

August 2024 Justice and Outreach Council

Trinity Episcopal Church Member Profile

Michael Neal Arnold

Michael claims he “never expected to get involved” but when he first attended Trinity Episcopal Church thirty years ago, he found the next step in his own spiritual journey. That sojourn included his families’ attendance at an Episcopal church in San Joaquin Valley, California in his younger years, and a somewhat spotty attendance record in college and as a young married man.

Still seeking spiritual input in his life he reacquainted himself with the Unitarians in the mid to late 1980s while also attending Trinity Episcopal Church. He was still seeking spiritual input and The Rev. Mark Asman invited him to ‘fill in the card’.

His first involvement beyond attending services was being a part of the altar party (Acolyte and LEM) at the 8:00 am service. Through that he became acquainted with parishioner, Jim Belden, who asked Michael to visit and serve Eucharist at the Santa Barbara Convalescent Hospital. After a while, Jim turned the ministry over to Michael. He’s now been doing it for 25 years or more.

Michael encourages all Trinity attendees, those who are new and those who are have more experience:

“No matter how intimidating it might feel, step into it and keep an eye open for what sounds interesting.”

Michael was comfortable with committee meetings, but he was not at ease with the social hour after the service or with church events. The more he became acquainted with individuals, the more his participation grew. But his attempts to join in were not always successful.

Ann Jaqua (featured in the July 2024 JOC Digest) got him involved in parish council, then, Betty Bickel urged him to run for a vestry seat. He lost the first time he ran for vestry, but his involvement in such activities as Adult Education introduced him to more Trinity members. He also began involvement with the Transition House ministry and stayed active because of the strong relationships he enjoyed. This aided his transition to new leadership levels.

The next time Michael ran he won a vestry seat. (Thankfully, Trinity now elects vestry members through the nomination process, it is an affirming experience.) He has now served three or four terms or approximately fifteen years. Finally, he trimmed back some roles and served as the junior warden during the clergy leadership change. He served on the search committee as a co-chair with Susan Kruttsch.

He still remembers the words of The Rev. Anne Howard:

“Religion is something best done in community.”

At first Michael disagreed, wanting to be in touch with his *own* spirituality. Now he knows it is ALL about community, not theology, but community. Meet him now through the Base Community. Michael says,

**“Pick something little to get involved with
community prayer, or our base community, and find a bond”**

Interview and article by Anita Perez Ferguson, JOC Digest Editor