

Russell Allender 2-14-2023 interview.

Interview with Russell Allender by Linda Ferreria

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Transcribed by Catherine Crouch

Linda Ferreira Welcome. I'd like you to start by talking about your earliest memories at All Saints. So say who you are and then talk about All Saints. Your earliest memories and...and what you know about how your family got here.

Russell Allender My name is Russell Allender. And the earliest days I remember about All Saints were... I was very young child; actually I don't have a lot of memory of first coming here. I just remember being here every Sunday, getting dressed for church and coming faithfully. My family had already established some history here by the time I arrived apparently. So I was always... it was a part of my family. It was a part of my routine for the week. And so I just remember being here and being comfortable knowing a lot of the people in the congregation, and they were just all a part of my life.

Linda Ferreira Give us a range of years that would have been. You were born in?

Russell Allender I was born in 1964, so probably 1970 is the earliest memories I have of attending All Saints.

Linda Ferreira So tell us some stories about the people at All Saints and who was important to you. What experiences were important to you here?

Russell Allender Yeah. I remember not just not only attending service here at All Saints, but also participating and being a part of the things that were going on here. And that gave me the opportunity to become close to a lot of the different members who were over different ministries, such as the choir; being an altar boy and, and different, you know, activities that were going on. So it was really a great experience. And I loved coming here every Sunday. And, you know, during the week when we had rehearsals for, like I said, different ministries and things like that, and there's, you know, there's a hall next to the chapel where we would have coffee and donuts after service. And so that gave us the opportunity to fellowship amongst each other and really get to know each other. So we were pretty big family and me as a young man, it gave me the opportunity to be able to associate myself with different people from different backgrounds and as well as, you know, my own - As far as friends and other people who lived in my community, I was able to meet other people in other communities and see some of the things that they were doing and seeing how they were participating in the church ministries as well.

Linda Ferreira In part, you're talking about differences in diversity and race and in probably careers and economics. And I think you're saying you participated across the board.

Russell Allender I did. I did.

Linda Ferreira Can you talk some about. When you would come into the church, did people sit separately by groups? Were they mixed together? Who was in leadership? Who was in the pews? How would you see the mix?

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Russell Allender It was very diverse at that time. And if there was like separation of groups, it would be probably due to family. You know what I mean? Not just particular people, not, you know, wanting to, you know, connect with the rest of the community. I saw everybody as one big family. There weren't too many people in the congregation that I didn't know and that didn't know me by name. So on different times like holidays, Christmas especially, and things like that, you know, we all had a part in, you know, whatever event was planned. So, you know, I, I really I really enjoyed being here. There was a lot of diversity at the time, and it was a very relaxing and comfortable atmosphere.

Linda Ferreira And what would you - what would your guesstimate be of the racial mix at the time?

Russell Allender I feel that the racial mix in the congregation was probably 70% white, 30% Black. Yes.

Linda Ferreira And you're saying people took, both Black and white, rich and poor, took part in the variety of ministries?

Russell Allender Yes, because we were...we all felt welcome. We all felt that we knew each other well enough to be open and to work next to one another. So that made for a very good experience here at All Saints.

Linda Ferreira Were there times that there were people in the church or that the church itself helped you with hard things you were facing?

Russell Allender Yes, I believe that. I feel that there were a lot of people in the church who were very helpful in my youth and in my upbringing who showed me unconditional love. And that was appreciated. And they showed me other options. Presented me with other choices other than what was shown to me maybe at home or in school. They showed me a lot of things that I, I used in my daily life today.

Linda Ferreira Can you tell a story or two about this? What you got a hold of, what you learned?

Russell Allender You know, I. One time. Yeah. I can tell you. I have a very good story for you actually. I... I'd gotten in trouble. Me and my cousin. Well, they were... we lived... Where I lived was next to where I-70 East and West is the Bright Wood Martindale community. We lived, like, right next to where they were doing that infrastructure. And I remember they had put up a bunch of reflectors on the side of the road that I guess for night driving, you know. And we thought that those would look really great on our bikes. So my cousin and I decided to go up on the highway and we twisted these reflectors and they came off really easy. And so we, we probably we got a handful, you know, maybe a dozen, maybe a dozen a piece or whatever. And... anyway, the state police pulled up on us, and so we were caught red handed and they put us in the car and they took us home. Well, while arriving, I remember Mrs. Van Kersen (she was the choir director at the present time) had just pulled in front of my house to pick us up for choir rehearsal. So that was embarrassing, but the officer talked, spoke with my mom, and I remember Mrs. Van Kersen waiting. And when everything was resolved, he decided to, you know, let us go with a warning and we returned the items. I remember getting into the car and she said that, "Well, it's a good thing I came to get you." And I... we just... I just remember her saying that: I remember her saying that it's a good thing I came to get you. And I didn't

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think about it then. But what I do realize is she was a part of God's plan as far as showing me that I had other options. You kind of see what I'm saying? Yeah, I had other options and that God was waiting on me, you know, to serve Him and that I was forgiven for what I had done. But God's still priority. So I remember that clearly.

Linda Ferreira Well, that is a wonderful story. And I'm curious about when you think back on that story, you obviously have thought about it because you've done some work there. When you think back on that story and if you were to describe yourself when you and your cousin had the idea: what would have your descriptors been, what adjectives would you have used to describe yourself then?

Russell Allender Wild. Anxious.

Russell Allender I was wild. I was anxious. I was a very obedient young man. But at the same time, there were periods where, you know, I was mischievous. So I...

Linda Ferreira You would say, I was wild. I was anxious, a little afraid about what might happen here. Yes. And I'm an obedient person, usually, so, but I do have mischief.

Russell Allender Yes. And. And that goes back to what I was saying about having options, you know. You know what I mean? Just, I see it today as making mistakes and not discovering my options when I knew that I had church family and other people who, who kind of wanted better for me. It helped me to want to make better decisions when I saw or when I felt that I had people who actually cared about me. It made me want to make better decisions for myself. I didn't want to be a disappointing person.

Linda Ferreira Oh. So in that story, she was solidly right there.

Russell Allender Yeah.

Linda Ferreira "Good thing I was here."

Russell Allender Yeah. Yeah.

Linda Ferreira And it sounds like it really reinforced your experience of your notion of God and the world and what you're called to do as well as your basic goodness.

Russell Allender Yeah.

Linda Ferreira Yeah. Just need to keep the options in mind.

Russell Allender Yes. When she when she said this a good thing that I came, it... I think she was saying to me because she overheard everything that was going on and the fact that my mother explained to the officer, well, she's here to pick him up for choir rehearsal for the church. I think that had somewhat of an impact on the officer's decision to go light on myself and my cousin. So God was there for me. Yes.

Linda Ferreira I hear this as a joyful story. Yes. Trouble and joyful. Tell me another story like that. Where your life in the church turned something good into better or something slanting towards the difficult into something right.

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Russell Allender I remember being in choir rehearsal. One time, and Bob Goodlett, who was the choir director at the time, was a bit irritated with me because I was being disruptive and he pulled me to the side.

Russell Allender Yes. So I remember the choir director. Bob Goodlett was his name, was... he was correcting me because I was being disruptive in choir rehearsal and I got irritated and I got an attitude and I walked out and I remember that he came to me after rehearsal was over, and he explained to me that he thought I was a very mature young man, and he looked to me as a leader in the group because of that fact. And I didn't understand what, you know, what he was really trying to say. But as I've gone on in my life, I've been challenged to do things better or I've had people have expected more of me than I've expected of myself. And I remember those things going back that helped me, you know, in my life. Yes.

Linda Ferreira I was just thinking he was a white man in a leadership position.

Russell Allender Yes.

Linda Ferreira Do you have any additional thoughts about what it was like to be not just corrected by him? But told I'm basically I'm counting on you because you are in the leader position.

Russell Allender Yeah.

Linda Ferreira Was that a new - what was that like for you?

Russell Allender That it was that experience for me was normal. Okay. At the time was when I remember the public school that I went to at the time. Well, bussing had occurred and so I intermingled with other races all day. I had friends who were white. We did things together. We did sports, you know, different tasks at school to where I, I, you know, I had to create a relationship with. So it was never anything new to me. And like I said, that when I first started attending All Saints, I was very young, you know, I really don't remember first coming here. I just remember being here and, and I always remember being around different races, different cultures to where I was very comfortable. I was very at ease. And I'll go on to say that anything other than that is not comfortable for me. Diversity is a necessity in my life. There are a lot of things that I choose not to do if there's no diversity, because I don't feel like if there's no diversity, there's no growth, there's not a chance to grow. We always learn as life goes on. We'll never know everything. So if we don't keep an open mind, then we're at a standstill in life, I believe.

Linda Ferreira If perhaps we could continue with that same notion. That you built community and comfort here and at school.

Russell Allender And at school? Yes, that's correct.

Linda Ferreira How have you? You know, what have you taken from your All Saints life into your adult life? You know, what kind of lessons or directions have you taken that kept you so committed to a life of diversity?

Russell Allender One thing I do know about myself today is and I didn't know it then, but I had to learn that over the years. And that is I have to be comfortable with myself first in order to be comfortable with other people. Corinthians 13, First Corinthians 13 talks about

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love is patient. Love is kind. Love does not envy. Love does not boast. It talks about what love does not. But at the end of that chapter, it says, The greatest of these is love. Without love, there is no way we can serve God who unconditionally loves us. I have to learn every day more and more, to learn other people, even when they are hurtful, even when they are unforgiving. Even when they're impatient with me. I have to learn to love others unconditionally as Christ has loved me and it makes for a happier, peaceful, more peaceful life for myself, even in all the struggles that I've endured over the years. When I when I instill those things into my life, all that goes away. It goes away. God has forgiven me of my sins and he forgives me daily. And I have to remain aware of that and always try to change. Yes.

Linda Ferreira Are - were there ways that you would - I could ask this in two different ways so you could go wherever you want with it. I know that that belief and pattern of living. You know that constantly coming back to facing a trouble or facing mistreatment and turning back to the work of loving. I know that's pivotal for you and I assume you've learned that in several different places. And you can talk about all several. But if you can talk some about additional pivotal ways you learned that here. And it could be times that times of trouble for you. Where you had to, where you faced mistreatment and you had to learn to love again, or when you helped someone else do that.

Russell Allender The. My experience here at All Saints was...it was...never changing. It was always the same for me. This was always a place where I felt safe. It was always a place where I had somebody to talk to, from the new member to the bishop or whoever was, you know, over the congregation at the time. I felt comfortable being able to talk to...to anybody. But the thing that I know is had I known that then when I was young, it would have been a great deal more helpful for me in my life because I've had some struggles, I really have. Especially after I lost my mom.

Linda Ferreira You were young, right?

Russell Allender I was young. I was 16 when I lost her, and a lot of bad struggles began for me. I lost my way and I started to get into serious trouble, not just being mischievous. I started to really get into trouble. And I stopped attending church here at All Saints. And so that everything that I held dear kind of fell off because I was facing hardships more than I was interested in being here at All Saints. At that time, my reality was struggle. And I didn't understand how to fix it. You could even say I wasn't taught how to fix it. So it was hard for me and it took me to a very late age to realize all these things. Because a lot of situations that I found myself in, I always felt different and I never understood why. I was never into being in a gang or just being a criminal. I was... I was never comfortable doing those things, yet I was always around those things. And I never understood why. I never I felt like I fit in. I never understood that. Today. I understand that that began. When my journey began. When I started to attend All Saints, then when I started to meet new people from different backgrounds, different cultures, and being able to talk to people, being a part of different ministries, being an acolyte, being in the choir, there was a time where my, yeah, my first job was here is at All Saints. I used to cut the grass here. I used to clean up over here at the hall. My first paying job. I mean, I literally got a paycheck. It wasn't much, but it was my very first job, and, when I, when I really think back, a lot of things were instilled in me that would not go away when I was in trouble, around the wrong people, never fit in. So I just gained a lot at a very young age from being a part of All Saints. And I thank God for that experience because it helps me today to be who I am. I never felt comfortable when I was in trouble. I never felt comfortable when I was not helping others. I wasn't comfortable when I wasn't forgiving others...when I wasn't loving others - it's always been who I was. I

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just didn't know it. But today I can say that that's who I am. And I'm very comfortable in my world today, in my life. And I thank God for the things that I learned just being a part of this church. For the people who were a part of my life at a very young age; they helped to raise me. That's how I see it.

Linda Ferreira You're saying they helped to raise you? This was the nest? Yes, it was the nest. And when your mother died and you were lost.

Linda Ferreira Do you have any memories of anyone trying to gather you up, trying to find you or reach you?

Russell Allender No, I don't. I'm sorry. I don't have any memory, memories. There may have been messages sent, you know, asking about me or whatever, but I don't remember. One thing I do remember is midnight mass. Christmas night. 12:00. That was traditional. I remember doing that for maybe a few years and but eventually I just kind of faded out. Unfortunately.

Linda Ferreira When we when we're trying to understand our history, we are looking at what gathered people together in love and in diversity of leadership and roles and how things get lost. We're trying to look at both sides. So you're actually telling a story of being lost? And I'm sure there are many factors in how that happened. But, you know, for you, your memory bank doesn't hold the trying to reach, people trying to reach you, although you're assuming maybe they did. You do remember coming back for a midnight mass?

Russell Allender Yeah, because at the time, well, I would say that it was always a time where my family gathered together was for that one event. We always came to church on Christmas night for midnight mass. We did it for years and a lot of my family continued to do it. So that part I do remember even after my attendance had dropped on Sunday, I do remember that because this is where my family's going to be. So that's where I'll be, you know? Yeah.

Linda Ferreira So I don't know how much we can take away from this experience. But you are clear that that early nest has made a huge difference in knowing who you are and who you're comfortable with and what you need and what you believe.

Russell Allender [I'm definitely certain that that that has had an impact on who I am today.

Linda Ferreira And if you could talk to whoever is the Mrs. Van Kersen or the Bob Goodlett in our church today, and you were going to say, watch out for the lost ones. Yeah. Um, do you have thoughts? Do you have a comment you would make about how to do that, watching out?

Russell Allender Yeah. I would. I would say if I had the opportunity to say something to someone who may be lost or myself looking for someone who's lost, and that is cling to who God places in your life. And in order to do that, keep an open mind that God is working. Because sometimes we can feel that He's not. But He's always working, even in the midst of a storm. God is working. We can we can turn bad things into good things if we just endure the good with the bad and stay strong. And a lot of our - the things that we have to realize is a lot of our lives are based on our decisions. And when we get things instilled in us that help us to make right decisions we have to first, we have to know that we have other decisions, but we have to put ourselves in a position to where we can

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collect different alternatives, different choices. Rather than what we always see, we always have other choices. If we can just learn to make better choices and be willing to endure because the easy way out is not always the best way out. And I've learned that in my life the easy is not always the best. And it's built character in me just with the testimony that I have as far as the hardships that I've endured. It's turned out for my good because I allowed it to help. I allowed it to help other people, not to make the same mistakes that I've made. So anybody who may need a shoulder to cry on or someone to talk to. Look to the person next to you, they might be the person that can help you through.

Linda Ferreira That's the cling to the person that God put in your life.

Russell Allender That's right. Right. Exactly. We never know when God has put somebody there for, you know, for a reason. We just have to open up.

Linda Ferreira So I don't know if that you would tell the person who has lost: cling to the one that God put it in your life. And to me, you're kind of speaking under that category of learning how to speak truth to power. We're powerless in that case, but in the general category. Did you have experiences at All Saints or that you drew on the resources from All Saints later in life where you learned, were incidents, where you spoke truth to power, that you said the hard thing? Or took the hard action?

Russell Allender There was a time when I was struggling. And the person who... I was in a relationship and I was living a sinful life and the person that I was with was living a sinful life and... I wanted to change. And at the time, that person didn't want to change. And I had to make a decision. What do I want to do with the rest of my life? So I eventually had to approach and... How am I going to say this? I had to. Basically, I had to let this person know that I can't be in this relationship any longer. And I explained why. And it wasn't the fact that addressed this issue. It was the fact that. I looked at it, I had to look at myself in my own life. And I had... I had to call myself out. And it was hard for me because I had to do a total change. For myself, and I had to literally move out of the situation in order to change. So I could have stayed; it would have been so easy, but I decided not to because I wasn't comfortable any more. And I knew that it was... I spoke truth to power.

Russell Allender [00:47:47] Right. I've... I feel as if God has given me other choices that I can take. And sometimes I end up going down the wrong road and I've caught myself going down the wrong road. And I just think back to what I've learned, what I was given the instruction that I was given in my upbringing just being here at All Saints and I know life is so much better and I just isolate myself into a lot of things that are not good for my life. I just always have that desire to come out. I've always wanted to live a better life. Now I don't.. I don't necessarily mean rich. I don't necessarily mean famous or anything like that. I mean a peaceful life... a joyful life, a meaningful life. I get so much joy from helping other people whenever I can. It makes me feel better than I've ever felt when I was being selfish. And when I look back, a lot of the reasons why I had trouble and hardships and I stayed in it for so long was because I was being selfish. I was always thinking about me. And when I changed that and I turn that around, things started to change for me. And when I really started to dig down into what the Word of God says, a lot of things started to manifest and come true in my life.

Linda Ferreira So can I come back to life at All Saints? Do you have any reflections on looking back or memories on things that you would say that the church areas in which the church or the neighborhood was having trouble grappling with issues of race?

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Russell Allender I really don't remember, I don't remember at all having any types of issues as far as racism, race. I was never, I personally was never insulted. I don't ever remember feeling bad because somebody, you know, may have said something or had done something that I didn't feel was fair or necessary. I don't remember ever having those feelings here at All Saints And that is totally why I love All Saints so much was because I never had-

Linda Ferreira -never had that.

Russell Allender I never had those feelings. I, I dealt with them enough in my in my home life. So this place All Saints was always a place for me to be safe and comfortable. Had anything bad happened I probably would have stopped coming. Simply because of maybe one particular incident, because I had so much other stuff going on. And I probably would have put that in the category of, well, "This place is no better."

Linda Ferreira No better? (quiet) You have company in that?

Russell Allender Yeah.

Linda Ferreira Experience in that joyful experience. What am I not asking? And you talked about why you left All Saints. And you're a churchman now, right?

Russell Allender Yes.

Linda Ferreira So you didn't come back here? From the - what choices? How did you make those choices? And what additional things have you learned that we might learn from, learned about being community and loving.

Russell Allender One thing that I know for sure. And this was extended to me during my time here at All Saints. It was extended to me every time I walked through those doors. And that was love, kindness. But what I do realize is we first have to learn how to forgive. You know, and this is just my own personal, you know, belief. A lot of times we don't like to forgive others for small things, and it kind of bleeds off into our daily lives. To me, these days, everything is so impersonal. Nobody wants to be troubled with anybody else's issues or whatever the case may be, because of an inconvenience. And I believe that my life is more happy when I live it to help somebody else rather than always thinking, think about thinking about myself.

Linda Ferreira So then go ahead with that. About how did that relate to your going and other church life and not returning to All Saints?

Russell Allender Yeah I kind of grew. You know, for me, we cling to what we need. We cling to what we want based on what we need. I always wanted acceptance and I found it. I thought I found it with maybe my own people. I have attended many Black churches and I thought I could find it there. And going back to what I was saying earlier about diversity. It took me a long time to learn about myself, that I am more comfortable around different cultures, different races. And I know for a fact that that was instilled in me here at All Saints.

Linda Ferreira So. So you're saying in part, you went on a search. And I know you married and became part of a church, but you kind of went on a search to see would you be more comfortable or were there additional things that you-

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Russell Allender Well, to be honest, no, I didn't go on a search. I was a lot of times I was following other people. I just I never did it for myself.

Russell Allender You kind of see what I'm saying? I wasn't doing it for myself. Like now I'm a member of a church that I'm not sure that I'll remain in. Not because it's a bad church. It's because I don't feel like I can reach higher potential at this particular church because I want to be the best that I can be, the best that God can make me be. If I'm somewhere where I'm very comfortable, somewhere where I can share my gifts. Normally, we can tell where our gifts are going to be appreciated. Or will we be able to share our gifts at certain places? You know what I mean? Is there room? And sometimes we can see, you know, there's no room here for me to and I really want to do something else, but it's not here. So maybe I need to keep - and sometimes we can stay stuck in that, you know, and not move on. And then we stop growing. And that's not what I want to do. I want to be a part of an outreach ministry, helping others who have endured some of the struggles that I've endured and don't have the answers as far as how do I get out of this? So I guess I want to, you know. Help, you know, be helpful to others and share some of the experiences that I've learned and accepted here at All Saints. Because to me, it all began here.

Linda Ferreira I think I'm hearing you're right that you're looking for a church, that it's the right fit for using your gifts. In outreach in particular. And particularly as in your life experiences.

Russell Allender Yes, that is correct.

Linda Ferreira I'll ask a couple of more questions and then I'll let you add anything you want to add. Our church is more - pretty white at this point.

Russell Allender Okay.

Linda Ferreira And we are reflecting on what were the changes over the years and you were gone for the years in which that dwindling happened. But I thought you might have some ideas about life in the neighborhood or about the church that would be good for us to reflect on. Might help us.

Russell Allender First, let me say we can praise God anywhere. But for me, God needs for us to worship Him. I don't think that we have to push so hard to meet our agenda. I think we need sometimes we just need to let God do what he what he... what he wants to do because he's not a respecter of men. And God doesn't care where you work, what kind of car you drive, where you live. He doesn't care about that stuff. God just wants us to worship him. So it doesn't matter if you're white, you're Black, Chinese. It doesn't matter to Him. And I understand that, you know, we want things to... sometimes we want things to look a certain way, but we also have to accept the fact that it may not ever look a certain way. And we have to be comfortable with that because ultimately God is who we want to please. Society has put that... put a strain on us to always be politically correct or, you know, society's put a big strain on us.

Linda Ferreira And so let go of that.

Russell Allender [Yeah. And so we feel like we have to go a way... go out of our way to make things appear to be okay. And that takes away from my worship. I believe God is

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more pleased with who worships Him than what color they are. It doesn't matter. It doesn't matter to me who's worshipping God next to me in the pew. Am I worshipping God? That's all He cares about. Now, would I like to be a member of this huge, diverse church? Yes. I would love that. But I would never let that stop me from serving Him from pleasing him. Because at the end of the day, that's all He cares about: love. I have to show love in every area of my life. Not just some, you know, not just when I come to church, not just when I'm with ...when I'm with my family or when, you know, just when I'm in the car with the kids or whatever. I have to show love when I pass the stranger and they're waiting for me to speak because their home life is terrible. They may not have... they may not be getting any respect from their kids... or, and sometimes just a "Hello, how are you doing?" Sometimes people just need somebody to listen and those are things God can work with. He can make things grow from that one random act of kindness. That one person can turn into a hundred real easy when I don't filter who I show love and kindness to.

I think this whole community has changed so much. It really has. From the time that I grew up, I grew up in this area and it has changed a lot. And for the most part it is, back then, when I was a kid, it was mostly Black. And now it's changed and it's mostly white. So. I don't really expect anything different, and it has nothing to do with race. It has nothing to do with race. It's just where do I feel comfortable serving God? Where are my talents best used? Where is a good place for me to bring my family? So that they can be loved and loved on. Where can I bring my kids where those things can be instilled in them as it was with me? I think that's what people care about. And if this community here now makes up the better part of the congregation then so be it. It's a place of worship. Churches have been in communities for years and for that very reason. To serve that community, that's just my belief to serve that community. It would be nice for All Saints to serve Broad Ripple. But people might not want to drive all the way down here. There's an All Saints right down in Broad Ripple. You know what I mean? So this is closer. This is where I'm going to go. Sometimes it's a matter of convenience, you know? I don't know anything other than allowing God to be who he is.

Linda Ferreira Okay. Any additional thoughts, things you thought about preparing for today that you would want to add to today's conversation?

Russell Allender I would. I just want to say that, first of all, thank you for the opportunity to, to be in this wonderful building again. To hopefully help somebody who is looking for a great church home to visit All Saints. I know it to be a great church, and I know that it's always had the great best intentions for the community and not just individuals. I love this place. I always have. I just want to say that God is the head of my life today because of All Saints. He was there in the beginning, and then I walked away from Him, but, in the end, He's come back into my life and He's revealed all the things to me that He wanted to show me then. And my life has become more clear because of it. So All Saints will always be a part of my heart. It will always be a part of my memories. And it'll always be a part of my family.

Linda Ferreira Thank you so much.

Russell Allender Thank you. Thank you. And God bless you.

Ladema Zinsmeister Were you involved in anything else? You said you were involved in the choir. What else? We know there was like sports, games, Karate and camp.

Russell Allender Yeah, I went to camp to the Waycross, Hickory Hill.

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Linda Ferreira He was the acolyte.

Russell Allender I participated in the camp events. All Saints offered, well provided two separate camps, Waycross and Hickory Hill. Hickory Hill was a traditional camp site where you would either stay in a tent, a cabin, or there was a covered wagon which was basically roughing it. We built fires. You swam in the lake. And then you had Waycross, well Waycross was, you know, the swimming pool, the dining hall. It was more of a hotel stay, if you would. So we always preferred, I think, maybe went to Hickory Hill the first time. And then once we went out, went to Waycross, it was it was over said and done. That's where I always went. And it was it was just so wonderful. And there was opportunity for all the kids. The children of the families who attended All Saints to, you know, to go. And we all got to know each other. And so we all became sister and brother. You know, we had hard times. We had good times. Everything you went through with your brother and sister at home, you went through with members of the church. We just we were always having fun. There was always something to do here at All Saints. And we loved it. We loved it. Yes.

Ladema Zinsmeister Did you have to come back and give a report?

Russell Allender [I think we did have to give, "What I like most about my week". Because I think it was a week stay and we would all have to write out what I liked most about my trip. And so there was a time when we would have to stand in front, up front here, and we would have to give this whole testimony on what we did and what we'd like best about our week. Yes.

Ladema Zinsmeister And how did that feel?

Russell Allender Nervous. I was nervous. I remember being nervous. A lot of other people were more comfortable speaking, but I was nervous. But it taught me how to really just get to know everybody a lot better when we - the more things I participated in, the more I got to know different facets of the community. Like I said, from the Reverend or Bishop, whoever, you know, we had a relationship with them. The other acolytes, the members, choir members, choir director. There was nobody in the church that I didn't know, that didn't know me by my first name. So it was it was awesome. It was great. It really.

Linda Ferreira How did you get to camp?

Russell Allender I believe we went in, on a, no we were in a van. I believe it was a van. Yeah. No, no, no. I take that back. We had particular certain people in the congregation that would take us. I think, like Miss Van Kersen. They would take cars. Now that I think about it. No, there wasn't a van. They would take their own personal cars. So now, when I think about it, it was really nice that, you know, that was a kind gesture, because I don't remember Mrs. Van Kersen having kids. I know Bob didn't have kids, so they did that out of the love in their hearts. So now when I think about is like, wow, they went above and beyond to make our experiences good ones. They really did.

Ladema Zinsmeister Camp was huge for me.

Russell Allender Oh, yeah.

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Ladema Zinsmeister I was just wondering. Like mountaintop. I mean, it was like the highlight of my year.

Russell Allender Yeah.

Ladema Zinsmeister It was like, yeah, you got to go.

Russell Allender But, you know, so we went every year. It was, you know, every year. Yeah, we didn't miss that. We didn't miss that. Summer vacation. We're going to camp. Yeah. So that was man, that was awesome. I love that. That was fun. I mean, there were so many different activities that took place here that you were almost afraid to miss church because you thought you were going to miss something. You know what I mean? So, yeah, I remember. There's not - I don't think there's too much in in in these terms that I didn't do. Usher. Yeah, I remember now we used to Usher pass the basket from each end. Man. Everything. Everything. And I loved it. When I think back to all of that stuff now I think about my life today and because, you know... the way I speak. I always wonder, where did I get that from? I remember when I was a kid and you might think this is weird, but when I was a kid, one of my favorite shows was Johnny Carson. I would stay up late to watch Johnny Carson and just some of the different things that I did when I was young caused me to learn a lot. You know what I mean? And I learn a lot of different things outside of where I lived. You know what I mean?

Linda Ferreira I think I do.

Russell Allender Because when I was - my mother, we talked about that- my mother was an alcoholic. My stepfather was an alcoholic. Terrible, terrible, terrible home life. And so I always wonder where did I? (pause for thinking) You know where did I? (thinking again) And now I think about it. It's like I pick those things up from different places. You know what I mean? And this place is one of them you know, so. And I just wonder where I got... Because I'm real posture minded. I like to sit up straight and I always wonder where I got that from. But I just always like to sit up straight. And it is paying off now because, you know, I'm almost 60 years old in my back doesn't hurt all the time, thank God. So I guess that's been beneficial, you know, to me. So it's like different things in my life. I don't... I never understood where I got a lot of these things from, you know, because it wasn't taught to me. It wasn't told to me.

Linda Ferreira But you noticed and absorbed.

Russell Allender I absorbed that. There you go. That's the word I'm looking for. Absorbed a lot of things that I never knew where I got those things from. So... and, that is what always going back to what I was saying. That's what always make me feel different. That's why I wasn't comfortable in certain situations. You know what I mean? Because...

Linda Ferreira Makes perfect sense.

Russell Allender Yes.

Linda Ferreira Yes. Because you were literally absorbing a different stance...in some of your situations.

Russell Allender Yeah. To the point where, you know, because I've, I've been around some hoodlums, and I just - I didn't fit in. As bad as I wanted to fit in because this is where

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I'm at and I want to fit in because I want to be one of the crew. I just never fit in. And I always wondered why. But, you know, now at this age, now I know this because I felt different because I was different and it was because of the things that I absorbed. Yeah.

Linda Ferreira Well, I am so glad you could return to this space again and tell some of that story.

Russell Allender It's just. It's awesome because everything is still here: when I look at the Eagle, when I look at Mary holding Baby Jesus, when I when I look at those things, I remember the – (gesturing to the Michael windows) I forget what you call them, the windows.

Linda Ferreira The stained glass.

Russell Allender And the stained glass.

Linda Ferreira Windows.

Russell Allender And yes, I remember those. And everything is like...hasn't been touched. And so it takes me, I mean, to the cross there, the confessional, all those things, the prayer box where we light the candles, all those things are still the same. And I bet you it's probably the same organ up there.

Linda Ferreira Yes, same as your time.

Russell Allender Yeah. God, it's a huge flashback, because when we talk about 1980, this is 2023. Over 40 years.

Linda Ferreira It might be an updated organ, or partly.

Russell Allender It's been a long time and this really brings back so many memories. So many memories.

Linda Ferreira Well I'm glad you could be here. And I'm glad...I'm glad this place in this community could be a springboard. A family base.

Russell Allender [Like I said before, you have had a huge impact on my life. More so now than ever before. Because I've learned.

Linda Ferreira [Because of where you are.

Russell Allender Who I am today based on where I've been and feeling comfortable now more than ever. You know the who I was when I was a member here, I'll say, versus who I am today fits together better than the middle of my life. Yeah. Yeah.

Linda Ferreira The beginning and the end. Um.

Catherine Crouch Did you say why you stopped coming here?

Russell Allender I stopped attending when my mother died. My mother passed in 1980, and I became lost. I was a confused young man. I was at a very crucial age. Like I said, I left home. Well, basically, when my mother passed, I didn't have a home, and I didn't know

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how to reach out to the right people. I may have reached out to a lot of the wrong people and it led me down a terrible road, which it took years for me to turn those things around because I got so deep into it that I didn't know any different.

Russell Allender I don't attend All Saints now because I am a member of Lakeview church, which is on the South side, and I am part of the ministry there. I recently moved back here from Memphis, Tennessee, so I lived in Memphis for some years and my wife died in 2021. And so when I when I moved back here, I went to Lake View Church with a friend and I just fell in love with it. And so that's that's where I'm at. Yeah.

Linda Ferreira And is that the place where you're hoping that there ends up being more outreach

Russell Allender] Yes, yes, yes, yes, they do. They do have a huge outreach ministry. They've they've got a lot going on. A lot. Yeah. So they have a ministry for drug and alcohol abuse, which I'm familiar with in my life. So that is very helpful for me because as I said before, my passion is to help others. Basically, the best asset that I have is my testimony. So I plan to use that as well as God will allow me for as long as He will allow me to, to help other people. I love to see people get their lives together. There's no better, better feeling in the world. It brings me more joy than anything else in the world. And it keeps me out of myself.

Linda Ferreira So, again. Thank you.

Russell Allender Thank you. Thank you. We done?

Linda Ferreira We done!