



David Conaway Essay

By David Conaway (11/28/25)

Last Sunday, David Conaway addressed the congregation during the announcements on behalf of our Stewardship Appeal. I was so moved by his words that I want to share them here with you. - Jarrett Kerbel

At the beginning of this year, I had the privilege of walking through those big red doors for the first time. I can remember so distinctly being gripped by a terrible and persistent anxiety — an anxiety that dissipated almost instantly when I ran directly into Lorna and was handed my first program. I was quickly surrounded by smiling faces and by kind, gentle words welcoming me and assuring me that I was in the right place. How true that has turned out to be. I can say that I was not sold a false bill of goods; the atmosphere here put me immediately at ease.

I had also worried, separately, that I carried far too much doubt to attend church — that perhaps I needed to be more faithful before joining a congregation. Instead, I was met by Fr. Nutter, who kindly reminded me of the parable of the mustard seed, and told me I was welcome no matter who I was or how deeply I did, or didn't, believe. I discovered that the tiny bit of faith that helped me walk through the door was more than enough faith to stay.

From that first service until now, there are many things I have seen here — and thankfully, a few things I have not. I see a congregation of loving, compassionate human beings. People I am proud to know and count among my friends. There is a sense of community at St. John's that I have never felt in church before, and I see in each of you the desire and the dedication to be good, and to do good. Getting involved with ministry has only increased the value I place on St. John's and the people within it.

I would point out that the problems our ministries address — homelessness, addiction, and human suffering — have no easy solutions. There are no clear answers. There is no finish line. The reservoir of pain in the world is unending, and I see this

each Second Saturday, and each week under the Chamberlain Bridge. And yet this stops none of you. You bake, and knit, and donate, and volunteer simply for the sake of doing good, with no expectation that the work will ever be finished. It is difficult for me to imagine anything more truly Christian than that.

As for the things I have thankfully not experienced: Since I joined, not one of you has called me an abomination. No one has sent me specific quotes from Leviticus with detailed notes. None of you have told me I am living in sin or destined to burn for eternity because of my sexuality. The “love that dare not speak its name” is simply love here. And these warm, gentle conditions have helped the mustard seed I walked in with grow into an oak tree — a tree that grows in stature and strength each time I see God undeniably working through each of you.

Love is my empirical evidence, and it will always keep me coming back.

St. John’s isn’t just a building, or a church, or a community. It’s a well — a well from which we all draw. A place where we come to be refilled, refreshed, and reminded once again who we are.

Thank you.