

Non-Members

More than many communities, we depend on and are enhanced by non-members. We have pioneered mission after mission with the help of people who are not members. Many people have dreamed with us and cared and prayed and given. A non-member is not a less-committed person. He/she is often more deeply committed than our members.

The non-member is simply a person not called to membership in this particular community with its particular understandings and structures. If one is not inwardly called and does not welcome our particular understandings and our structures, their growth is enhanced by non-membership rather than by membership.

So I just want to express a profound gratitude for those in the past and now in the present who have never been members, but have been and are totally essential to our life. Membership has nothing to do with being better or being more committed. It has everything to do with a special call to a particular community structured in a very unusual way and operating on assumptions often quite different from the normal assumptions of church life in America. Thus, in this kind of community there will be much coming and going. Coming and going will be normative. "Let me explore this," many will say. "Is it right for my spirit? No, this is not where I am now." The hope is that each of us, and the whole community, will be richer because of these explorations.

Gordon Cosby 2006

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