

October, 2005

This month is the one-year anniversary of my call to St. Andrew's. I celebrated the one-year anniversary of my ordination in Minnesota, while visiting my sister who was recovering from surgery at the Mayo Clinic in Rochester. It was very strange to be back exactly a year since I left the state we resided in for six years. There have been so many changes over the last year for me and my family—changes I could not have possibly foreseen. God has been at work through all the changes. Most of the changes have been very joyful for us and some changes we wish we could have avoided. Those changes that I wish could have been avoided were the loss of family members over the year and my sister's cancer diagnosis in September, but I know through all of these crises God is with and working through all of us.

One thing I never imagined, when my call began here, is that I would ever get to know people's names. Having a pictorial directory on my desk has helped a lot, and saying everyone's name in communion has also been very effective. However, what has profited me more than anything has been prayer. Not praying that I would remember everyone's name, but praying for each of you as I go down the list of names;

This year I know that many you have prayed for me and my family through this transition to life at St. Andrew's and to our new home in San Diego. Last month you and many others around the country were praying for my sister. In our modern world where we tend not to do things unless there is some tangible and/or monetarily profitable outcome, it is strange that prayer is still very much a part of our faith. We moderns often find it necessary to have something in our hands that gives us that sense of prayer and hope in the midst of crisis. I found something last week that seems to cover that sense of need for something tangible that prayer seems to miss. For me it came through our prayer quilt ministry. I received my quilt at the beginning of the year with the knots that you had tied and the prayers for me and my family. This truly did not become evident to me until I gave my sister and my mother their quilts. I laid the quilt over my sister as she was recovering just hours after her surgery. As my mother read the notes that were attached to the quilts, my sister smiled, patted the quilt that laid over her, and smiled a thank you to me for all of your prayers. The quilt remained on her for her stay at the Mayo Clinic. For those days of recovery she was literally covered by all your prayers, and I came to the realization that prayers can be seen in the little knots that we tie on each one of the quilts on Sunday morning.

Seeing my sister lying under that quilt through her recovery, with some pain, it reminded me also that just as individuals tied those knots in the quilt, each of us as individuals make up the body of Christ. St. Andrew's is the body of Christ and each one of us contributes our gifts to make us whole. My hope and prayer for St Andrew's is that we continue to be a place where people can discover their gifts and find the support that a faith community can bring. I mean this not just for those of you who come through the doors every Sunday, but also for those outside our little corner of Jackson and Lake Murray and out into our neighborhoods and places of work. When we hear those closing words to our service "Go in peace, serve the Lord", that is exactly what we do when we go out as the body of Christ to serve others and fulfill God's will.

In Christ,
Pastor Manuel

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