

## Why Become a Member

Persons often say that they are spiritual, but not religious. What they probably mean by that is that have a belief in God and they may even know Jesus, but their attitude is that churches just have too many people to deal with; they would rather just be spiritual on their own. They will usually say something like they feel closest to God when they are off by themselves, close to nature.

So we might ask, why can't we do that? Why not just practice our own spirituality in our own way and not be bothered by having to deal with the church and its members. Maybe attend a church every now and then when we feel like making a connection or receiving a sacrament. Maybe just show up on Easter and/or Christmas.

Well the simple answer is yes, we can do that. However the faith we will be practicing is not Christianity. Jesus taught that faith is not a private matter. Spirituality is not something we do individually. Our faith is not something we can go off and enjoy by ourselves all alone, sitting by a stream or walking in the woods. Now such times of private devotion can feed our faith, but our life in Christ happens when we are gathered together, even just two or three together. That is when Jesus said he would be with his disciples. Not when they are off alone and feeling holy.

And it is really easier sometimes to feel holy when there is no one else around. That is because life in a Christian community is not always easy. We are humans after all. And humans fail. From time to time we fall out of love with God and each other.

When Jesus began his ministry in the world, the first thing he did was to call disciples and form a community. And that is his gift that has come down to us today, the gift of community, where we meet brothers and sisters, heart to heart, spirit to spirit and face to face. It is that place where we know God and are known by God, the love at the center of the community, a life-giving, sacrificial, persistent love that calls us to reach beyond ourselves, to realize we are connected, woven together into one body, the family of God.

To become a member of the church is an outward and visible sign of your intention to be a part of the community that Christ established and to be an integral part of the body of Christ in the world.

When persons become members of All Saints Episcopal Church we observe a short welcoming liturgy wherein the new members promise to be faithful to the new community; to challenge the community to become the best version of itself and to live up to what the community says it believes; and to allow themselves to be changed, shaped and transformed by the community as they live into their called identity as a beloved child of God. The congregation then makes the same promises to the new members. By so doing, the entire community expresses the hope that together all may live in the Spirit, build one another up in love, sharing in the life and worship of the church, and serving the world for the sake of Jesus Christ.