

Why Deer Park?

By

Carole Birkhead

When asked ‘Why Deer Park?’ I must reply, “Honestly, I had no choice in the matter!” My Mother joined Deer Park in 1935. When I was born in 1937, I was immediately drafted into the Cradle Roll. I soon found myself in one of the cribs in the Nursery. I continued in the normal progression to the Beginner, Primary; Junior High and Senior High Sunday School departments. There was never any question about where we went on Sunday mornings.

So, I would rather consider the question ‘How has Deer Park served me?’ Growing up, every Sunday morning a devoted Sunday School teacher gave her time to help me learn about the Bible. Early in the process it was being told Bible stories and coloring pictures of the characters. As I moved on, I heard the same stories but with the added information about the context of those stories; such as the fact that the characters were real people, when in history they had lived, who had first recorded the story, and how it became part of the Bible we still read. I learned to recite the books of the Old and New Testament, and why they were divided. I was asked to memorize many Bible verses and where in the Bible they were found. I was challenged in sword drills to sharpen my skill at finding specific verses. This in-depth study of the Bible has served me well, both intellectually and spiritually.

It was at Deer Park that I learned to sing. From “Jesus Loves Me” to the Randall Thompson “Alleluia” I was instructed in how to stand and how to breathe while singing. I learned about harmony and how to read music. And I learned to follow a director to achieve the dynamics necessary to make the piece most meaningful to the congregation. I became the alto in a trio whose singing of “Softly the Stars Were Shining” became a tradition at Deer Park which continued for many years. Singing remains one of the things in my life which brings me the greatest joy.

The sermons of six pastors have deepened my understanding of the scriptures, the nature of God, the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, and the relevance of this knowledge to my life.

Deer Park has served me well. My participation there has shaped my life. It will always be MY church.