

2018 Note to the Confirmands
The Monroe Congregational Church, UCC
Rev. Jennifer Gingras
June 3, 2018

Matthew 7:24-27

Dear Lydia, Abby, Josh, Liv, Gerrit and Kyra (even if you are in Tennessee, you are still in our hearts today),

I had no idea what to expect when we started on our journey together this year. When I first came to MCC, you were toddlers! I knew some of you, mostly by knowing your older siblings. Others I got to know at VBS or during the even-entertaining times with children. Some of you were new to church just this year! All of you were delightful to spend time with, and I mean that.

I got home from our first meeting together and thought about what you were like as a group. Ya'll were quiet... real quiet. Respectful. Thoughtful. Deep thinkers. It took time for you to come out of your shells. Once you did, you shared your quick wit, subtle sarcasm and entertaining punchlines. You are smart, inquisitive and willing to take risks. As a class, you did not miss a thing and it is safe to say that you kept Debi and I on our toes all year. You are turning into fine young adults and we are proud to bear witness to that.

A few weeks ago, we were talking about covenant and relationship and what that has to do with church life. And I told you that night, but it is worth repeating now: You do not have to believe what you think the rest of us want you to believe in order to fit in with us. Believe what you believe – just be authentic about it.

And remember that you will make mistakes. We all do. In the Book of Ecclesiastes it says: "There's no one on earth so righteous as to do good only and never make a mistake." (Ecclesiastes 7:20)

Our mistakes are not what define us. It is what we do after our mistakes that counts; that is what makes us who we are. When we, as a Church, confirm you and welcome you into our community of faith, we are not asking you to be perfect; we are simply asking you to open yourself up to the possibility of grace.

It is okay to ask questions. It is okay to have doubts. It is okay to not believe every single word that is written in the bible or that comes out of my mouth on a Sunday. It is okay to be confused by all of this religious stuff. It is okay to believe some of it, but not all of it. Trust me. Like I said: Be authentic in what you believe.

Here's the thing: Your commitment to your confirmation year is over and done. You are now an adult in the eyes of this family of faith.

The other adults here are now your peers. We want you to come to church because you want to. We want you to come to church not because you want to be known as a good kid who goes to church (*though, for the record, there is absolutely nothing wrong with that*); we want you to come to church because this is a safe space for you to be you.

We want you to come to church because this is a place where you can reflect on life and get support from people who truly care about you. Let this community be your rock.

We want you to come to church because this is a place where you can serve others, where you can see a world outside of the one that you are living in and learn how to show compassion and humility and kindness.

We want you to come to and be part of the community because – quite frankly – service to the church looks great on college, honor society and job applications. You all have the capacity within you to do great things and we, as your family of faith, want to help you reach your fullest potential.

We want you to come to church because we want to be part of your stories; and, perhaps even more importantly, this church needs you to be a part of its story as well.

Today you were confirmed. We laid hands on you, as others have laid hands on so many in the past, a sign of the passing on of the Holy Spirit from one person to another. Your parents and sponsors and Debi and I will continue to pray for you, asking God to come into your heart and give you courage in your belief, whatever that might look like from day to day.

So be brave. Be humble. Be courageous. Be kind. Work hard. Rise up. Take risks. Embrace the unknown. Strive for excellence. Show compassion. Extend grace. Love without fear. Shine light in a world that too often is filled with darkness. Put your imprint on this church, on your community and on the world. We need you.

Thanks be to God for you! Amen.