

Good Morning.

My name is Cheryl Kennedy and my husband Bill and I have been attending church here for almost 30 years....we have been members for 28 of those years. Fifteen years ago we moved to Algonquin Il. For those of you who don't know where Algonquin is, it is 42.7 miles from our driveway to St. Pauls parking lot. It has been referred to as "kookamunga" or the "land way, WAY beyond O'Hare."

When people ask me "why do you drive so far to go to church? Do you know there is a UCC in downtown Algonquin just a couple of miles from your home and there are two UCC's in Crystal Lake just 7 or 8 miles from your home? Especially now when gas is \$4.00 a gallon?" I smile and say "you have to know St. Pauls Church in order to understand." There is continuity here. Bill and I were married here. Our daughter Hillary was married here and our Granddaughter Elizabeth was baptized here. I have watched an entire generation of children grow up here. I attended a baby shower for a member of this congregation, I attended that child's baptism, I was here the day she received her Bible as a first grader, I saw her confirmed as a teenager and I am a member of the committee that sent her, her first "goody box" when she was a freshman in college. Next June she will graduate from college and I hope, someday, to attend her wedding here and see her babies baptized right here in this sanctuary.

On the other end of that spectrum, there are elderly members of this congregation. I have driven them to church, taken them to the grocery store, delivered Easter baskets, visited them in hospitals and nursing homes and ultimately attended their funerals. There IS continuity here! It is my personal belief that the best way for me to serve God and to show my gratitude for many blessings is to follow what we say in our statement of faith....."to love and serve others". At St. Pauls I have been given the ideal place to do that. Over the years I have served two terms on the board of Elders when our governing body was set up that way, taught Sunday School, chaired the adult education committee. I have served as an usher, and a communion server and I put a rose on the altar when a baby is born into this congregation. I have cooked meals for families in crisis and volunteered for some of the fun activities that we have here ...like October Fest a few weeks ago.

And I have been on the receiving end of the love and care of this congregation. Two years ago, when I was diagnosed with cancer, there were prayers, gifts, notes and the shawl ministry knitted a shawl for me to wear during chemo treatments. There were meals sent in, so that Bill, in addition to having to assume all of the other household chores would not have to be concerned about fixing meals. The other advantage to that is that I now know who in this congregation makes the BEST lasagna and the BEST chicken soup!

Now this sounds like it is all about me. But it really isn't. It's about you! You too, can serve the Lord right here at St. Pauls Church. There are many things you can do and you can start by signing a pledge card. Consider your own faith journey and decide how much St. Pauls means to you. Over the next week see where your donation to St. Pauls fits into your budget. All of those opportunities you have to serve cost dollars. Just as at home St. Pauls has bills to pay.....gas,

electric , salaries, supplies etc. You get the idea. We all need to know how much money we have coming in so that we can budget accordingly.

As I look out at this congregation (and I don't very often get to do that from this vantage point) I see the diversity here. I see older people and younger people, gays and straights, married and single. I see children from other countries brought here and adopted by loving parents. And I am proud to be a pledging member of such a wonderful and diverse community of faith. Now some of you may be wondering "Is there ANYTHING this woman doesn't like about St. Pauls"?

Well.....yes there is! Do you see that side aisle over there? The one leading to the side door? That aisle USED to contain MY pew, and they took it away!! And they NEVER put it back and I STILL signed a pledge card. And I hope you will too.