

## **Confirmation Faith Statements for the 2021 Confirmands**

### **Westminster Presbyterian Church**

#### **Minneapolis, MN**

Over the course of the year I spent in confirmation class I learned so much about God, Jesus, the Holy Spirit, and about faith. We completed many different activities, read many different passages, and watched different clips. The activity that stuck out to me most was looking at different images of both the cross and different images of Jesus. The part that surprised me was that they both can be viewed in so many different ways. In the photos of Jesus, some were similar to each other and many I have seen before but there were also many that were nothing like I've pictured. This was the same with the photos of the crosses, there were simple ones that I see often and ones that were very artistic and really stood out.

The many photos of Jesus and the crosses were all very unique and very different. This made me realize how each person on this earth God created is different and unique as well. Me and the other people in my confirmation class are all different but God is seen in every one of us. Just how I saw God in every photo of Jesus and in every photo of the crosses. I see God everywhere, I see him in my friends and in my teammates but also at school and around the city.

So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. Genesis 1:27. This passage from the bible sticks out to me as something that also reflects God being in everyone. He created everyone in an image of himself but everyone is unique and different and very few look the exact same. Over the time I got to spend in confirmation class learning about God, Jesus, the Holy Spirit, and about Faith the activity that stuck out most to me was about seeing God in everyone and everywhere despite what it is or who they are and how it looks or how they look. It not only brought it to my attention but it also made me look for it more often and realize how special everyone and everything is.

For most of my life I have been uncertain in what I believe, not sure if I believed in God or not. But steadily my faith has grown, and now I am here, writing my faith statement. Despite not always completely sure of what I believed, I have always felt a strong connection to Westminster, and this has stayed with me. The people here are possibly the nicest, most loving, and most welcoming people I have ever met.

During winter break, one of the things I look forward to most is the Christmas pageant. I like every part of the pageant, but the part I love most is the singing. Something about it is just so amazing. It is hard to explain the feeling I get when this happens, but it is something like a combination of joy, love, and even a bit of pride. I don't think I would be at this point in my faith journey without the amazing community of Westminster. I know Westminster will always be a part of me, and my identity.

I believe Jesus is both man and God. However, I don't really know what being both man and God looks like, my mind can't really comprehend that. However, I am not worried that I don't have a great understanding of this, it will just have to be a concept in my faith that I will have to explore more. But more important than this is I know that Jesus died on the cross to save us.

Along with this it is more important to look at and follow Jesus' teachings rather than argue on the theological nuances concerning Jesus. This is similar to my view on interacting with other religions: we shouldn't be arguing on religious differences, rather working together for the good of mankind.

My belief in God is much more concrete. I believe God to be omnipotent and omnipresent, and that God is the one and only God. I also believe God is the creator, responsible for the universe in which we live. Importantly, I also believe God is almighty, but loving.

I think God can be seen and experienced everyday through the acts of people, and even nature. Every day I witness people doing acts of kindness and love towards each other, and in this I can see God. According to Genesis humans were made in the image of God; I can see this in acts of kindness by the people around me. I not only see God in people, but also in nature and the world itself. Sometimes I will just step outside and feel a great sense of awe, but also peace and love. In those moments I am certain that God is watching over me.

My view and understanding of the Holy Spirit has always been a lot more confused than the other parts of the Trinity. It is hard for me to imagine something Divine and non-corporeal, but distinct for God. Despite this, I trust in the things I have learned, and can even sometimes see the Holy Spirit in the actions of other people. I have settled on the conclusion that the Holy Spirit is like God's power or energy in and around us that enlightens, and sustains us during times of hardship and adversity.

This is my faith statement, but it is only my faith statement at this point in time. I think it is important for me to acknowledge that even though I know generally where my faith is, there are still things that I don't understand yet. I expect that my faith will continue to grow and change over my life. I am excited to continue to learn about my faith both through my time at Westminster, but also by myself through thought and prayer.

I don't know if I believe in God. I don't know if I want to believe in God. I never thought about it before confirmation, and religion was just a tiny part of my life: Sunday school, Christmas, and Easter. It's was and still is so easy to slip into believing or not believing "just because," switching back and forth to what was convenient for me and never giving any real thought to why. Throughout confirmation, I realized that this feels fake to me now. God does mean something to me. I always find it hard to explain what because it doesn't make sense to me either. Sometimes I think I see God everywhere, but other days I can't remember the last time I thought that.

So for the moment, I don't know what I believe about God and religion. What I do believe in is the love I have for my family and friends and, in turn, the love they have for me. What I do believe in is the beauty I find every day, whether it's a handful of wild strawberries, receiving or giving a compliment, my friends and I laughing until we can't breathe, the perfect sunset, or the smell of flowers every spring. What I do know is that I have the rest of my life to figure it out, and being confirmed seems like the next step to getting there.

I remember my very first day at Westminster. I remember walking into Sunday school for the first time, how I felt. I don't remember what we did, but I remember a sense of community. That same feeling of community has been with me every single time I've walked into our church. During the beginning of my faith exploration, everything seemed very clear and true. I didn't have any doubts or questions about my religion. However, as I got older and learned more about myself and my identity, questions began to emerge.

What do I truly believe in?

Is this community the right fit for me?

For people like me?

The answer to all three of these questions simply is: I'm not sure. At least, I'm not sure at the moment. I know as I grow and learn more about myself and my faith, I may have answers to these questions. But for now, I'm content with the unknown.

I like to describe my relationship with faith as, for lack of a better term, odd. I say this because though many view the bible as something that dictates right from wrong, unquestioned, I don't necessarily view it that way. I love to question, to criticize, to look at things from different points of view, especially when it comes to religion and faith. I suppose it is an unorthodox perspective, but I feel that open discussion and contradicting opinions should be implemented in many aspects of life, including religion.

I can confidently say that I am Presbyterian, but that doesn't mean that my journey of faith is set in stone, complete. Rather, I'd like to think that it's just beginning.

I believe God is watching over me. He guides me through testing situations throughout the entirety of my existence. When issues arise, I am grateful to know that He will always be there for me to talk to and to seek guidance. He has a plan for me, my family, my friends, and I trust him with that plan.

I believe Jesus was meant to come to Earth and show the world that when they are at their best, they can be something incredible. When people are struggling with morality, there is nothing to fear and there is light at the end of the tunnel. He is showing me the way I can be the best version of myself. He died on the cross for our sins. Because of this, I am confident in his plan and his guiding presence in my life and I trust in everything he does for me.

I believe that the Holy Spirit guides us through to the plan that God has for each and every one of us. It helps with the decisions we have to make, brings light into the dark times, and creates opportunities for us. Even though we might not always be able to feel the Holy Spirit, it is always there leading us.

Church is a community I have that allows me to be myself, follow what I believe in, and ask the questions I want to know to further my knowledge in God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit. I am so thankful to have this community around me and although confirmation has come to an end, my journey with faith has not.

## God

I think God is my Creator and created everything. He is the faithful one. God is everywhere when I am at places and watches over me and all of us. I believe God is in heaven.

## Jesus

I think Jesus is the son of God and was human and did human-like things. Jesus helped others and washed his disciple's feet. I feel Jesus is here with me when I am praying.

## Holy Spirit

I think the Holy Spirit is the Holy Ghost. I feel the Holy Spirit makes bad things go away. For example, protecting me from a robber breaking into my house. Like the wind blows things away, the Holy Spirit does too. The Holy Spirit protects me and helps me to pray. I believe the Holy Spirit is guiding me in what I should do or not do in life.

## Church

I think church is belonging. I feel church is a place where I pray, sing, and worship. I believe church is a community. The church helps me know my Christian faith by serving others. On my mission trips I have worked in a Duluth community garden and a Minneapolis community garden. I have helped at FEAST with people who don't have food and at day camp working with the kids and staff.

When I was younger, I didn't like the idea of organized religion. I thought all churches were close minded and hateful, so I swore I'd never be religious. So when my parents told me we were going to start going to church, you can imagine my annoyance. But it didn't take long for me to realize that church actually... wasn't that bad?? I found myself really enjoying youth group events, and making new friends. The Westminster community has been so welcoming and loving since my family and I joined, and it's easy to tell that they carry that same energy everywhere they go. Now when I think church, I think community. This love I feel every time I go to a church event is what led me to joining confirmation.

I love the community aspect more than anything. Presbyterians hold the belief that everyone is a child of God, no matter how different, and we were all put on Earth to work together. Especially during these times, I believe this to be very true. In order for us (as a community) to improve, we need to work together and listen to each other. That's what Westminster is all about, and that makes me feel very safe. I feel very lucky to be a part of such a progressive church.

As I just said, going to a progressive church is amazing. Hearing the pastors say in their sermons that everyone is welcome and KNOWING they mean it is hard to come by in a church. I love going on mission trips with this church because I know we'll be helping communities. Learning about Line 3 this year was such an amazing opportunity, and it further showed how involved in the community Westminster is. For all of these reasons, I choose to be confirmed in the Presbyterian Church.

*Water* a poem

God is water

Water is life

Water is a liquid, fluid,

Takes the shape of its container

I see god in all of us, taking many shapes, faces, in everyone and everything around us

Water is beginnings, baptisms, and

Water is endings too

Washing everything away

In Westminster, I see the holy spirit

In Westminster, water is everywhere

God is water

Water is life and death and everything in between