There is a saying that home is where the heart is. When I first came to BU, I wanted to create a new space that I could call home. Perhaps I could have gone further away from Brookline, the town near Boston where I grew up, to accomplish this.

But when I came to Marsh Chapel my freshman year, I found a place that grounded me, where I could place roots. Marsh Chapel has been described as a heart for the heart of the city and the service in the service of the city. I would take the first part of this phrase and add an “H” to the word heart. Marsh Chapel has become a hearth for me, as well as a heart for the city and a home.

When I say hearth, I mean the space where people can find rest, food, and warmth. Most of all, I mean a space where people can find solace, grow, and change. I believe in building such hearths through acts of hospitality.

This belief stems from spending Tuesday nights cooking dinner for students in the basement kitchen and sharing it over conversation and laughter. It emerges from nights I would spend cleaning dishes and just listening to the simple peace of water flowing and dirt being washed away. It comes from my experiences sitting down with people and yielding space and time to them—space for them to comfortably be themselves, and time for them to tell me their stories.

I believe that one of the greatest challenges as a student is learning how to listen. This is more than just paying attention in class so that you don’t miss something. It involves not thinking of a response to what someone is telling you in the moment and just being present with them. Listening is becoming comfortable with your own silence so that you can discern the voices of others, the sound of your surroundings, or maybe the gentle whisper of the divine.

Once you’ve discerned that, you then have a choice to make. How do I respond to what I’ve heard?

I believe that, sometimes, the hardest power to master is not knowing when to act but knowing when to yield. This is not the same as giving up or being complacent. Yielding is knowing how much you can do to support someone before stepping back and letting them make decisions for themselves with the tools they’ve been given. It is knowing when to let go of your ego, while still preserving your worth as a person, for the sake of another. It is knowing that you don’t have to fix every problem to have hope—hope that survives best at the hearth you’ve created for yourself and for others when all else is said and done.

These are the beliefs I’ve developed at Marsh Chapel. They are the flames that nurture me as I leave my home. They form my hearth and where my heart is.