

Confirmation Reflections

Tuesday, August 4, 2020

You could say that our 2019/2020 confirmation class has been on an unprecedented journey, since they first gathered in November of 2019. It began, much like any other confirmation class held at Valley in the last 12 years. We met in our groups to begin the process of forming new relationships between mentors and youth. The first 4 weeks we met regularly to study and share our faith with one another. Then it was Advent and we took time off to reflect on the season of waiting as we prepared for the birth of Jesus.

The new year meant it was time to regroup and begin discerning what their project might be. This is where things began to change, and rapidly. Before we knew it, we were sheltering in place and confirmation was once again waiting but this time we were in the season of Lent, a time of wandering in the wilderness. I've worked with children/youth for over twenty years both in the educational setting and most recently here at Valley. What I can tell you is if you want to see what perseverance, faithfulness and hope looks like, then look into the eyes of the children and youth in your lives. I do, and everyday I am more and more amazed. I asked the confirmands to share with you their reflections on what this process has been like for them amid this pandemic. Grab some tissues and be ready to beam with pride as I am, as I write this letter. ~ Sheila Sheldon

"My time going through confirmation has been less than normal. It started off like past years with bible study and getting to know your mentor and other confirmands. However, God had other plans and designed a special path for us to walk. Our plan was to paint a mural in the space now known as Valley Village (former Camp David) and after completing the base coat on the walls, Covid-19 stopped us in our tracks. But we persevered and the mural planning is underway and will be completed this fall after some delay. This in my eyes, shows God's presence by being able to overcome adversity to accomplish our goal." ~ Adam Chancellor and Cathy Paulson, mentor

"Confirmation has been very different this year. We couldn't meet face to face safely. We found God's love by being able to get together through video chats and later meetings on the church patio. In confirmation you really learn how to think for yourself because your parents aren't here to answer for you. You must come up with the answers on your own and it was hard to figure out what was right for you, with the guidance of your mentor. We look forward to sharing our vision through our mural project with the congregation" ~ Emily Gillet and Heather Rautio, mentor

“At the start of this journey it was normal. But normality isn’t a thing anymore. During this uncertain time, we look to God. This has been done through generations and events in our history. We support each other and help each other through this journey. Our project isn’t a challenge compared to the separation we are facing. We rely on others and rely on God.” ~ Max Westerlund and Ray Anderson, mentor

“Having confirmation during the Covid-19 pandemic has been very interesting. It has been hard to always keep a mask on, they get super-hot and very uncomfortable. Other than having to social distance and wear a mask, confirmation is going really well. Sheila is always making sure that everyone’s ideas and opinions are heard and taken into consideration. She is always making sure that we all do our part and helps us through disagreements. I’ve seen God in all the laughter and kindness that is shared not only within all of us youth, but also within our mentors.”

~ Jamese Decker and Mary Schuette, mentor

“Confirmation has overall been a good experience for me. It started out a lot more structured and consistent, which I liked (I like having constants in my life that I can rely on) but has gotten a lot more flexible on when and how we meet. I really appreciate how when the world turned upside down, that the church is here doing everything they can to support everyone and remain a source of hope and guidance. When the pandemic first got here confirmation was the last thing on my mind. And although there was a break where we didn’t actually meet, I like how everyone has really been flexible and willing to adapt around the situation. This confirmation group is really amazing, and I feel lucky to learn with and be around these people.”

~Angela Zywicki and Mary Dunham, mentor