

**A Letter to the 2020 Confirmation Class**  
**The Monroe Congregational Church, UCC**  
**Rev. Jennifer M. Gingras**  
**June 21, 2020**

*Matthew 10:24-39*

Dear Mia, Evelyn, Greg, Carrie and Kate,

On Wednesday we gathered for our final confirmation meeting together here on the side lawn with Strawberry Shortcake for dinner! Of course, you had it with the works – that’s the only way to go!

Our task was to gather with parents, siblings and sponsors so that you could share your art projects. We had 2 videos, 2 mixed media pieces and an original song – they were as creative and heartfelt as I expected, after being on this confirmation journey with you.

Debi and I have appreciated all that you’ve had to contribute to our time together. You pushed me in February to do a brown bag sermon, reaching out to church people about the questions THEY have about faith. Because, when you think about, just because you are passing this big milestone today doesn’t mean that you will stop asking questions.

Unfortunately, there were some things we didn’t get a chance to do this year, and I’m sorry about that. We never got to go on our retreat together, so I’m grateful that we had the chance to do so with PF earlier in the year. We did get to do some special things together, like walking the fabric labyrinth and spending a lot of time making our stoles - you put a lot of care and effort into those. We attended Ash Wednesday, learning about the tradition and symbolism of Lent. You had deep conversations not only in class, but with your sponsors too.

Something you did, which not all classes do regularly, was tell us at the end of every class “thank you”. That may seem like a really small thing, but I noticed it every time and deeply appreciated it. Thank you for your commitment, your promptness, and your appreciation.

In today’s scripture from Matthew’s gospel, Jesus has given his disciples authority to drive out evil spirits and to heal people. He’s given them the job of sharing the gospel boldly. And now he’s giving them instructions for how to go about that good work. It’s a rite of passage moment. And spoken in terms of Confirmation, it’s a confirming moment.

The disciples have been with Jesus long enough at this point to know what he's about, what he stands for and what he will not stand, and what it will take to follow him from this point forward. And now, hearing these instructions from their teacher, the disciples are given the opportunity to confirm their participation, to say 'yes' to what the UCC's "Statement of Faith" calls "the cost and joy of discipleship,"

... or to call it a day and head home.

I wonder, if Peter and Andrew, James and John, Mary and Martha and the rest of them had heard Jesus' instructions and declined his invitation to go out and share the good news of the gospel, wouldn't everything that they'd been through with Jesus to that point be a waste?

Wouldn't everything that they'd learned from Jesus—about the love of God for all people regardless of who they are or where they come from, about how the spirit of the law always supersedes the letter of the law, about the dignity and wellbeing of God's people always being above any religious doctrines or social taboos—wouldn't all of that become just a waste of time? Sometimes I wonder that same thing about church.

Jesus invites us to take up our cross and follow him, because in taking on the cost and joy of discipleship, we lose our fearful lives in Christ and save them in the process. If we who claim to follow Jesus confirm the truth of love outside the Meetinghouse, then the world might start to see those churches we attend as not so much of a waste of time after all.

I believe that is what is happening today. In the midst of all the brokenness and despair of this world, you are here to make a commitment. That's a huge deal. You are claiming YOUR faith.

You are a unique and vital member of the Body of Christ. Today is all about you taking what you've learned over the past 14 or 15 years and realizing that you have an important role within this church and throughout the world.

The world needs people like you, pushing yourselves outside of your comfort zone and encouraging others to do the same.

The world needs people like you asking questions and not pretending to understand or believe something just because someone tells you to or expects you to.

The world needs people who are willing to speak openly and honestly in a big group of people about important things, people who are willing to serve the community whenever and wherever they are needed.

So don't be scared.

This church has some pretty spectacular Good News to share and today we encourage you to be part of that story. Our prayer for you is that you open yourselves up to see new things, hear new things, try new things and learn new things. Nurture your faith. Step outside of your comfort zone. Trust your instincts.

And let your voice be heard. Let your voice be heard in this church, in this community and in the world. Let your voice be heard with your friends, at school and in your family. Let your voice be heard so that others can hear it, but – perhaps more importantly – let your voice be heard so that YOU can hear it as well.

We are so very proud of you. Amen.