

I am Chris Miner. I am a husband, father and Marine. Our family found St. Andrew's a little over two years ago. As a frequently moving military family, a priority for us is to find a good church home, and St Andrew's was a fantastic choice. What drew us to St Andrew's initially was what we believed to be the best Children's and Youth ministries in the area. And, when we moved from Carlsbad to an on-base house at Camp Pendleton last year, finding another Parish just was not an option because we felt so attached to this Parish and the Parishioners. Let me tell you why:

First, our expectations were certainly met through St. Andrews when it came to the Children's and Youth programs. Under the leadership of Brenda and Colleen, our children and yours learn about God's grace, love and promises as revealed through His Word. They uncover individuality in their relationship to God. And, they grow in faith as they approach adulthood. While I was deployed last year, I was called to be an adult leader on the Youth Mission Trip to Crown Point, New Mexico. When I say "called," my daughter, Ally, really did call me and ask me to go on the mission trip with her. But I did feel a Spiritual calling as well. I can tell you after spending a week with our kids, they are amazing. I was able to witness their relationship to God through service and through their participation in worship and devotion. Although not all of our kids are able to go on the mission trip, I believe the sample of 30 who traveled this year is an honest reflection of the spiritual quality in others throughout all of the age groups. Parents play a large part in shaping this foundation, but those who provide their service to the Parish in working with our youth are molding them in a positive way through Christ's teachings.

Second, this Parish made us, as a military family, welcomed. It's not easy being a military family on the move. Despite coming in with our short haircuts and strange talk filled with acronyms, I have witnessed how this Parish makes our military feel so welcomed. One would not need to look too much further than our Bulletin where we find a prayer to those serving in the Armed Forces every week. But if you do look further, and despite any differing political views, you will find a Parish truly supportive of our men and women in uniform. The volunteers in the MESS group are an example of outreach to our troops. Last year, while 3 of us from the Parish were deployed to Afghanistan, the MESS organized the delivery of over 200 care packages that we were able to further distribute to the men and women serving with us. When John Field's unit returned from a deployment, the MESS welcomed them back by field-daying (that means cleaning in civilian lingo) their barracks that had been empty for about six months. I can't tell you enough how much those young men and women appreciate this generosity.

Finally, this Church has one of the most impressive senses of community I have experienced. My family experienced this while I was away. The outpouring of support and genuine concern my family and me while I was in Afghanistan, through prayer and inquiry, demonstrates that we are a part of this community. But I won't stop there. I look around at the different ministries, events, and activities of this Parish, and it is satisfying that so many are willing to invest their time and talent to make this Church a place where service is not as much as an expectation but a sense of desire of the Parishioners. In some Parishes, it's the 10% doing 90% of the work, and most of that is the Vestry. But not here, and not on our watch! Rudyard Kipling wrote, "For the strength to of the pack is the

wolf, and the strength of the wolf is the pack.” I think we can say the same for us here and our interdependence on each other. It is because we can depend on each other’s service and giving that we can have this sense of collective belonging in a great Parish. By investing the 3-Ts in our Parish - time, talent, and tithe - we invest in each other and are also able to spread God’s love to others.

I am very glad we found St Andrew’s, and thank you for taking the Miner’s into your community.