

## **PARISH MEMBERSHIP**

What does it mean to be a member of a Parish? This is a question worth asking. In the New Testament, the letters of St. Paul were written to particular “churches” and given their title by the city in which they lived, gathered, and worshipped. Thus, we have the epistles to the “Romans” and other cities in which local bodies of Christians had been formed through St. Paul’s ministry. In some cases, we even have references to particular parishes meeting in the house of Aquila and Priscilla (1 Cor. 16:19), in the house of Nympha (Col. 4:15), and the house of Philemon (Philem. 2). It is likely that these particular parishes did not include all of the Christians that would be considered the “Romans” or the “Corinthians” but would constitute the main group to which Paul was sending his pastoral instructions. So, the Bible contains an acknowledgment of the reality that Christians are both members of the universal Church and members of a particular parish of believers. So, we may conclude that being a member of a parish is simply belonging to a particular community of Christian believers.

### **BELONGING TO THE CHURCH**

Prior to any parish membership, a person must become a member of the Body of Christ which is the Christian Church – One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic. A person becomes a member of the Church through faith in Jesus Christ and Baptism in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. To be a Christian and to belong to the Church of Christ, we must begin with Confession and Baptism (Matt. 28:18; Acts 2:38).

For full sacramental membership of the Church, in addition to Baptism, the Church requires the anointing of Confirmation through the laying on of hands by a Bishop. The Bishop stands in the place of the Apostles, who laid hands on the Baptized to fill them with the power of the Holy Spirit (Acts 8:14-17; 2 Timothy 1:6-7). This anointing is to bless the believer and strengthen them with the power of the Holy Spirit for Christian service and perseverance in the Faith.

### **BELONGING TO A PARTICULAR PARISH**

A Christian should belong to a particular parish, where they can commit to living the Christian life with a group of other Christians that they worship with, love, pray for, serve, and carry out the many biblical instructions regarding mutual support in the Christian life. As noted above, it was assumed that St. Paul was writing to a somewhat defined group of individuals when he sent greetings to particular groups such as those who met and worshipped together in the home of Aquila and Priscilla. We see from the New Testament, that the local Churches of Christ (Rom. 16:16) all had appointed leaders in ministry, members involved in service to others, those who provided through generosity, those who encouraged others, those who did works of mercy, etc. (Rom. 12:3-8; 1 Cor. 12; Eph. 4:11-13; 1 Pet. 4:10-11). Commitment to a local parish encourages us to find our place of service, discern our calling, and to serve others in Christ.

### **PARISH MEMBERSHIP AT ST. ANNE’S**

At St. Anne’s, there is no formal requirement for joining or registering as a member of the Parish. As a small community of believers, we welcome those who worship with us into our family. If you are a baptized Christian who believes the Nicene Creed, worships with us regularly, and receives Communion at least once a year, then you will be considered a member of our Parish. We also love and pray for those members who belong to our family but are no longer able to leave their home for worship regularly – and we desire to meet any pastoral needs they may have. The members of our Parish also serve in various ways to support and engage in our life of worship, fellowship together, parish ministries, outreach ministries, and financial needs.