

Catching Up with Charlie Allen

Charlie Allen helped guide The Church of St. Michael & St. George through years of progress and challenge. His devotion and steady influence helped make our church the wonderful place it is today.
—Amy Zimmerman

Joining the Church

We lived near the Cathedral Basilica until I was about four years old and my parents bought a home on Aberdeen Place. My father belonged to the Unitarian church and my mother was an Episcopalian from Austin, Texas. When my father's church folded we joined The Church of St. Michael & St. George. It was probably around 1927 or 1928.

I came here every Sunday with my parents and my older sister and we enjoyed it. We walked the three blocks to church from our home at the corner of Aberdeen and University Lane.

As a teenager I remember helping Rev. Block, who later became Bishop Block, with the early service. (The Rev. Dr. Karl Morgan Block was rector of The Church of St. Michael & St. George from 1925 until 1938.) I remember at the end of the service he would kneel and I wondered if he was going to be able to get up again because he was such a large man.

Liturgically, I have seen some changes in the church over the years. Rev. Dr. Sant used what we called "low church" traditions. Some of the other rectors tended more toward a "high church" (Anglo-Catholic) worship. I feel that the general makeup of the parish has been very consistent throughout the years.

Going to the Chapel

My wife, Cynthia, and I were married here in 1954. One of our wedding pictures is part of the Centennial Wedding Celebration the church is holding next week. Cynthia wore her grandmother's wedding dress and our wedding was the last time it was worn. It literally fell apart after our wedding.

When we were married, Cynthia wasn't a member of any church. St. Michael and St. George meant a great, great deal to my mother. My father was senior warden and held leadership roles in the church, but emotionally it meant a lot more to my mother. Cynthia often came to church with my family. After we were married she joined the church and became involved both socially and with the Sunday school program. Our son was also very involved with the church as a child and as an adult when he lived in St. Louis. He now lives and works in Geneva, Switzerland.

Serving God

I served on the vestry three times for three different rectors. The first time was in 1960 with the Rev. Dr. Sant (The Rev. John Francis Sant was rector from 1939 to 1964) and I was the youngest person on the Vestry. In 1963, the Rev. Dr. Sant suffered a stroke while on vacation. We called an emergency vestry meeting and

placed Rev. Jack Schweizer in charge of the parish; subsequently he was named the rector. I served on the vestry again in 1982 with Rev. Salmon (Rev. Edward L. Salmon was rector 1978 to 1990) and in 1994 with Rev. Semon (Rev. Kenneth J. G. Semon was rector from 1991 to 1997).

I also served on committees for the Diocese of Missouri. I was head of the diocesan search committee that identified three candidates to be considered for bishop to replace Rt. Rev. William Jones. The diocese selected Rt. Rev. Hays Rockwell and over the years he and I became friends. He comes back to St. Louis from time to time and we still get together. I served on the search committee again when Bishop Rockwell retired.

Fond memories

One of the fond memories I have of my years at the church is when we welcomed one of our first African American members. His name was Larry Howard and he was the head of the Missouri Botanical Garden. Rev. Salmon asked him to preach on a couple of occasions.

I've seen the highs and lows in this church, but it has always been, as long as I can remember, the best Episcopal Church in St. Louis.