

Machiavelli wrote in The Prince, “For a man who has newly risen to the top, nothing brings him more honour than devising new laws and new practices. When such things are solid and show vision, they will bring him respect and admiration.” People admire those who take risks and who take those risks to benefit others. And those who take the leap of faith, with a vision of a new practice or a new goal that will benefit others less fortunate, gain respect and are cherished by those around them. I had the privilege of getting to know a number of St. Andrew’s adult parishioners who took a leap of faith this past summer by guiding and working with our youth group in New Mexico—my relationship with these adults—Karen Moore and Dan Bozich—to name a few, will never be the same. As my work partners and group advisors, they impressed me that they would give up a week of their summer for us and the work we came to do, but also by their obvious strong relationship with God.

My personal spiritual growth comes not only from what I learned from the Mission trip experience, but from my experience over the years at St. Andrews. I have been going to St. Andrew’s for 14 years and began attending the youth group in the 6th grade. During the 7th and 8th grade, I began to feel disconnected and uninterested. Even though I separated myself from the youth group... the students, Brenda, and Fr. Wes all had influences on me that helped to draw me back in. My growing re-interest in St. Andrew’s led me to become acquainted with those around me and to have an interest in participating in Confirmation. Later, I continued my faith journey when I participated in the San Diego mission trip last year and more recently, the New Mexico mission trip this year. Seeing the horrible conditions that people live in on the Indian Reservation gave me a better perspective and understanding of how fortunate I am. We built a guest house and renovated a man’s house, while returning later that day to worship with the other churches. The trip allowed me to disconnect myself from social media and San Diego, traveling past the La Costa Valley Carlsbad box that I live in. I felt enlightened by this opportunity to participate in the work that God had set before me. I know that many other people in the Youth Group also had similar feelings of enlightenment and of a spiritual “high”. We were left feeling that we want to serve more people next year on the mission trip, as well as those unfortunate in

our community. The trip left us feeling more greatly connected to God, and I know that I also felt good about myself and what I did for others and with the youth group that week.

Most of you are probably wondering how the Youth Group is impacted from this Stewardship Campaign. When you consider pledging, you generally think of giving a certain amount of money. Personally, I'm a teenager who doesn't make very much money and I cannot pledge a significant annual amount. But I can contribute something and I can also pledge my time to the church and to serving others. Thank you for supporting the youth as we grow in our faith and as we have the opportunity to participate in great experiences like the summer Mission Trip. Your pledge and support for our church is crucial to helping us strengthen our faith and to take closer steps in our understanding of God's love for us.

Thank you.