

“Sermons on Confirmation”

Confirmation Sunday

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Confirmands

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From the Pulpit

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William Haslett

Hi, my name is Will Haslett and I go to Worthington McCord Middle School and am in the eighth grade. You might know me as the grandson of Barbara and Al Glover. Many of you know Barb as the person who is always talking about BREAD - not the food, the social justice organization. And you might know Al as the one who always says "Amen!" the loudest after a good sermon. Peepaw, I hope you don't disappoint today. I'm also the son of Chris and Valerie Haslett, you know that couple - one of them always has a leg in a cast or a boot. Please believe me when I say that I have nothing to do with that... they're just really accident-prone. I'm also the older brother of twelve year old twins, Jake and Maya.

I'd like to talk to you today about my faith journey and how it has brought me to this day, my confirmation day at First Church. My family actually use to belong to a different church when I was younger, but it never really felt like home. So there were a few years there when we just said our prayers and read from the Bible. On holidays, we would come here to First Church since my grandparents were members. And then last summer, my grandma asked if I might want to learn more about my faith by taking confirmation classes with Tim. Obviously, I said "yes"! Looking back on it now, I'm not really sure why I said yes. Maybe I was just being *spontaneous* like Miss Jackie!

(Sorry, that's an inside joke in our confirmation class.) But I'm so glad I joined! I feel that decision has had a great impact on my life.

For those who don't know what confirmation is like, allow me to tell you a little bit about it. We meet a couple times a month and are asked to read chapters of our books on our own so we can be ready to discuss them during class. We discussed the Bible, the history of our religion, the different denominations of Christianity and have learned about important dates and seasons in the Christian calendar such as advent, Christmas, Maundy Thursday and Easter. We also learned about Catholicism, Islam and Judaism and took field trips to their places of worship. These trips helped us understand that even though they are different religions, we are all children of God and have a lot in common.

As a part of confirmation, Reverend Tim also paired each of us up with a mentor who we met with outside of class to talk about topics such as the trinity, death and resurrection, ministry and baptism. As you know, my mentor was John Deliman. The definition of the word "mentor" is "an experienced and trusted adviser". John fits this description perfectly, not only because he is a great teacher about the Christian faith but also because he is trustworthy and supportive. I learned so much from him and am so thankful that he volunteered his time so willingly.

As you can tell, I have been greatly influenced by my confirmation class experience. I've learned to offer forgiveness even when it's not requested, to think more globally instead of just worrying about myself and to think about what I can do to make a positive impact on the world. I've learned that I don't need to fear death, since I know for sure that there is an afterlife. And I feel more connected to God and find myself thinking "What would Jesus do?" when I'm making difficult decisions, and I reflect on how our church helps people in need through mission offerings and programs like good Sam and laundry love and how I might contribute to the greater good - even in small ways - to make a big difference for other people.

But what I learned in confirmation is just one small aspect of the faith journey I've been on this year. I've also met a lot of new friends and had great experiences in youth group with Mr. Mark and in Sunday school with Bill and Susan Rhoads. I've learned how to play sardines, gaga ball and "What do you stand for", a game where you try to collect all of the character traits before everyone else. But probably my most favorite experience was going on the retreat at Temple Hills. Everyone engaged with each other at meal times, during group activities and at worship. Confirmands and mentors spent a lot of time in class, but outside of that time, it felt more like a family reunion than a church retreat. The type of family that that accepts each other for who we are,

respects and celebrates each other's differences and works together to impact the world in a positive way.

For that retreat experience and the experiences I've had in confirmation, at youth group and in Sunday school, I am so grateful. I wouldn't be up here today without the support of Reverend Tim, Jonathan Miller, Jackie Dean, John Deliman, Mr. Mark, Susan and Bill or my friends. You've all played a significant role in helping me along my faith journey.

I made a big choice today. We all did. We all had different journeys that brought us to this day. But together we are taking our next step as Christians as we confirm our baptism. We were all baptised as infants, which was our parents' decision. But now we are publicly affirming that decision to live as Christians and follow Jesus' example. As we become members of the church, we promise to continue to grow as Christians. And to welcome others into our church family as you have done to us.

Thank you.

Madeline Day Elizabeth Helmer

I learned when I was very little that God loves everyone even if a person has a brain disease AKA Mental Illness. I have a brain disease but I was not born with Dissociative Identity Disorder (DID). DID used to be called Multiple

Personality Disorder and it is developed by experiencing severe and/or chronic trauma before the age of five. Separate personalities form in order to keep the trauma memories and to protect the host during the traumatic events. Each person with DID has a different experience with it but all have a system with three or more distinct personalities. I have several personalities some who are two years old and some who are as old as forty-two. My system and I have been learning through counseling how to work together to keep us all safe and well. I still experience periods of time loss when a personality is out front or conscious and I or other personalities are inside my head not aware of what is going on. Everyone can dissociate sometimes even if you do not have DID! Have you ever gone to work or school and not remembered the time between home and your destination? Well that is dissociating!

Anyway, even though I went through a ton of trauma and have DID the one constant in my life has been my trust in God and His love never failing. When it comes to talking about brain disease it is easy to focus on the pain and struggle and lose sight of the good work God can do in any circumstance. I realized that although I suffered and was in the midst of tremendous pain the one thing that remained constant was God's love and redemption and that with and through Him I can and will heal!

I first learned about God's unconditional love when I went to church in South Carolina with my mom and brother Trenton. I found that the church can be a very special place because the people of the church show God's love through their actions and through the way they treat others. I attended Sunday school both at Seaside Vineyard in South Carolina and here at First Church and often remember talking about God's redeeming love for everyone through Jesus' death and resurrection. I have always loved John 3:16 "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life."

So what is the church supposed to do when someone with brain disease comes through our doors? There actually are a lot of answers to this but I will share what has been most helpful for me. One major plus for someone walking through our church doors with any life storm is that First Church is known for doing a lot of social justice and advocacy work! Some might question their ability to help someone with brain disease but there is almost always someone around at First Church to ask for help. If you are able would you please stand if you are a social worker or part of the health care industry? Mom, that includes you! Knowing any of the people standing you now know someone who can help you to help someone else even if it is to get the resources or information for them! Thank you for standing up and being the helpers of the world! You may be seated!

For me the church has been a huge part of my recovery journey having brain disease! I often remain hopeful during hard times because of the many Bible lessons I have learned. Romans 8:28 helped me to realize what God does to redeem and Matthew 22: 37-39 has shown me what we are supposed to do as Christians! Romans 8:28 says, “We know that God causes everything to work together for the good of those who love God and are called according to His purpose for them.” Matthew 22: 37-39 “Jesus replied: ‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’”

My answer to the question of what the church should do when someone with brain disease comes through our church doors is follow the command to love God, love thy neighbor, and to simply just be kind, loving, and supportive! I have always felt loved, cared for, and supported here at First which is a major piece for me and anyone struggling with a brain disease needs as part of our recovery! Doing this will help reassure people with brain disease like me that they are never alone because they too will learn about God’s love. God really does cause everything and everyone to work together for the good of those who love Him!

Thank you for all you have done to help me! I am grateful to God for giving me so many wonderful people in my life who

care enough to take the time to understand about my brain disease. DID is complicated but I joke with my grandpa that since we are all made in God's image that my DID is totally like God because there is the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. That is three in one! So God basically created my DID to protect me!

AMEN!

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