

All About...

MEMBERSHIP

Saint John's in the Village

Let's start by saying that, membership in the Church is not the same as membership in a club or civic organization, though there are obvious similarities. Membership in the Church is a life-long commitment to a life lived in holy community, growing in spiritual maturity with all the elbow-bumping and love that life in any human family brings. It is the acceptance of a disciplined life under a generous authority of love. It requires the use of both the brain and the 'heart'. It is a commitment to a common life of worship and service, reflected in individual talents and opportunities brought together in service for communal purpose: the revelation of the kingdom of God. It carries with it potential for both personal growth in the spiritual life, and the obligation to be of assistance to others in the same. Membership in the Church is open to anyone who can affirm the ancient baptismal creed, and who makes solemn vows to accept the ministry of reconciliation begun in Jesus of Nazareth. Therefore, it is a pledge to:

- renounce Satan and all the spiritual forces of wickedness that rebel against God.
- renounce the evil powers of this world which corrupt and destroy the creatures of God.
- renounce all sinful desires that draw you from the love of God.
- turn to Jesus Christ and accept him as your Saviour.
- put your whole trust in his grace and love.
- follow and obey him as your Lord.
- continue in the apostles' teaching and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in the prayers.
- persevere in resisting evil, and, whenever you fall into sin, repent and return to the Lord.
- proclaim by word and example the Good News of God in Christ.
- seek and serve Christ in all persons, loving your neighbour as yourself.
- strive for justice and peace among all people, and respect the dignity of every human being.

I. HOW TO BECOME A MEMBER OF SAINT JOHN'S CHURCH.

A. If you are a member of another Episcopal Church, or a member of a parish anywhere in the Anglican Communion, you must request a *Letter of Transfer* from the parish where you are presently a member. If you are unsure where you are a member, try the parish in which you were baptized. Your membership remains in the parish of your Baptism, no matter how long ago that was, unless you or a parent has asked for it to be moved.

B. If you are a member of another denomination or fellowship, and were baptized in the name of the Holy Trinity, you may request a membership information form from our Church Office (410.467.4793). When that is completed and returned, you will then be entered in the Canonical Register of Members. Subsequently, the rite of Holy Confirmation, a public affirmation of the Catholic Faith together with solemn prayer invoking the Holy Spirit for perseverance in this faith, administered by the Bishop, is normally expected of those who have not yet been confirmed by a Bishop in the Catholic tradition.

C. If you have never been baptized, please speak to the Rector about preparation for the rite of Holy Baptism. (Please see [All About Holy Baptism](#)).

D. In any event, please feel free to speak with the Rector or any member of the Clergy about membership.

II. WHAT THE CHURCH EXPECTS OF HER MEMBERS

The Catechism of the Book of Common Prayer gives this summary of the solemn vows of Holy Baptism: "The duty of all Christians is to follow Christ; to come together week by week for corporate worship; and to work, pray, and give for the spread of the kingdom of God." *The Book of Common Prayer*, page 856. Based upon our Baptismal Covenant, the Church expects its members:

A. *To follow Christ* - that is, to represent Christ and his Church, to bear witness to him wherever one may be, and according to the gifts given one as an individual, to carry on Christ's work of reconciliation in the world; to take one's place in the life, worship, and governance of the Church. ...To remember always who and whose we are.

B. *To come together week by week for corporate worship* - this means joining our brothers and sisters in Christ for communal worship of God each week in a celebration of Word and Sacrament, wherever we may be and whatever else may be going on in our lives. By extension, this includes not only Sundays, but the seven days set apart in The Book of Common Prayer as Principal Feasts of the Church, whether they fall on Sunday or not.

C. *To work for the spread of the kingdom of God* - This means the offering of one's time and abilities in service to the Church and the world by taking up one's share in the work of reconciling humanity to God, each other, and all creation.

D. *To pray for the spread of the kingdom of God* - This means joining in the Daily Prayer of the Church, morning and evening, either at home or at the church; having a time of regular, sincere, and open personal prayer to commune with the Holy Spirit of God; and to see one's own prayer and the Prayer of the Church, as a means for change in the world in service of the kingdom of God. "...thy kingdom come..."

E. *To give for the spread of the kingdom of God* - This means that out of the abundance that God has given us in time, ability, and money, we designate a portion of each to be returned through our parish church to the ministry of the whole Church, which, in all its enormous variety, serves to spread the kingdom of God. As a minimum standard of giving for money, the Episcopal Church in its General Convention has adopted a tithe of ten percent.

III. WHAT MEMBERS MAY EXPECT OF THE CHURCH

Saint John's Church is a local manifestation of the Church Catholic. We are a part of a much larger and broader whole. Within our resources as a community of Christian people, Saint John's Church provides: a setting for the regular communal and personal worship of God; for formation in the Christian spiritual life according to the Anglican tradition; for the celebration of the Sacraments of the Catholic Faith; for the Proclamation of the Word of God; for pastoral care (including spiritual counsel and support); for opportunities for Christian service in the world; for Christian fellowship and renewal.

A. *...a setting for...Worship* - Members may expect that Saint John's will be above all else a place dedicated to the worship of God and to prayer. The Daily Office of the Church, morning and evening prayers, will be held in the church most months of the year; the Holy Eucharist will be celebrated on every Sunday and Holy Day of the Church. The church will be open before and after appointed service times for private prayer, and by appointment, at any time. This is our "...bounden duty and service". The form and substance of our worship will be the best we can do in every respect. Our worship will conform to *The Book of Common Prayer* and the Anglican spiritual tradition and heritage. We will welcome everyone who genuinely desires to worship or visit.

B. *...a setting for...Formation* - Members may expect to find a program of spiritual formation and training at Saint John's. This will include instruction in the Catholic Faith; in methods of prayer and meditation; in the Anglican spiritual discipline, tradition, and ethos; and in moral decision making for a modern world.

C. *...a setting for...the Sacraments* - Members may expect to be instructed in the meaning and joyful use of the sacraments of the Church. They may expect that they will be celebrated with dignity, reverence, and pastoral sensitivity, and according to *The Book of Common Prayer* and the Canons (laws) of our Church.

D. *...a setting for...Proclamation* - Members may expect to hear the Holy Bible presented as the Word of God, but not as the 'words' of God. The Holy Bible is presented at Saint John's as the divinely inspired record of the maturing faith of both the Hebrew people and the early Church, and their evolving understanding of their relationship to our God and his Christ. The central message of the Holy Bible, that God is love, creator, sanctifier, and saviour, who calls us into loving and reconciling relationship with himself, one another, and all creation, most clearly and accessibly in Jesus of Nazareth, will be readily and repeatedly proclaimed.

E. ...*a setting for...Pastoral Care* - Members may expect to receive spiritual counsel and support, the ministration of the Sacraments, encouragement, and presence from the clergy and other members of the congregation in times of sorrow and of joy.

F. ...*a setting for...Christian service in the world* - Members will be exposed to, encouraged to, and expected to engage in opportunities to carry on Jesus' reconciling ministry in the wider community. Members will be able to perform not merely social service, but service motivated by love and gratitude to God, and extended as an offering with Christ.

G. ...*a setting for Fellowship and Renewal* - Members may expect a ministry of hospitality one with another, and which welcomes and includes an ever widening circle of "all sorts and conditions" of God's people. Through this hospitality and these interactions members may expect to find renewal and support in their Christian pilgrimage.

Membership in the Church is unlike membership in most organisations. Our goal is nothing less than the kingdom of God on earth. Ours is not a group of people who look, think, and act alike, but rather each of whom has chosen to be followers of Jesus of Nazareth in the multiplicity of ways he calls us and endows us with insight and grace. We are united in our faith in him and in the Baptismal Covenant we share, knowing that by definition it is impossible to be a Christian by oneself. We sustain and renew our unity and covenant with him and each other in the Rite of Reconciliation, in the Sacrament of his Body and Blood, in our common worship, and in our prayers for one another. Our mission as Christians and Members of his Church is to restore all people to unity with God, each other, and all creation, in Christ.

