GODSPEED, GRADUATES!

CONGRATULATIONS and

BRITTANY BARAJAS, B.A. Spanish.
I will begin my master’s in Spanish at Northern Illinois University and a master’s in bilingual speech-language pathology this summer. My goal is to become a part-time bilingual speech-language pathologist in a rehab clinic and to help start outdoor excursions that incorporate speech-language pathology exercises for adults with language disorders.

JOHANNA BÜRKERT, Law (not from UIUC)
Future plans include returning to Germany and likely a Law (not from UIUC) degree in the fall.

TAYLOR MULLIN, B.A. Political Science, Business
This summer I am returning to work at my local state senator’s office and I am currently waiting to hear back about offers for next year.

ALEX MUNGER
Alex has served as our Music Minister and seasonal choir director for this academic year. He is moving on this summer to find work on the #NiUnaMenos campaign in Argentina. Leaving for Buenos Aires to conduct dissertation fieldwork on the RNUnMenos movement.

HENRY ROTHENBERG, B.A. Integrative Biology (Honors)
I will pursue a master’s in science secondary education at the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

STEPHEN SHERMAN
PhD, Urban Planning.
“Governing bodies through space, governing space through bodies: planning, police power and race in central Atlanta.” Currently deciding between job leads in New Hampshire, Minnesota, Oregon of Connecticut and maybe even staying in Urbana.

CLAIRE BRANIGAN
Leaving for Buenos Aires to conduct dissertation fieldwork on the RNUnMenos movement.

Surprised by Joy
...that indescribable deeply-settled, light-filled sense of being...

Molly Banwart, class of 2020, Student Minister of Community Ministries

Raised in a Christian family, I knew that when coming to college, I needed to go to church to make sure my “good standing” as a Christian didn’t diminish.

After an apathetic period of church-hopping, I settled on one that was a convenient five-minute walk from my dorm. I saw faith as another box on my checklist, and I went to Sunday services to meet this minimum that cleared me of my “Christian obligation” for the week. I didn’t view church as a burden to my life however; after every Sunday morning, I felt energized for the week ahead, yet perhaps this was more so from the cup of coffee in my hand from the after-service fellowship than from anything spiritual fulfillment. My faith was complacent.

In sermons I was half paying attention to, I heard the difference between happiness and joy explained before, but only now am I starting to truly understand it. My previous college experiences with church gave me happiness. Sure, I didn’t agree whole-heartedly with the sermons, or stick around to interact with other members of the church, but after having “done my time” after a weekly service, I experienced that instant gratification of superficial happiness. But my time at St. Andrew’s has radically changed my perspective on faith, and now after being involved in this (quite literally) life-changing community, I feel joy. I’ve been able to see first-hand how the church extends beyond the physical building to its people and the love they share, and it has brought me that indescribable deeply-settled, light-filled sense of being. Joy. In the midst of the chaos of college student life, St. Andrew’s has not only given me a sense of calmness, belonging, an acceptance but it has restored my faith after a spiritual crisis that I didn’t even know I was in.

My heart soars talking to future leaders
On May 5th my husband and I attended the St. Andrew’s end of year celebration. We gathered around the barbecue grill and feasted on goodies, and I marveled while chatting with the students in attendance about their summer plans. Young adults from this community of faith are heading to Washington D.C. to work on public immigration policy, San Diego for an engineering internship, Argentina to study community life, and numerous areas throughout the United States and the world.

Others are staying in Champaign Urbana to work and learn more in their field of study: medical practices in a local hospital, nuclear energy, clinical psychology, environmental concerns, etc. Still others are returning to their homes where they will provide leadership in their churches and communities. My heart soars when I think about these young leaders who are striving to make a real difference in our world!

This kind of compassionate leadership doesn’t happen without companions for the journey and intentional mentoring. The Lutheran Campus Center provides both! I have been privileged this year to witness first hand the strength of the St. Andrew’s community in empowering one another to reach out to the world with Christ’s love for the sake of all people.

May God bless us all as we seek to support campus ministry at the University of Illinois!
From the Pastor

Do you remember jumping off a diving board for the first time? A parent, aunt, or uncle is likely in the pool below waiting to scoop you up, encourage you, and saying, “I’m right here! You can do it!” The jump is a great leap of faith. At St. Andrew’s, we are seeking support as we prepare to take a leap of faith into God’s future for us. We have taken intentional steps to empower students to be the primary leadership in our ministry, and God has raised up those leaders in abundance. With two part time Student Ministers already preparing for our 2019-2020 academic year, we have seen a noticeable increase in student attendance in worship, participation in our Bible studies and events, and visibility on campus. Our facility, however, has fallen far behind in its ability to support our mission, and it has become a stumbling block to our ministry. A few years ago, we opened an Accessibility Fund we hoped would allow us to install an elevator or lift so our many active students in wheelchairs would be able to get around our entire building. After more study and talk with contractors, we discovered other serious maintenance problems and design flaws that make retrofitting impossible. For this reason, we are putting on hold further collection of funds for the Accessibility Fund. Our pledge is to put all the Accessibility Funds already raised toward accessibility, regardless what our needs may be at that time.

Our mission and identity are clear; we are in need of a facility that supports that mission and identity. The living corner of this huge university where St. Andrew’s sits is too valuable a gift to lose for the ministry of the Church, so after much prayerful and informed discernment, our hope is to stay, explore our concrete options for more significant facility work, create a plan, and take the leap of faith. This can feel like standing on a wobbly diving board, both thrilled and terrified of the waters below. We gather strength when we see the Gospel of Jesus change lives in this place, and we hope with the hope we bear: that God is not done breathing life into this earth or its creatures. With you we will be able to jump into the future God has in store for us.

This Easter at sunrise, we brought compost to our new prairie pocket garden, similar to the way the women brought spices to anoint Jesus’ body Easter morning. In our age of anxiety about the future of God’s creation, it was an act of faith and witness to the hope we bear: that God is not done breathing life into this earth or its creatures.

God’s Work, Our Hands... brains, hearts, backs, achy muscles...

A lot of students are drawn to St. Andrew’s in order to find service opportunities within a supportive community. Whether it’s river clean-up, volunteering overnight at a local women’s shelter, walking against hunger, reading letters to incarcerated people and picking out books for them, our students come to worship on Sundays to prepare themselves for service, and with to others. A new service opportunity this past year was provided by free ESL classes we began offering in Fall 2018. Students could sign up to be English conversation partners. For students like Daniel Zhu, a PhD candidate in physics (pictured below) it was his first entry into a Christian church. Now he is an our church council!

New Council Pres Promotes Christ’s Love in Art & Science

Brendan O’Shaughnessy, class of 2023, Council President

Studying both Art (Sculpture) and Natural Resources/Environmental Science, I am very excited to use my interests to serve as St. Andrew’s Council President this upcoming year. As President, I am eager to continue expanding our ministries of inclusion and environmental sustainability.

Under my leadership, we installed a native prairie garden on a section of the front lawn of St Andrew’s in the past academic year. To express our commitment to care of God’s creation, we hope to extend this garden each year to create a comprehensive landscape that fosters biodiversity.

In addition to our annual Sangamon River clean-up (cance trip) and our onsite vermi-culture composting, I also want to incorporate our exploration of environmental sustainability with our plans for the future of St Andrew’s facility.

As President, I will also further increase St. Andrew’s presence as an LGBTQ inclusive congregation by promoting the truth of Christ’s radical love. Continuing this mission is extremely important, as St. Andrew’s has provided me a place to strengthen my faith where all are truly welcome, with no exceptions. I

Spring Break in Appalachia:
Faith and the Healing of Creation

Melanie Rohla, class of 2020, Student Minister of Faith in Action

Over spring break, nine of us traveled to Athens, Ohio for a week of learning about environmental degradation and systemic injustice and God’s call to us. Led by Josh Shaughnessy, a former St. Andrew’s alumnus/geologist/currently in seminary/from Athens, we held daily Bible studies to explore our role as people of faith in the healing of creation. We explored the town and surrounding area: an old mine, a power plant that took over a whole city, an iron furnace, a Carnegie library, and many other powerful sites. At most of these places, our team was floored by the injustices and degradation present in the situations.

After multiple days of learning about and visiting different sites, we arrived with Good Works, a local (can’t get back page)

Unexpected Bible Study Restores a Sense of Safety

Brittany Barajas, class of 2019

If you would have asked me a few years ago whether or not I could imagine myself joining a liberal Lutheran church, my answer would have been “no.” I was raised Mexican Catholic, so I spent my first year and a half of college going to Catholic masses. Occasionally. I did not agree with many Catholic doctrines, but I had just accepted that my feminist values would always be at odds with religion. But, one day during my spring semester of my sophomore year of college, I learned that St. Andrew’s was going to host a Lenten Bible study called “Challenging the Biblical Glass Ceiling: Jesus and Women in the Gospel of Luke.” I couldn’t believe it. Or rather, I believed that St. Andrew’s was hosting it, but I certainly did not believe that any gimpse of feminism could be in the Bible.

Just four years before, I had gone to a Catholic Charities center’s counselor to process my experiences of surviving sexual abuse. At the end of the session, the Catholic Charities counselor asked if I had any questions, and I responded, “Yes, I do. What does the Bible say about my situation? About a female’s right to control who has access to her body?” The counselor had no idea.

I left there certain that Jesus and my right to control my body had nothing to do with each other. But, through attending this year’s Bible study, I learned that Jesus absolutely was a feminist. That enlightenment is the reason why I feel safe exploring my faith again. 

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