



June/July 2010

**A Faithful Church for Today's Vermont**

“Very truly I tell you, whoever receives the one whom I send receives me; and whoever receives me receives him who sent me.”

John 13:20, NRSV

“What St. Andrew’s Means to Me”  
By Jennifer Decker

In November, 2009, I had been in Burlington for about five years. I had been five years away from the church I loved in Seattle and though I continued to pursue my relationship with God individually, I was not involved in any Christian community. In fact, the overall sense of community that I had experienced when I first moved to Burlington had shrunk down. Many of the friends I had made upon moving here had moved away; this can be a transient kind of town. My husband and I weren’t sure about our future either, since his layoff from IBM. And if we were going to move, then my plan was to spend as much time as I could with my family; I had come to Burlington to live closer to them to begin with.

I had developed musculoskeletal problems and that limited the types of things I could do with others and my access to settings where I was used to building new connections. For a time, thinking that my years in Burlington might come to a close, I simply enjoyed the time with family and my smaller social circle. I dreamed about the possibility that my husband and I might relocate to Seattle where I could resume attendance at my old church.

Still, my life was getting more and more challenging, and God seemed to have other plans for me than I did for myself! I was also having a lot of difficulty with the frustrations brought on by my health problems, and I was missing time spent with close friends. I knew I needed more support and more connections to get me through the setbacks I faced.

I also needed help dealing with the challenges of an uncertain national economy that had hit home for my husband and me. Putting all those needs into just a few personal relationships was putting a strain on those relationships. I really needed a way to focus my desires and my attention on God, to allow Him to provide and to put Him back in charge of my life. It was around that time that I learned about St. Andrews.

I had been searching for a church off and on since I moved to Burlington. Just before I learned about St. Andrews, my search had intensified. As a result of spiritual experiences I had been having, my relationship with God was growing, but I didn’t have a regular context in which to understand or share those experiences with others. I had visited ten different churches in my quest. There were many services and congregations that impressed me before I found St. Andrews, but just one where I felt at home. The initial quality that attracted me to St. Andrews was the 4:00 p.m. service!

Once I arrived for my first visit, I was welcomed very kindly by Janet Barclay. This is why I include the first quote from the Gospel of John. I felt and continue to feel so well-received at St. Andrew’s. I had been a Christian for many years,

and I had been welcomed warmly before but never quite as well or as openly as at St. Andrews.

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I noticed

right away that the makeup of the congregation was different from any other church I have visited. So often, churches do not speak to the young adult condition and here was a church primarily made up of young adults. As a 40-plus-year-old, I want to be part of a congregation that is welcoming to people in their twenties and thirties, because it is such a vital and important time in life.



(above) Jennifer Decker.

Kevin told me that the church was hoping to attract more people from different age groups (and indeed already had), and I was happy to add myself to the mix.

The services are unique in how the church includes congregants. The services often include time for personal reflection or small group sharing of how the scriptures apply to our lives. This has helped us to get to know each other and to deepen our spiritual lives. I have also felt invited to have a role in the church relatively quickly, by reading scripture at services, helping to organize small groups, giving input into services, and helping out on the Counting Team. I have been encouraged to read books that have nourished my soul.

I appreciate that Kevin has made a big effort and shows he cares about my medical condition and my physical comfort at church. Knowing that others are being treated with similar consideration and kindness is reassuring to me. At this church, I feel Christ's love, and I feel good knowing others are also being well cared for through involvement in small groups and Sunday services. With the café atmosphere at some services and the semi-circle of chairs at recent services, St. Andrews now echoes the small circle of friends that started the church a few years ago. There is an intimacy to the community which one imagines the disciples and other early Christians must have felt.

As a result of my time at St. Andrews, I feel challenged to grow spiritually. Most recently in the couples' group, we spent some time forming and sharing our spiritual goals. Mine are: 1) to be more thankful, 2) to be more forgiving, and 3) to confess my sins more openly to God. It feels good to repeat and reinforce these important goals for my development, so that I can stay focused on following Jesus' example. The changes that I feel in my heart have helped me to see God's gentleness and fierce love for me. I am very thankful that St. Andrews has given me a place to grow in my relationship with God and with other Christians.

I have also been able to share my new church experiences with my husband—and with my family. It means a lot to me to have found a church in Burlington where I can invite my

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parents and siblings to services

My mom has come to some services and has said that she felt like she could be herself with all her questions and doubts. Today, for the first time, my mom told me that she has been praying to God a lot lately! She had some questions for me about her experiences, and we had a great theological discussion. Finding St. Andrews has made it possible for me to share my faith more openly with my family members and friends. For this, I will always be grateful.

-Jennifer

Thank you all for making stories like Jennifer's possible! Your commitment to St. Andrew's has allowed the ministry to continue to grow and to develop a strong foundation.



This June, St. Andrew's held our first-ever youth retreat at Groton Lake. Sarah Heim (top middle) and Rebecca Fitton (bottom), our youth leaders for the past year, planned a study on relationships based on the book of *Ruth*.



For more information about St. Andrew's, go to [www.standrewsvt.org](http://www.standrewsvt.org), email [kevin@standrewsvt.org](mailto:kevin@standrewsvt.org), or call (802)922-3569. All donations are tax deductible.

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