

Today is a wonderful day of celebration, and I started off this day going up to Henry and Claire and apologizing to them because I know their favorite part of worship service is going downstairs after we sing Peace like a River. So I knew they'd be upset, but they have to stay here the whole time today. And just because they're getting confirmed does not mean they don't get to go downstairs again after today.

When I talk to different people, we talk about confirmation, and I like hearing about what the other churches do: how they keep the kids involved, what builds up to today for them, and what confirmation means to them. Not all faiths do confirmation the way we do. For example, Alyssa didn't have confirmation. She grew up Baptist. So, at this point in their faith journey, they reaffirmed their belief in God. They reaffirm their love of God. They do things much differently than we do.

When I talked to some of my other friends that are pastors in other faiths, in particular the Lutherans like to call today Graduation from Church, because once they get confirmed, you never see them again. And I hope I know with these two that's not the case. But there's a lot of people that it is the case. And why is that?

I remember when I was in confirmation, we were taught that's the end of confirmation. You became a member of the church. You had new responsibilities. You had new beliefs because you weren't a kid anymore. Well, at the end of that, I might not have thought I was a kid anymore, but I was completely a kid. Still am. We were taught at that time, but that was the end of our faith journey. We didn't really need to keep developing our relationship with God because we already had it. It was confirmed; we graduated. We were no longer kids learning. We were now full-grown teenagers who knew absolutely nothing, but believed that we did.

I think back for a minute. If our faith journey stopped at that point in our lives, where would we be today? What would we know about God? Think about the story of Noah. Beautiful story when we were kids, right? A very simple story. God found Noah and told him it's going to rain. It's going to rain a lot, so I need you to go build a boat. This big big boat we're going to call it an arc, and then I want you to take your family and two of every animal. And you're all going to live in peace and harmony and be on this boat. No problems. And then one day it's going to stop raining. And when it does, I want you to send down a dove to find dry land, and it will come back to you, and you will know my love, my beautiful story.

Now, do you remember when we had the story a few months ago, and we talked about it here in worship? It's a little bit of a different story. God gets mad at the world, wipes everybody out. The end of our faith journey didn't continue if we didn't grow and learn more. We would never have learned about the rainbow. We would never know that God places that rainbow there so that we can see their love every time it rains, so that we can see the wonders of God's love for us. That God said, I love you so much. I am never going to do this again.

This opportunity that we get to hear more. If our faith journey stopped when we were kids, would we understand Pentecost? I don't know if we really understand Pentecost now, but it'd be hard right.

One of my joys in this confirmation class was talking to Henry every week about the burning bush. I don't know if you got anything else out of that class, but Henry can tell you how the Ten Commandments started. It was great. I quizzed them at the beginning. What are the first five books of the Bible who can tell me? Nobody, okay? How about the first four books of the New Testament? Nobody, okay. See! This is just like confirmation class, but I know they

know. And I know that their faith grew each and every class we had because we pushed each other. My faith grew talking with them because they pushed me. That's the joy of confirmation. You get to learn that there's so many other views up there, and none of them are right. And none of them are wrong. But, what's important is your view, your faith, your relationship with God. And their relationship grew more and more each and every week, each and every week that we didn't meet, cause I would get texts from their mothers. We're doing this. Is that right? They told me this; I don't believe them.

I do that now. Still, I talk with Alyssa. I'm like, hey, keep me on track. I need to read this book, and I do not like this book, but I gotta do it, and she keeps me in line. My mom still keeps me on track, makes me remember that I have to be here every Sunday. You think once you're done with confirmation that stops, it does not. Now, I know it's a little different in my spot. When I graduated from confirmation, I still enjoyed coming. I still enjoyed coming to church because of the fellowship, getting to talk with everybody on a much different basis.

I don't know what changes between you sitting there right now, and you standing up here in about 10 minutes. But the view of the world for you changes. You all don't realize it, but you stop treating them, like kids, and you start treating them like peers. Your conversations with them will change, your conversations about God, about faith, and what they're doing in the church changes. They weren't even out of Sunday School and you were already on them about what committees they're going to join. Henry volunteered to join Finance, so we're going to be ready and excited for that.

Your faith journey hasn't stopped. Now, they're a part of your faith journey more than you can imagine. You get to share your love for God with them, and they get to see it through your eyes. Now not is a child being told that they have to, but as a peer getting to hear those stories, as a peer getting to participate, and has appeared starting to learn what it really means to be a member of a church.

Some of the other faiths tell me that this is the day they get their membership card. They get their tithing card at the same time because they are expected. We'll explain that to Claire later. But it's not really any different than it was before. Their faith continues to grow each and every day. Their membership hasn't changed. They've always been a part of this church. I told Sue last week I was going through the hymnals because, you know, in the front of your hymnals in the black one especially, goes through everything we're supposed to do today. And one of them has Henry and Claire's name written in the baptism part of it. That's how much of a part of this church they are. They're not just on a spreadsheet somewhere. They're in the hymnal. They are full on in the hymnals.

What do you remember, the most important book we have in the church? Everybody always says the Bible. The Bible is a wonderful tool. It is a great way to hear the word of God. It is a great way to find answers, but it is not a great way to leave a message or a service because I don't want to try and sing any of the Psalms. Their faith journey continues to grow. Their faith journey will continue to grow, especially as we do this together.

So, at this time, Henry and Claire please come forward.