



February 2010

A Faithful Church for Today's Vermont

What St. Andrew's Means to Me
By Courtney Devoid

Taking a sharp breath in, I prepared myself. My heart painfully hit my chest, over and over again. I could feel the anxiety creeping up my body and I walked closer to the door. I couldn't show it, though, for this was important to him. So I gripped his hand tightly and pushed open the door.

As walked down a dark hallway I noticed the simplicity of the place. It wasn't daunting at all, not like before. All I could remember about the church of my childhood was feeling so small in such a huge room. Now we were in a basement, and it felt like home.

This was the first time I had stepped in a church in nine years. And I am so happy that church was Saint Andrews. Saint Andrews is not a typical place to worship. For me, it is everything I could have wanted. It is a safe place, a place to learn, and a place to grow my faith and overcome discouragement. I can not express how significant a role the service plays in my week.

Once a week, hearing a perfect stranger talk about life and having it be deeply connected to what I am feeling always brightens my world. Each service we are presented with a question. Taking time out of my day to sit and think about how to have inner peace or how hardship can lead to great outcomes presents me with a time for self reflection. It helped me to see how much more there is to life than the trivial things I, and so many others, are consumed with.



Courtney, a high school senior, with Thomas, a freshman at St. Michael's College, one of 6 colleges in the Burlington area

Our Matching Grant is now closed. All \$5000 were matched by new gifts and pledges, which means that St. Andrew's received an additional \$10,000 toward our ministry in Burlington this winter. Thank you so much for your support.

To go to a worship service for just a few months and have this epiphany shows how important Saint Andrews is to me. I have begun to ask questions, learning more and more about Christian beliefs. Everyone is always so supportive and I am enthralled by all the amazing things there are to learn. The community of this church transformed how I feel about myself and the world. All it took was a little courage and a leap of faith.

Now I am here, writing this essay five months later and thinking about how much I have changed because of that ounce of courage it took the very first time. I don't know what I had to be afraid of, for Saint Andrews is such a welcoming place. It is full of friends and people who are interested in you as a person and not you for how you look, how you act, or what you wear. To me, Saint Andrews means acceptance. It is a place where I can escape the horrible world of high school gossip and be treated like an adult.

"The community of this church transformed how I feel about myself and the world. All it took was a little courage and a leap of faith."

My opinions matter and are appreciated here. To have a place where you feel like people like you for who you are and want to get to know you not because they have to, but because they value your opinion, is a remarkable feeling. This is something I have never felt before. I am treated like an equal and that is empowering.

Empowering is another emotion that comes to mind when I think about Saint Andrews. It is so empowering to be a part of this community because you are respected and valued. I started attending a bible study group a month ago and even though everyone else had read the book of *Mark* several times and it was my first, they all welcomed my questions. No one made me feel stupid for not having the answers. It has been so easy to become further involved at Saint Andrews. I have joined the Saint Andrews environmental group and often go to vision of the church meetings, for I feel like my input matters and that is something I could have never imagined that very first day.

The intimate connection of Saint Andrews and the powerful community it has make it easy to have a full commitment to developing my faith.



What St. Andrew's looks like from the outside . . . during the summer months.

Because I loved the thought-provoking services I began to further investigate my relationship with God. I have begun to embrace the vast amount of knowledge that I do not yet possess and am learning more each week. The amazing connections I have made to God and everyday life at the service are inspiring. Saint Andrews has been there to foster this intense spiritual growth I am having and help me proclaim my belief in God. This remarkable feat is the reason Saint Andrews means so much to me, for Saint Andrews is the place where the beautiful relationship I have with God was formed.

Thank you,
Courtney

"This . . . is the reason Saint Andrew's means so much to me, for St. Andrew's is the place where the beautiful relationship I have with God was formed."

To me, Courtney's story is an important reminder of how difficult it is for someone to cross that threshold and enter a church for the first time – or after a long time away. We bring to church so many fears, explicit and implicit. What if I do or say the wrong thing? What if I'm put on the spot? What if God won't take me back?

I'm so glad that Courtney decided to walk across that threshold. Her energy and enthusiasm are contagious. Her desire to learn and grow is gratifying. Our community has gained at least as much from her as she's gained from us.

Praise the Lord that He responds to us when we seek Him – and that He answers our prayers.

Sincerely,
Kevin

For more information regarding St. Andrew's Christian Church, visit www.StAndrewsVt.org or contact Kevin Fitton @ (802) 922-3569 or email kevin@standrewsvt.org, brian@standrewsvt.org, or janet@standrewsvt.org. Checks are payable to *St. Andrew's Christian Church*.
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