

We have all experienced the fear of being lonely or lost, even me when I think about leaving (while not forever), my past behind and starting a new that I come to feel those feelings. Then I remember what was always said to us in Sunday school, that God is always with us. And when I think of God I think of you, my St. Andrews family. I think about the compassion you've shown me, the love that you have brought me and the lessons you have taught me. Most importantly the acceptance of all who seek the warmth of this church community. There is a spark in everyone of you and that is what I believe makes St. Andrew's so strong.

Certainly the world has experienced one of the biggest hardships in history during these times, literally everyone. We are all humans grieving, feeling lonely, hopeless, and living in a world of anguish and fear. Let us be the light for those yearning to come out of the darkness. And love, no matter what.

Recently I have watched a Ted talk entitled "Empathy is not an Endorsement". The speaker spoke profoundly about the connection we all have as people on earth. And in this time his words became ever so relevant to this time in history. I would like to share his message. He talked about his experience like that of many other people being put down, bullied, and even marginalized. The speaker said that in order to understand the reason for hurtful words and actions from others you must uncover their past and connect with the heart. It is this finding a shared experience that those who hurt can find empathy. No one should be defined by what they are on the outside, only in their soul. Lift each other out of the darkness. We are all human beings connected in some way, care for all. Remember that you must first see the light in someone else for them to see it themselves.

What I have always admired most is the overwhelming love that surrounds the St. Andrew's church. Never would I have expected to love smelling like fish fry, but it is because it reminds me of St. Andrew's. You shaped me into the young woman I am today, and I am eternally grateful for you. Over the years sometimes I had struggled finding the light, it is with your support that I was able to find it. I say to everyone that is struggling now in the world and in this church community that I am here for you, there is no bigger power than love and that is what we are all here on earth to do.

I would like to share what I have learned in Sunday school through my years at St. Andrew's. Whether you live on the other side of the world or right here in this town be there, be present, humble, kind, and caring. Have an open mind in order to see the way of all. Yearn to find a connection with others to better understand their heart. And find the light within.

It is easy to hurt, it is hard to find joy but through each other something beautiful emerges and that is love.

You always have and will continue to be one of the biggest pieces of my heart. I pray for you, I love you, and will always be there for you. Thank you, my St. Andrew's family.

- Ruth Naylor