



Winter 2011

## A Faithful Church for Today's Vermont

The article that I've included here was written for our St. Andrew's winter newsletter. Here's a glimpse at what we've been talking about in our church community about taking the next step.

### The Next Step

This winter has been an exciting time at St. Andrew's. We've experienced fresh growth. On several Sundays, we've welcomed 50 people into worship, filling our space. New people are coming: some looking for a church home, while others have been invited to explore the Christian faith for the first time.

We've also seen friendships growing. When our service ends at 5 or 5:15, hardly anyone leaves. By the time clean-up is finished, it's 6:30pm, and the last remnant is still lingering. Good things are happening. We are getting better at community service. We are working at developing a stronger prayer ministry.

But while we're certainly moving in the right direction, it is also becoming clear to me that we are approaching a significant challenge. The next step forward for our church looks to me like the biggest one yet.

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One major challenge is going to be the move into a larger worship space. We've been blessed to have the opportunity to rent affordable space from the First Baptist Church, but at some point soon, if we don't find a space with more capacity, we are going to limit our own growth. But the financial cost of making that change is going to be significant— even if we are able to find a creative solution.

Another major hurdle is developing a strong ministry to children. Burlington is a young city with lots of kids and young families. Connecting with children, ministering to them and their families will greatly expand our impact. Yet this is a huge challenge for a small church like ours.

There are other hurdles as well. We need to recruit and develop more leaders. It is also vital for us, moving forward, that we learn to become a praying church—and not just among a few.

I can see our future taking shape: a church that has grown to over 100 people, bustling with energy. It is a place where Christians are challenged to grow in their faith and experience Jesus in a fresh way. It is a place where those who have been away from God are coming back and finding Him again, encountering the radical truth of the Gospel.

But how do we get from here to there?

I'm reminded of a story in the Old Testament, where King Hezekiah has begun called the nation of Israel back to faith in God. He sends out his servants throughout the land with a message calling God's people to repentance. Not everyone responds to the King's message., but throughout Judea, the King's people rally to him. "In Judah the hand of God was on the people to give them unity of mind to carry out what the king and his officials had ordered, following the word of the LORD" (II Chron 30:12).

A great movement toward God occurred during Hezekiah's time, and it happened because people came together. They sought out the scriptures; they sought God in prayer. And they sought God in unity of mind.

A spirit of unity around the word of the Lord—that's what it will take to make it over that next hurdle. We have many people who volunteer, and we have some who give a great deal of time and energy. But the next step for us is something that will only happen if we are fully committed to our mission, each giving what we are able to give.

At St. Andrew's, we have believed that God was calling us to start a new church, so that more people in and around Burlington would have the opportunity to experience Christ, and to experience him in a deeper way. And it's happening. But it isn't going to happen in a greater way unless God will give us a unity of mind to carry out the mission God has laid on our hearts.

*Thank you all for helping us come this far. It's hard to imagine now that 3 and 1/2 years ago, St. Andrew's did not yet exist. Because of your support, this ministry has come a long way and impacted a lot of people.*

*Please consider how you can continue to support us as we take on this next, big hurdle.*