

Charge to Confirmands 2021

Rev. John Allen

You all have been through a lot to get to this moment. More than most.

We began your confirmation journey with a retreat to Craigville, which ran from February 28-March 1 2020. I don't think that we were giving COVID much thought at that moment, I remember us crowded around tables in the dining room, playing Mysterium, serving ourselves from the buffet in the dining hall...

And yet, twelve days after we got back from that trip, our lives all changed.

At first we postponed, hoping to regather in person, and ultimately we moved onto zoom, and I was so happy that we were able to conclude our time with an in person session outdoors, and I am overjoyed that we are able to celebrate your confirmation in person together today.

These 16 months since we started confirmation on that retreat have been a time where so much of our lives has been pulled back.

Familiar activities that kept us busy in the past fell aside, and, especially in those early days before school resumed, our lives really got pared back to the basics.

Family. Walks. Meals.

Plans cancelled. Our world's got smaller.

Out in public, our faces were reduced merely to our eyes...

And then gradually things start to layer back in, school, sports, clubs...

And now, I don't know about you, but it is feeling like the past few weeks, things are really rushing back...

Packed arenas, an in-person church service, full restaurants, and even maskless faces.

One of the opportunities that I don't want us to miss in this moment, is the chance to be thoughtful about what we bring back into our lives.

Were there things we were doing that maybe we don't need to go back to? Are there new things that we learned about ourselves, our community, or our world, that maybe inviting us to think about a change?

I believe that for all of us, this will be a season of choosing. Of choosing what fits into our new lives, and our new world.

Today, you confirmands have made one such choice. You have chosen this faith journey as a part of your life, you have chosen this church community as a part of your circle, you have chosen these questions and stories to wrestle with, these songs to sing, this God to trust.

The Rite of Confirmation celebrates the fact that each of us over the course of our own lives gets to close what we put at the center of our lives. Each of us gets to choose what we will value and who or what we will trust.

In the scripture reading we heard earlier, God tells the prophet Isaiah a hard truth. That there are many, many, many things we might chase after in our lives. Many paths down which we might seek happiness and blessing.

We might chase fulfillment through achievement, wealth, career... but if we do, we will only find ourselves weary.

We might chase happiness by following the racing moment to moment desires of our own minds... if we do, we will stumble.

But when we build our lives on something more sturdy, like the loving presence of God, then we will not grow faint.

When seek the mysterious presence of God in the midst of our lives, then we will find ourselves grounded in something that can truly sustain us.

Because, unlike chasing fulfillment through achievement, God's love will be there for you even if you fail. God's love will be there with you when you make mistakes. When you are hurt by the world. When you run out of steam.

On our confirmation retreat, we reflected on how we imagine God. We looked for signs and symbols of God's presence in photos, in nature, in stories, and most importantly in community with one another.

All of us get to chose, not just on days like today, but again and again throughout our lives, what we will build our lives around.

Where will we put our energy?

Where will we put our faith?

And all of us would do well, in this season of choosing, to follow your example today.

And choose this faith. This mystery. This community. This God. As a steady center to our lives.

I am so grateful to now share membership in this community of faith with each of you, and I look forward to continuing our journey of faith together.