

A Letter to the 2019 Confirmation Class
The Monroe Congregational Church, UCC
Rev. Jennifer M. Gingras
June 9, 2019

Acts 2:1-4, Romans 8:26-31, 38-39

Dear Luisa, Jimmy, Vee, Terese and Caleb,

A few weeks ago, we gathered for our final confirmation dinner and class. One of our tasks that night was to share your art projects and practice for worship on confirmation Sunday. We also ate a great meal put on by Fred and our deacons, and your parents and sponsors said a few words about you and how wonderful it has been to be on the journey with you this year.

Debi and I have appreciated all that you've had to contribute to the class. Now, because you are fully confirmed members of the church and see as adults by people who are here, I think it's in your best interest that I be honest with you.

This was not an easy class. Maybe that was because you all were pulled in so many directions this year. I've never had a confirmation group with so many responsibilities! Many of you are honor students. In your "spare" time, you're active in dance company, musical theater, rowing, Senior PF and robotics just to name a few!

There were a lot of times when you did not completely understand what we were asking you to do.

And, there were a lot of times when I did not completely understand why you did not completely understand what we were asking you to do.

You felt inadequate when it came to writing your final essays on decision night. I knew you could do it. I might have raised my voice once or twice. That's because, as a group you are funny and outgoing. If one of you wasn't cracking a joke, the other would. I'm not mad at you, It's just your charm, your personalities, and your friendships outside Dineson parlor that made you so chatty.

I'll be honest – as you began to talk amongst yourselves at that last confirmation class, I wasn't really sure how it was going to go. You kept saying that you didn't know where to start; that you didn't know what to say; that you didn't know the fancy church words to use. The paper in front of you remained blank for a good long time.

But you didn't give up. You buckled down and took it one word at a time. And even if none of you really finished, you never stopped encouraging the others at the table. At the end of the night I sat down with your essays and skimmed them over. As I did, it was immediately clear to me that you WERE capable of writing down some things about this journey (told you so), that you cared about what you had written and that you wanted them to truly be a reflection of what you believed.

When you had no other choice, you found your voice.

And guess what? This is faith – alive and at work.

This is your faith. This is your faith growing and being nurtured. This is God speaking to you and shaping you into a unique member of the Body of Christ. This is you taking what you've learned over the past 14 or 15 years and realizing that you have an important voice in your faith, within this church and throughout the world. This is you embracing your beliefs; asking questions and not being complacent if you don't like the answers.

And as much as I want you to remember today, I think I almost want you to remember that last class more. Because I want you to remember that when you had no other choice, you found your voice.

And because next time, I don't want you to wait to use it.

Because you had some pretty incredible things to say about your community:

One of you said "God's name represents a title for goodness, and the meaning behind it is that people show God's light. People (here) can ease the pain and anger (in life), these are the ones who help me to remain faithful to this religion."

Another one of you said "The last reason that I'm planning on being confirmed to this church is because I grew up with them. I remember as a child going to coffee hour and speaking with all the adults about how much I've grown. Becoming one of those adults would mean a lot to me."

And another said "It is very important to me that I am a member of a church who is welcoming of all people. This is really important to me because everybody should be comfortable with who they are and no one should be excluded because of who they are. Along with this, MCC has always been like a family."

I know that it isn't always easy to talk about your faith, especially now. Only 10% of people in New England are part of some kind of a religious community, so a lot of your friends may not even understand what it means to be part of a church. And I'm not saying that this is a bad thing or a good thing, I'm just saying that this is the world that you live in. That's why it might be hard to let your faith voice be heard.

But you need to try.

You need to try 1) because you have some pretty incredible things to say and 2) because the world needs people like you, spreading the good news and sharing their faith. 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 and serve the community whenever and wherever they are needed.

Don't be scared.

This church has some pretty spectacular Good News to share and today I am charging you to be part of the cloud of witnesses that is sharing it. 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.