaire




Strengths: Teachers are exceptionally dedicated and committed. Have a desire to do what is right. Includes creating a positive church environment that is not contentious. People show respect. A place where people want to grow, willing to be challenged, and respond well to challenge.

Voices Project Interviewee

Our church is: A lot of people participating in a whole lot of things. People don't seem to build "fiefdoms" that they can control.

Voices Project Focus Group



A group of diverse people are seated in a circle in a church, participating in a discussion. A woman in a purple top stands at the front, addressing the group. The setting is a bright, open-plan church space with large windows and a red carpet.

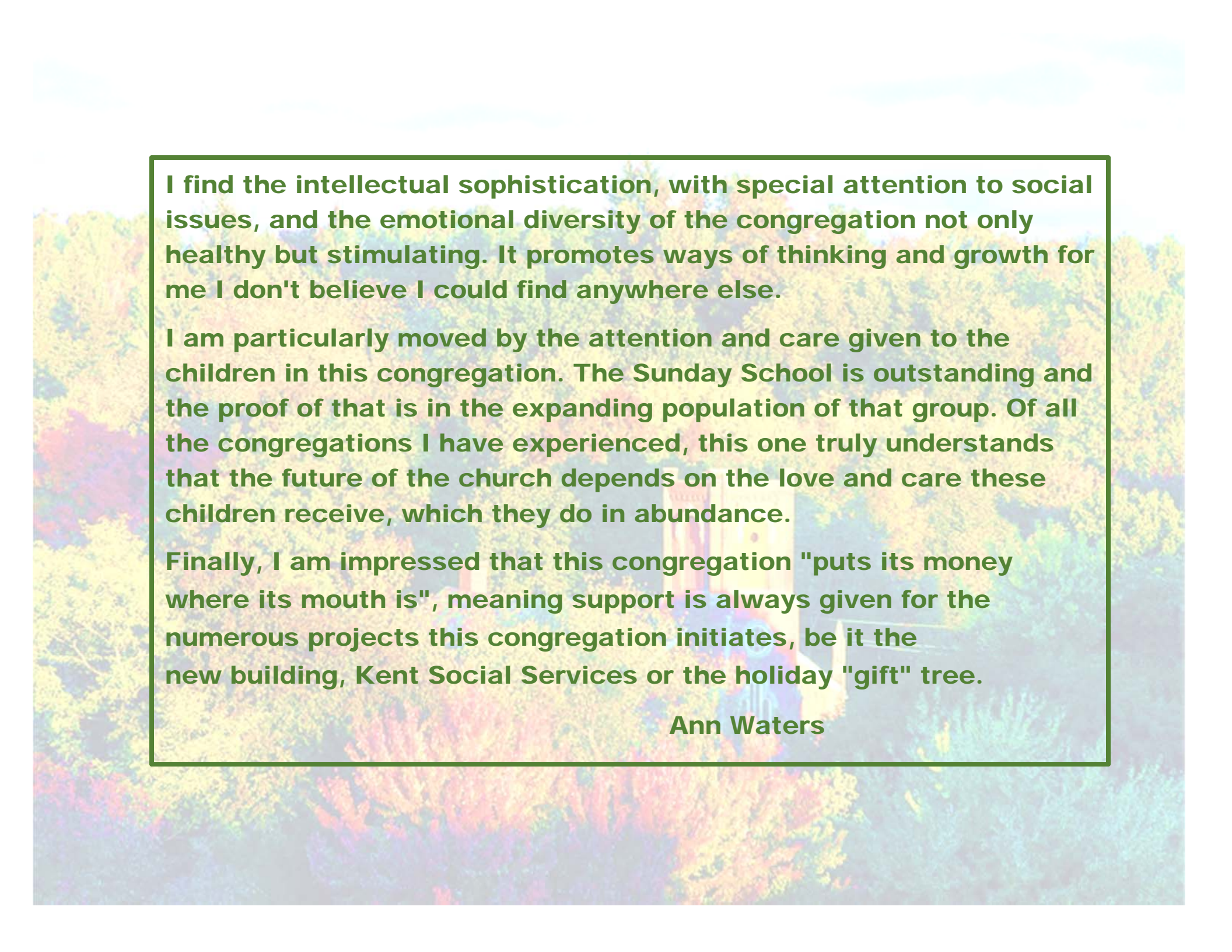
Really good place to find something to connect to, a lot of opportunities for people to look into something more than just sitting in the pew on Sunday morning.  
Voices Project Interview

“Walking into this church is like somebody opened the windows.” (I am quoting a UU minister).  
Voices Project Focus Group

I deeply value the friendly setting for great diversity of our members, visitors, and ministers.

Bill Wilen





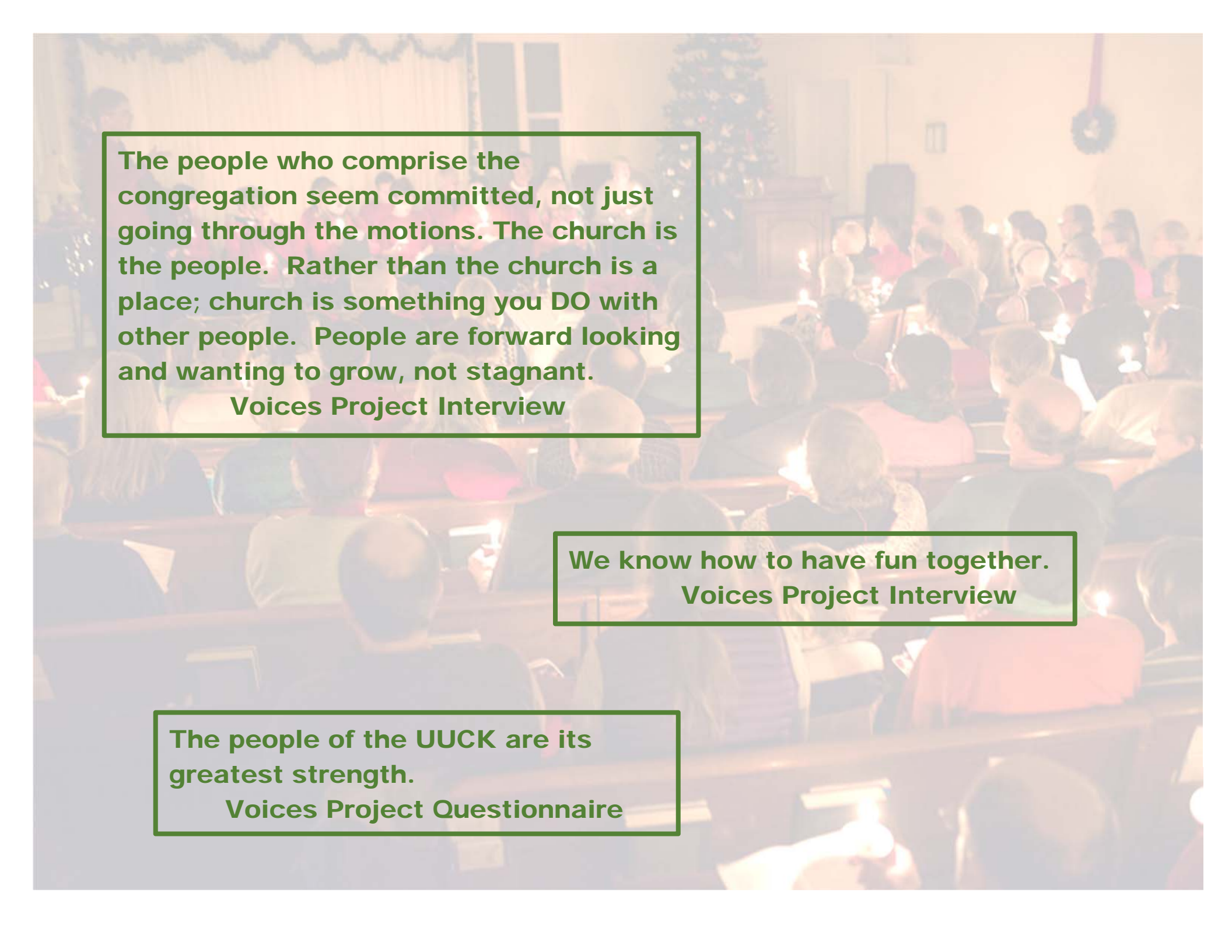
I find the intellectual sophistication, with special attention to social issues, and the emotional diversity of the congregation not only healthy but stimulating. It promotes ways of thinking and growth for me I don't believe I could find anywhere else.

I am particularly moved by the attention and care given to the children in this congregation. The Sunday School is outstanding and the proof of that is in the expanding population of that group. Of all the congregations I have experienced, this one truly understands that the future of the church depends on the love and care these children receive, which they do in abundance.

Finally, I am impressed that this congregation "puts its money where its mouth is", meaning support is always given for the numerous projects this congregation initiates, be it the new building, Kent Social Services or the holiday "gift" tree.

Ann Waters



A photograph of a church congregation during a service. The people are seated in pews, and many are holding lit candles. In the background, a Christmas tree is visible, and the room is decorated with garlands. The lighting is warm and soft, creating a peaceful atmosphere.

The people who comprise the congregation seem committed, not just going through the motions. The church is the people. Rather than the church is a place; church is something you DO with other people. People are forward looking and wanting to grow, not stagnant.

Voices Project Interview

We know how to have fun together.  
Voices Project Interview

The people of the UUCK are its greatest strength.

Voices Project Questionnaire



Strengths: Shared ministry – When the minister was gone, we didn't miss a beat. People in the congregation could step up.  
Voices Project Interview (CLM)

We build friendships that provide a network of support when someone is going through hard times or crisis. There is a strong sense that we really *like* each other.

Voices Project Focus Group

What drew us to the UUCK were the energy and caring enthusiastic folks who were interested in holding the church together.

Voices Project Questionnaire