

Kari: Good morning. I'm Kari Rusch-Curl.

Ryan: And I'm Ryan Curl. Together with our daughter Amelia, we attend St John's.

Kari: We are grateful to be with you today to share a bit about why St. John's is such an important part of our lives.

We attended a service here about 6 years ago, hoping to find a spiritual home. We both grew up Catholic and were married in the Catholic Church, but over time we no longer felt a connection to the faith. For many years, we had no spiritual home or faith community, but as we struggled to build our family through the adoption process, we longed to change that. We felt the Episcopal church might be a better fit. From that very first service, we felt welcomed and cared for. Pastor Susan (recognizing that we were new) pulled us aside after the service and asked us what we were looking for and if we had any questions. She asked us if we had children, and we mentioned we were in the process of trying to adopt. She spoke of the many members of St. John's who built their families through adoption, and we knew this would be the place for us.

Ryan: When we connected with a birth mother, we turned to Pastor Susan who help guide us through the anxiety and uncertainty that we were going through. When our daughter was born, it was members of this congregation that contacted us to see how they could help out. I remember how proud we were to baptize our daughter with all of our family here at St Johns. More importantly, I'll never forget the look of shock on my niece's face when before the service she asked "Where's the priest?" to which Pastor Susan looked down at her and said with her southern accent, "Why dearie, that's me." For my niece, it was the first time she'd seen a woman in leadership in the church. For our daughter, she'll never know otherwise.

Kari: Together we served on the Keeping Faith Campaign committee, helping to make the bell tower restoration, fund for social justice, and renovations to the basement all possible. When we considered our contribution to the campaign, we thought about how our daughter would use the space to develop what will become her spiritual foundation. I currently co-teach Sunday school for the 6th and 7th graders downstairs, and our daughter enjoys participating in Godly play.

What makes us most grateful, however, is the wonderful community we have experienced being part of the Wednesday night children's choir group. Almost every Wednesday during the school year, we rush home from a busy day at work, pick our daughter up from preschool, and head to St. John's. There, we are blessed to receive a meal made by a St. John's family, which we enjoy in the company of many other wonderful families. We talk and share parenting stories and book recommendations and just get to know each other better.

Ryan: This happens because Chad and Wendy are so giving of their time, talents, and patience to work with our kids, exactly as the young people they are. We acknowledge and sing to those who have birthdays each week, and Jodi and Ali provide activities for the children to do when

they aren't with Chad and Wendy practicing for an upcoming service. It is one of many examples of how time, talent, and financial support come together here. Our entire family gets to experience this together, and although the weeknights are often busy, Wednesday nights at St. John's exemplify the faith community we longed for years ago.

While this is our story, we know that many of you could stand up here and give similar stories of how the St John's community has been integral in your lives. We give to St. John's because it has given more to us than we could have imagined.

Thank you for all you do to support this community.