

Sandy Dixon – Why I Give

I'm Sandy Dixon and I have been a member of Arlington Street Church for over 20 years. I started coming here in 1992 when I was 25 years old. Remember 1992? When we hadn't heard of cell phones yet, and we just started listening to the Indigo Girls on CD's instead of cassette tapes. When the seat cushions were red, and the paint was peeling?

You could say I am a person of routine and habit: I eat the same thing for breakfast most days, I go on the exact same run in the mornings, I even wear the same outfit days and days in a row. But even I don't do the same things for 20 years. But **this** I do. This, I am happy to say, has stayed in my life. And for the most part, on Sunday mornings, I've been here. And what I used to do alone I now do with my spouse, Tracey, and son, Gabriel.

When I think about why I support this church, it comes down to two reasons: because I **need** to, and because I **want** to. First, because I **need** to.

We remind each other every time we welcome new members: we need one another. We need one another in our hours of success and hours of despair; we need one another to be recalled to our best selves. I'm the spouse to a lovely partner, I am the mother of a 6-year-old boy, and I'm a psychologist who sees clients who are often suffering very much. How on earth am I supposed to know how to do all of that well day in and day out?

The answer is I have no idea. But I do know that I learn something invaluable being here. About opening my recalcitrant heart, letting in a little joy, the importance of gratitude. These are things I can't learn on my own. I want to know them, and I I imagine you do, too. We need one another.

Second, I support this church because I **want** to. I pay to keep something in my life that I value very much. I know that my money and my volunteering and my showing up make a difference.

Now that I'm a parent, I understand that more deeply. Tracey and I are lucky enough to live in a wonderful town just north of Boston, and every time I talk with Gabriel's teacher, see his full-time classroom aid, and witness the way everyone at the school has helped transition our once-timid preschooler into an amazingly brave kindergartner, I am delighted. And I am delighted that my taxes buy that. I am happy to know that my money goes out of my wallet and comes straight back into Gabriel's life and the life of his friends and his future friends and all of the kids who live in our town, and sustains something that I want to have in our life.

I like knowing the same is true here.

Last week after the service I walked out the side door, took a right, and walked one block to the site of the destruction. I only had to walk one block. It was moving to realize, standing out there in the crowd, that there was nothing I could have done if I had been there when it happened. And that the only thing that determined the outcome that day for me and everyone else was sheer luck. And that none of that was in my power to control. That was a very unsettling feeling.

And then I turned around and came back in here, and I realized that this is something I can control. This is something that I have an ability to ensure stays right here, just like it is, right next to what's just down the street.

And I like **knowing** that I'm **responsible** for a small part of this. I like **being** responsible for it. It lets me know I can do something truly worthwhile in this world.

Amen and Blessed Be.