

Centennial Conversations

Meet Alma Stokes



The daughter of an AME preacher, Alma Stokes grew up with church at the center of her life. As a young mother, she found her way to the Episcopal Church through Saint Barnabas in Pasadena which she says “felt like AME” and where she and her family settled in and became involved – including a term for Alma on the Vestry. Alma remembers her time at Saint Barnabas fondly, recalling her sons serving as ushers and acolytes: “I didn’t have to tell them, get up and go to church; they just did it!”

In the early seventies changes in her life – including remarriage and the birth of a daughter – sent Alma on a search for other changes as well. She knew George Regas as a “football buddy” because their sons played on the same team at Poly and her good friend Regina Moses was a fixture at All Saints Church. “I decided I’d go to All Saints,” she recounts, “but I said ‘I’m not doing anything: I’m just going to sit on the bench.’”

Clearly God had other plans for Alma.

“Tim Safford wanted to start a “speech choir” and since I had been teaching drama at John Muir, I signed up. My involvement just got bigger and

bigger, starting in the women’s group -- which Anne Peterson more or less ran -- and of course I joined the mission group and out of that, we ended up starting Grace Center – which still exists as part of Five Acres.”

Serving several terms on Vestry, Alma has known three rectors – George Regas, Ed Bacon and Mike Kinman – and in retirement has continued her work in the community with PEF: Pasadena Education Foundation, helping mostly underserved students connect with STEM education.

In our interview with Alma, we asked her to respond to these three questions:

What’s one thing you’re the most grateful for about All Saints Church?

“What it did for me is to open me back up to Church when I was about to lose interest,” she said. “I was at the point if I didn’t go to Church I was OK – but All Saints actually was the catalyst for me to get involved in church and not quit. What happened to me at All Saints was the people, the minister, everything. I not only felt welcome -- the whole atmosphere and what they were doing in the community reminded me what church is all about and that God was there. It was a place where people were giving, working, acting to help the community and other people.”

Tell us a story of a favorite memory of your years at All Saints.

“I got too many ... I don’t know ... I really don’t ... There’s so many I can point out that just stand out. Just that I found my church. That said, our Prayer Shawl Ministry is still very important to me.”

What is your greatest hope for All Saints Church as we move into this next century here at 132 N. Euclid?

“That we will concentrate on number one, God first – then anything else can come after that. When we have God first and have Him in that church, then when you walk in those doors, you feel holy, because He’s there. And that’s how we’ll continue to do all the things we do there.”