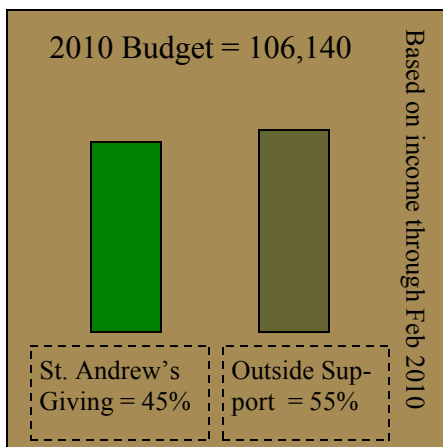
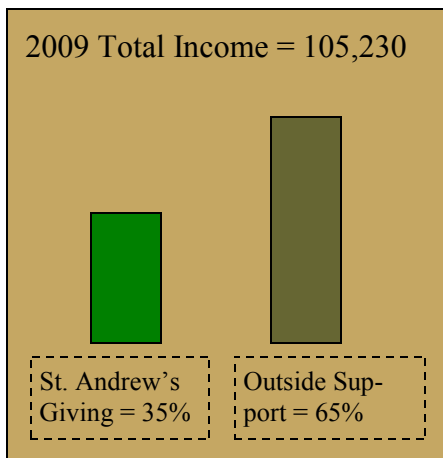
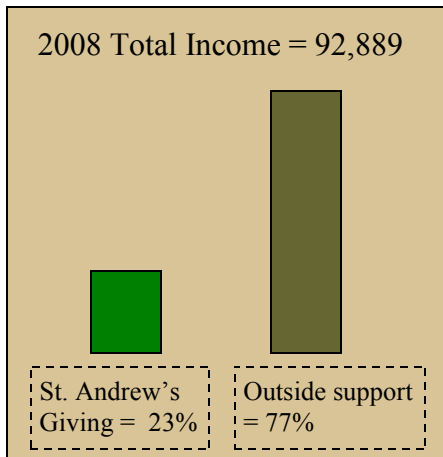


A Faithful Church for Today's Vermont

Moving Toward Financial Independence.



When it comes to living organisms, growth can be hard to perceive. There are times, especially in the earliest stages of the life-cycle, when growth can be quite noticeable. When a seed first germinates, for instance, the action happens below the surface of the soil. But then, suddenly, a new growth bursts through the soil—a tender shoot appears—and something that wasn't there the previous day is now evident.

Our daughter Adelaide, at 18-months, is experiencing explosive growth. Some days, you just swear that she looks bigger than she did the day before. Suddenly, new concepts take root in her mind, new words join an exploding vocabulary.

But in another year, change won't be so obvious, because the degree of growth slows. Our older daughter, Naomi, is only 3 & 1/2. With Naomi, change can be difficult to observe, even over a period of months.

While change becomes more and more difficult to observe, however, we all know that growth should be happening. We take our children to the doctor for periodic check-ups to be sure that their growth is on track.. And if they're not developing at a proper rate, if they're not meeting their own growth curve, we're concerned.



One of these pictures of Naomi was taken on June 5, 2009; the other was taken on Nov 9, 2009. Can you match each photo with a date?

It means that something is most likely wrong.

Churches, as I have observed in the past, are living organisms. Therefore, when they are young, they should be growing: the spiritual roots of the community should be deepening; the leadership trunk should be strengthening; and it should be adding branches, growing higher and wider in its reach.

But growth, as we've already noticed, can be difficult to observe. With some organisms, growth is more obvious. St. Andrew's' growth-curve has been fairly slow, which has made it difficult to know sometimes whether things are working—or if there might be a problem.

The key for us in watching St. Andrew's has been to take a longer view. We are in an area of the country where it generally takes people longer to develop trusting relationships; add to that, people's intense skepticism of the Christian Church, and we really need to look at our progress in terms of years, not months.

"St. Andrew's' growth-curve has been fairly slow . . . The key for us in watching St. Andrew's has been to take a longer view."

One key area of growth for an organism is the move toward independence. There are many aspects to this transition, but one of the easiest to track is through finances.

On the front-side of this newsletter, I have included 3 graphs, which represent the church's move toward financial independence. And here's what we see: in 2008, the church's first full year of operation, the vast majority of its income came from outside support. In 2009, even though the church's budget grew, the percentage of self-funding grew significantly, from 23% to 35%. And while we don't have a lot of data yet for 2010, based on pledging from the church community, we expect 40-50% of St. Andrew's funding will come from its members.

It's hard to see on a month-to-month basis, but the transition is happening.

WHEN DO WE EXPECT INDEPENDENCE?

One of our advisors has pushed, from the beginning, the idea that St. Andrew's may require long-term financial support from sources outside the community. Another advisor has been adamant that new churches should reach self-sufficiency within 5 years.

My personal feeling is that St. Andrew's should grow toward financial independence and a sustainable future on a time-table which matches its own growth curve. From my seat today, I am hoping that we will reach a self-funding rate of 50% by the end of this year, and that we will be independent (or close to it) by the end of 2012.

And my message to all of you who have been supporting this ministry from a distance is this: thank you for supporting us to this point, and please stick with us for a while longer.

The beauty of church planting is that what started out as a mission to Burlington, Vermont will become a self-sustaining ministry. It will itself become a ministry that is giving to missions and justice projects—and it will do so primarily through people who were not previously part of a church community. You just have to look a couple years into the future to see an organism which has finally reached a place of maturity.

Thank you, again, for your support.

-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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