

## Hospitality in Print

Getting to the DUMC Library might require some navigational inquiries, but the trip is definitely worth a few questions. Tucked down a hallway bordered by staff offices and painted concrete walls, the location is advertised as a “warm, safe, and welcoming place.” It delivers on that promise.

Step inside and you are immediately surrounded by a world of books, CDs, and DVDs that run from floor to ceiling, as well as a few comfy chairs and a research table. There’s a good chance you will be greeted by Gail Spach who, although she is a *real* librarian, doesn’t necessarily speak in traditional hushed tones. A native of England, she and her husband have lived in Davidson for the past 22 years. It doesn’t take too many shared sentences to appreciate that she didn’t pick up that elegant British dialect from around these parts!



Gail has created an inviting environment where people can find the resources they need for spiritual growth and personal education. Many visitors, most of whom are DUMC members or Weekday Preschool families, are interested in learning more about the Bible or in researching a particular topic. Others come in to check out DVDs for their children or audio books for a trip. Gail is particularly proud of the “Junior Concerns” section, which serves as a self-help resource for young readers struggling with issues like bullying, stress, or perfectionism.

A recent visitor shared heartfelt appreciation while sinking into a comfortable reading chair. “Coming to your library is my only safe space,” she said. Another explained, “Through the library at DUMC, I’ve encountered ideas and thoughts that have truly shaped and sustained my Christian faith.” Such conversations help guide future book purchases by Gail, as she proactively responds to the needs of the congregation.

The current count of catalogued books is around 8,500 and growing—including a constant stream of new publications. Another 1,000 or so books are stored in another location on church grounds. While donated books of all types are always welcome, they require additional sorting. The lack of space in the current library means that the collection of cardboard boxes continues to grow and that many really great resources are not yet readily available.

Having all the publications under one roof in a proposed space to be renovated on the Sanctuary level would afford major improvements and capabilities, including visibility and accessibility. A larger space would provide a more welcoming and comfortable environment for visitors and greater display possibilities for the books and other items.

“The library fulfills an important function in the life of our church,” says Gail. “It is a place where people can come to learn more about God, the issues of today’s world, and themselves.” Surrounded (literally) by millions of words on a daily basis, I asked Ms. Spach for a single word to describe the mission of the church library and its burgeoning shelves. “That’s easy,” she replied, “hospitality.”