

Stewardship Talk
St Andrews Church
November 8, 2013
Betsy Vaughn

The Great Barrier Reef is one of the world's great wonders and one of God's most beautiful gifts. For those who don't know me, I am Betsy Vaughn and have been a parishioner of St Andrews for over 12 years. My family had the good fortune to spend several days snorkeling on the GBR recently. It was alive with coral in shades of pink, orange and purple. There were gardens of HUGE clams that opened and close as we swam by. We saw sea turtles and bright blue star fish. Of course there were fish of every shape, size and color: striped, spotted, red, yellow, black and rainbow..... What a gift. Like anything though, the GBR needs to be nurtured..... As a result of preservation efforts using peoples time, talents and of course money, the GBR will be flourishing for generations to come.

The parallel to St Andrews is vivid. St. Andrews is a gift. Just read our Parish Profile. We do **so** much. We do amazing outreach through the soup kitchen, Tim's Friday lunch, MESS, Homeless shelter and Refugee Network. And then of course there is community and fellowship through the Foyer groups, XYZ's, Young Adults and Youth Groups. Our facilities house healing meetings for NA, AA and other groups. These are just a few of our activities.....We do so much.

We also get so much. Over the last several weeks we have heard from parish members on what St Andrews means to them. Stella , who came to St Andrews through our Friday lunch program, Francis who came to us through the Refugee Network, Chris and Ally who represent our Military Families, and of course our youth, Julia and Garrett. Thank you to all of them for your inspirations and insights. We have also heard from many of you through the Parish Profile committee work. Each of us has a unique way of experiencing St Andrews but some themes bubble up. What I have heard from you all is that we love the sermons, music and traditions. We love the opportunity St. Andrews gives us to do good works through our outreach programs. The Sunday school, pre-school and youth groups are a vital component for our younger families. We view St. Andrews as a way to enrich our spiritual growth. For many of us there is a sense of belonging, community and mutual support that ties us together. We get so much from St. Andrews.

Like the GBR, St. Andrews needs nurturing and care.... to not only survive but to prosper. So I ask myself, "What is the value that St Andrews brings me and my family?" It's a hard thing to capture because the value is so deep and pervasive. BUT, it stewardship time, so I will ask the question, "If I had to pay for all the good I get from St. Andrews, what would I pay?" Is the value higher than my cable service or my entertainment budget? Nils Blatz, the rector at our church in NY, once challenged the congregation to look at our personal credit card bill and checking account registers. What do we spend our money on and what does that tell us? Do our spending habits reflect the values we intend to hold? For the next few weeks, I will be praying and reflecting on what my credit card bills are telling me. It is not easy to look into that mirror.

St Andrews is a gift. We do so much here and we get so much. I challenge you to reflect and pray on what the value that St. Andrews brings to you and your family. Attempt to put a dollar value on it and commit to a pledge. Your time, talents and tithe will help to make St Andrews a vibrant, growing gift for generations...like the GBR.