

Living Our Faith

Meet Adam

An SFX parishioner since: November 2023. College Church is the Jesuit parish closest to my hometown of Jacksonville, Illinois, located approximately one hour north of Alton and a half hour west of Springfield.

Living my faith: As a new parishioner, I'm still discovering how my experiences and talents can benefit the parish community, and I look forward to identifying SFX social ministries where I can engage. I currently volunteer at Annie's Hope – The Center for Grieving Kids, in Glendale. I try to find positive aspects of grief and, drawing on personal experience, have convinced two hospice coordinators to recommend this program to young families.

Why I'm involved: I've been on a zig-zag journey to find my new spiritual home at College Church. Previously, my late wife, Kim, and I were affiliated with Holy Ghost parish in Jerseyville. I was returning back to the active practice of Catholicism after a "sabbatical," and was reflecting on why I left, and how we – now a family of three -- would transition back to the Church. Kim was in the process of converting and getting an annulment from her prior marriage so that we could marry in the Church; our daughter, Kayleigh, was baptized.

Then, a series of events and experiences challenged us and complicated our journey back. Our supportive, trusted pastor and spiritual advisor died. Kim faced a challenging cancer diagnosis. Job and parental responsibilities increased. We dealt with COVID isolation and faced vocal racism toward Asians and our mixed-race marriage. We struggled with conservative ideology in the community and the U.S. Catholic Church that seemed at odds with the social and justice teachings of Jesus.

My spiritual reflection continued. Conversations with a local priest and his interest in my history of growing up with Dominican and Loretto sisters, diocesan priests, and Jesuits piqued my interest in my unique Catholic family. Last summer, at a family reunion, my aunts and my uncle discussed Father John C. Rawe, a Jesuit and my great uncle, focusing on Jesuit philosophy and spirituality. "Jesuits are different," they said. I decided to learn more. I joined national Jesuit organizations, such as the Office of Justice and Ecology. I listened to Jesuit podcasts. I read about Pope Francis. After talking to Father Tim, I knew that SFX needed to be my spiritual home and the place where I could find healing and learn forgiveness.

Three words that describe SFX: Diverse, Welcoming, Nonjudgmental.

My neighborhood: Jacksonville is a small city of 19,000 people in the corn fields of west central Illinois. (Add 62650 to the many zip codes represented by the SFX community.) Jacksonville's claim to fame is Illinois College, the Illinois Schools for the Deaf and Visually Impaired, and Ferris wheel manufacturing.

Fun facts: I lived on campus at St. Louis College of Pharmacy in the Central West End before changing majors and moving on to study biology, environmental biology and ecological studies, and geology at Illinois College and Western Illinois University. My focus in graduate school at the University of Illinois in Springfield was environmental risk assessment and general science. I now work as a Resource Planner for the Illinois Department of Natural Resources.

College Church feels like home and is the Church of my youth and family. I have ties to SLU and SFX through aunts, uncles and cousins who attended undergraduate and graduate school at SLU. My Jesuit great uncle was educated at Boston College and SLU, spent time in St. Louis and other missions, and was an advocate for the Roman Catholic rural life movement. His funeral Mass was held at SFX, with burial at St. Stanislaus Seminary.