

Faith Journeys



Confirmation Sunday
Pentecost
May 11, 2008

The Confirmands of 2008 have worked hard through this entire confirmation process to reflect on what they believe and who they are as disciples of Christ. They are all most certainly on journeys of faith. Please take this booklet as a way to pray for them and support them on their journey.

Included in this booklet are their names, baptismal dates and locations, confirmation verses, statements of faith, spiritual gifts, and "new" names that they gave themselves during our retreat. They were told to give themselves new names that describe how they think God knows them. I wanted to share these names in this booklet because it gives us an insight into their playfulness, understanding of God, and another way to know who they are. In all fairness, my new name is "Grace" and Pastor Warner's is "One God sees."

What would your "new" name be?

Peace, Casey Carlson

Exploding Epiphany



Alyce
"Hope"

Baptized:

April 7, 2007
Advent Lutheran Church
Morgan Hill, CA

Spiritual Gifts:

- Music
- Intergenerational Openness
- Artistry
- Listening
- Dance
- Drama
- Leadership
- Administration
- Evangelism
- Mercy

I have not grown up in a strict Christian family. I have always known that there was something in me; something that was reaching out telling me that there was more than just a few church services and some Sunday School lessons. That inner voice was telling me that there was God. The problem is, how do I get to God?

It wasn't until sixth grade that I started regularly going to church. I started going just for a single, simple reason, I went to Christian Music Theater in the Summer. I ended up loving the feeling and warmth that everyone displayed at Advent Lutheran. I felt welcomed and befriended by all. I was baptized at the Easter Vigil Service in 2007. I trust in God's promises of baptism. In order for me to live out my baptism on a daily basis, I have adopted the following of the Ten Commandments and the teachings of Jesus.

The only problem with my faith statement is that I still doubt what I shouldn't doubt. The little light bulb in my head hasn't clicked yet. I get what everyone says, and I try to believe, but there is only so much that I can believe. When it comes to my faith, I am overwhelmed by everyone's opinion that it's hard for me to focus on the matter at stake. I wish that I could just open the Bible and I would have an *exploding epiphany*, but I don't. I may just need more time, and I hope that I'm not alone in my belief. I wished that there was something that could just help me find out a simple way to God. It may take me my whole life.

For our confirmation retreat we were told to choose a name that fit our faith at the moment. It took me a while to figure it out, but I finally did; that name was Hope. I chose the name Hope because I know that I may not always believe everything I hear or have the faith I wish I had, but I know that God still has hope in me. I feel like my real faith statement isn't about my beliefs. It's my story, which still isn't finished. It's my way of saying, I have been shown the path, now I need to walk it and find my way to God.

Ephesians 1:17-19

I pray that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you a spirit of wisdom and revelation as you come to know him, so that, with the eyes of your heart enlightened, you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance among the saints, and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power for us who believe, according to the working of his great power.



Caitlin

"Anima"

Baptized:

August 1, 1993

Prince of Peace Lutheran
Fremont, CA

Spiritual Gifts:

- Hospitality
- Giving
- Intercession
- Listening
- Mercy
- Administration
- Advocacy
- Drama
- Music
- Discernment

Before confirmation, my faith in God only appeared in church. It never occurred to me that my faith in God followed me to all places, whether it be at school, at a friend's house or even on vacations. When I started attending confirmation, I realized that my faith followed me wherever I went. In school I started praying for A's on tests and projects. When we went on a vacation, I would pray to God to keep me and my family safe. Before I knew it, I was praying to God for a lot of different things. When I was having my dental screws placed in my jaw, I was praying to God to keep me safe and to get me through it in one piece. I believe God is always with me, even when I am not aware of it. He is always beside me guiding me in my life. He will never leave. A verse from the Bible that helped me draw this conclusion is from Psalm 23, "The Divine Shepherd": *The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want. He makes me lie down in green pastures; He leads me beside still waters, He restores my soul. He leads me in right paths for his name's sake.*

God is with you when times are good and when times are hard. This is something I will always believe in. With my parents' help, I have been able to form my life into a life with God. I believe He has given me many talents. Sometime when I have piano recitals, I can feel God's presence with me.

Now in my third and last year of confirmation, my faith and belief in God has grown to where I know that He has been and always will be with me even when I'm not praying or asking to help and guide me.

Psalm 23:1-3

The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want. He makes me lie down in green pastures; he leads me beside still waters; he restores my soul. He leads me in right paths for his name's sake.



Megan
"Steve"

Baptized:
June 15, 1993
St. Catherine Church
Morgan Hill, CA

Spiritual Gifts:

- Service
- Leadership
- Hospitality
- Artistry
- Drama
- Writing
- Administration
- Encouragement
- Faith
- Intercession

Faith is said to be a journey. My particular journey has had many twists and turns and it's been a pretty bumpy ride. I have struggled with my faith for a long time. I have had many doubts, but I would never voice them. If asked, I would always say that I was Christian and that I believed that Jesus died to save us from our sin, but sometimes that was a lie. For the past two years especially I have gone back and forth between belief and disbelief. I did believe that there was a God and that He was the creator, that never changed, but a lot of the time the concept of Heaven did not make any sense and was not logical to me. I was confused, I felt lost, and I constantly prayed for God to give me some sign of existence and to help me believe. But it seemed like I was never getting a response back. I mean, it had been two years and I was still struggling. Where was God? Why wasn't He answering me? I was frustrated and angered with God for the longest time and it wasn't until a few weeks ago when I finally felt that I got the sign I had been praying for.

Confirmation was drawing very near and I was trying to write my faith testament, but the words just weren't coming out. Your statement of faith is supposed to be a way for you to express to others exactly what you believe. Seems simple enough right? The only problem was that I wasn't sure of what I believed. I was pretty sure that the congregation wouldn't want to hear a speech on how I was getting confirmed even though my doubts completely outweighed my faith. I tried writing it for a very long time but I couldn't think of anything. It was extremely frustrating... And then I got a text with a simple message saying, "wuts up?" from one of my friends. I told him that I was trying to write my statement of faith and that I was having trouble with it, so he decided to call me to help me out. We started talking for a while trying to figure out what I should write, but it was not working out too well. Whenever he would ask me a question about what I believed my response was

almost always, "I don't know." So he told me about his faith, what he believed, and the ways that God had blessed him in his life.

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I asked him a few questions, told him some of my thoughts about faith, and soon I was completely immersed in the conversation. I told him about my doubts and my struggles and how I felt like God would never answer me. I told him about my constant prayers for a sign that I felt would never come and I eventually had a total meltdown and began crying over the phone. A realization had kicked in. I had no idea what I believed and I was getting confirmed in a few weeks! I didn't know what to do, I was completely lost. I spilled out my heart to my friend and told him everything I was feeling. He stayed up with me like a true friend until 1:30 in the morning, listening and reassuring me that everything would be fine. Then, when I finally hung up the phone, he told me that he would pray for me and that he'd be there if I ever needed to talk. After that, things seemed a little better. Listening to how strong my friend's belief was really made me think about my own. I really believe that God was with me that day, working through my friend, I may not have realized it until a few days later, but I think that I got the sign I had been praying for.

So obviously, I still don't have all of the answers. And I still have doubts. But I do believe that God exists, I believe that He is always with us, and if we believe that His son died for our sins then we will have eternal life through him.

Philippians 4:8

Finally, beloved, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is pleasing, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things.



Anna

“Still Learning”

Baptized:

*March 22, 2008
Advent Lutheran
Morgan Hill, CA*

Spiritual Gifts:

- *Intergenerational Openness*
- *Dance*
- *Music*
- *Writing*
- *Administration*
- *Evangelism*
- *Leadership*
- *Pastoring*
- *Advocacy*
- *Teaching*

My story of faith began at CMT. It was the summer after first grade and my mother had signed me up for a show as a way of summer daycare. I am sure the fact that it was at the Lutheran Church and led by a family friend was just a lovely bonus. I don't remember much of that first year just a feeling. "But memory is an abstract painting it does not presents things as they are but rather as they feel." (Eugenia Collier) And I remember the feeling of love the most. Of love and caring, a feeling of welcome and joy. I was mesmerized and drawn into this feeling. It soon became a yearly thing to do CMT and I began to make really great friends.

But I have to say even though CMT really drew me into the church it wasn't till seventh grade that I actually began to come to church and experience God. I should really give thanks to Alyce for bringing me to confirmation and giving me the confidence to go to a strange but welcoming church. Here I have met so many great people that have taught me so much: like Marianne Glover who has taught me love and Emma, Megan, Michelle, and Alyce who have taught me friendship, and countless other things or my Sunday school teachers who have showed and explained God's word and promises to me. But you all have brought me in to the family of Christ. I am forever thankful! Anyways so I began to go to confirmation and learn about the Bible, Luther, and God. But it is more than just learning and attending it's believing and having faith.

You know why I think believing and having faith are so hard to obtain? It's because they are so great and powerful it has to take work to achieve. It takes being comfortable enough to put all of yourself out there and ready to accept, to defeat the great antagonist doubt. But even after this how do you know? "I believe but do I believe enough" (Will my house stand) it's not like you go to church enough times and believe. This I think is the true statement of faith. But you know what I figured out? You will never stop doubting. I think it's the doubts that make your faith stronger, the ability to overcome all the doubt that is faith. And I have defiantly overcome doubt. Do you ever get this feeling of readiness? It's hard to explain: what do you feel when the indescribable thoughts of your faith are said aloud through the words of God? What do you feel when you are singing and the light comes through the windows onto your face? When you look into the faces around you and all you see and feel is love for them? I feel ready. I have decided that this feeling burns out the doubt.

I know what you are thinking your faith can't be just a feeling. But I think what I am feeling is the presence of God. I say it's a feeling only because I can't describe it any other way but I just know that it's something so amazing that it has to be God. And I think He is telling me to love and spread the word and promises. MY faith statement is the realization of my connection and love for God and his people. The faith that I know he is here and I know "For by faith you have been saved through grace and this is not your own doing but the gift of God" (Ephesians 2)

Ephesians 2:8

For it is by grace you
have been saved, through
faith, and this is not your
own doing; it is the gift of
God...



Michelle

“Me-Shell”

Baptized:

*November 7, 1993
Advent Lutheran
Morgan Hill, CA*

Spiritual Gifts:

- *Artistry*
- *Intergenerational Openness*
- *Listening*
- *Intercession*
- *Dance*
- *Discernment*
- *Evangelism*
- *Hospitality*
- *Faith*
- *Music*

When I started confirmation, I never thought that I would be able to find God through it. I even questioned how God would be able to work himself into my life. When I started High School I knew that the next four years were going to be the most important, and trying years of my life. I knew that I needed God in my life in order to make it through my high school years as the person I wanted to be!

A close friend and I decided we wanted to be in a club, and what better club than Christian club. They were talking about this event that was coming up, and it involved the Christian community at Sobrato meeting at the flag pole in the front of the school. It was amazing, and the fact that everyone at school (as they were arriving) saw us out there praising God just made it all the more better. After this event one of the leaders of Christian club invited my close friend and I to her youth group that night. We went and we both felt the presence of God in and around us. God really took a hold of me and kind of shook me and said “You need me in your life.” This hasn’t been the only time he’s said this to me.

There have been countless times when I thought, “I’m so alone” or, “No one understands what I’m going through, they aren’t me, they don’t know me well enough.” At those points I would pray, and it usually paid off! I would feel better, and life would go on. This year I ran into a pretty big predicament. You know the usual high school drama, but it was one case of it after the other. It got to be too much for me. So I disconnected myself from my friends, my family, and God. I became a hermit! Everybody around me would ask me what was wrong, and I wouldn’t tell them. I would just say, “Nothing,” shrug my shoulders and be done with it. But then a couple of my close friends realized that something was seriously wrong with me.

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I went back to the church where God's presence filled me, and that's when I broke down. I told my friends everything, and they prayed for me. They told me I should pray to, and that it would make me feel much less depressed. I prayed, and I prayed, and I prayed some more. Finally, my prayers were answered. I made up with the friend that I had the drama with, and it seemed like everything was going to be okay.

About maybe a couple of weeks ago, so recently, I felt like I was losing myself. I was becoming a different person, someone I didn't like, a person who couldn't talk to her friends, her family, or even God about anything. I decided that I needed to step back, and see what was making me change. The truth is, I don't even know what was making me change, but I asked God to help me get back to who I was. Through some miracle, God worked his answer through my friends, and family. They helped me realize that I could talk to them, about anything and everything. I also realized that God is there even if I don't realize that he is. He is always there, working to help me, and is also there when I need him. The verse from Mathew 28:20 says: "I will always be with you." This helps me to realize that God is actually always there with me!

Now that I'm getting confirmed, I wanted to think about what it really means to me to get confirmed. To me getting confirmed doesn't mean that you are officially a part of the church that you're attending, because I'm sure that God doesn't keep score on what church you went to and how many years you went to confirmation. To me it means that you are officially accepting you're place in God's family, as well as his heart. Today I'd just like to say... GOD I am here, and I'm telling you that I accept being a part of your family. My journey through confirmation has been long and hard, but I'm glad that it was. It's changed my life for ever. Now I'm ready to walk the rest of my path of faith, with God as my guide.

Matthew 28:19-20

Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.



Matt

“Many names (God doesn’t want us to be labeled with one characteristic)”

Baptized:

*March 27, 1993
St. Catherine Church
Morgan Hill, CA*

Spiritual Gifts:

- Hospitality
- Service
- Technological Skill
- Intergenerational Openness
- Listening
- Leadership
- Encouragement
- Administration
- Mercy
- Drama

Honestly when I sat down to right my statement, I had no idea what I should write about. I thought I could write about how Jesus has been with me in whatever I do or about how I find God in my daily life. But I decided to write about how I came to believe in God.

When I was little, my mom would wake me up early on Sunday and say we are going to church and everyday I would fall out of bed and say WHY!! Then she signed us up for confirmation class which was really boring at first. But over the years I got used to going to confirmation classes and church. I enjoyed hearing the hearing Isaiah say PASTOR WARNER!!! I also enjoyed listening to the sermon and enjoying God’s word. I was getting my weekly recommended allowance of the bible. But now I am finishing confirmation class it is going to be harder to learn about God and His important life lessons. Connecting God’s word to my

daily life was hard for me. I could never “put two and two together”. I mean I’ll still be going to church and learning about God just not as often. Although I’m losing an hour and a half of God time I can still learn about God, just not as often. It is unfortunate how we aren’t going to confirmation to learn about God. But there are still plenty of other places where I can learn about God.

I thought I would get off the leaving confirmation subject and get onto a topic about my favorite Bible verse called The Whole Armor of God and it goes a little something like this. Finally, be strong in the lord and in the strength of his power. Put on the whole armor of God, so that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the Devil. For our struggle so not against enemies of blood and flesh, but against the authorities, against the cosmic powers of this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. Therefore take up The Whole Armor of God, so that you may be able to withstand on that evil day, and having done everything to stand firm. Stand therefore, an fasten the belt of truth around your waist, and put on the breastplate of righteousness as shoes for your feet put on whatever will make you ready to proclaim the gospel of peace. With all of these, take the shield of faith, with

which you will be able to quench all the flaming arrows of the evil one.

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Take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the spirit which is the word of god. Pray in the spirit at all times in every prayer and supplication to that end keep alert and always persevere in supplication for all the saints. Pray also for me, so that when I speak, a message may be given to make known with boldness the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains. Pray that I declare it boldly as I must speak.

What a lovely story. I love this because for one I am a boy, when someone says that the Bible involves flaming arrows and a sword of the Spirit I will usually pay attention. Also this says to me that life is a constant battle whether is against the Devil or a battle with yourself. Some people say the armor of God is God's way of protecting you this is true, God can protect you from anything so if the armor protects you from the devil and the armor of is gods word then we don't have to fear the devil The armor of God or is a way to protect yourself from all the evils in the world. These battles can be against stress at work or school, it can be problems with colleagues or class mates or a battle against the Devil. The armor of God is the way to find peace and relieve stress. If you have a major problem that no one can answer or you are really stressed out and cant find any peace of mind go pick up the Bible and read something you haven't read. You never know the Bible might just be that peace of mind you needed.

Ephesians 6:13 -18

Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints.



Sam

"Artist of God"

Baptized:

March 27, 1993

*St. Catherine Church
Morgan Hill, CA*

Spiritual Gifts:

- *Artistry*
- *Intergenerational Openness*
- *Skilled Craft*
- *Discernment*
- *Evangelism*
- *Faith*
- *Giving*
- *Hospitality*
- *Knowledge*
- *Mercy*

I've always liked going to church and going to Youth group, they have told me a lot about God, Jesus, the 10 Commandments, and helped me understand what I believe in today. I remember, one time when we were in Confirmation class and we were highlighting verses in our bibles. While we did this, there was a section in Revelation 21:6 where God said "It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end..." I remembered that Alpha and Omega are the first and last letters in the Greek Alphabet. So then I thought God is the beginning and the end. He was there when the universe was formed and He will be there when the universe ends. He is there when we were born and He is there when we die. This means to me that God will always be there for me, even if I don't know it at the time. God will never abandon his children for anything; He loves us all the same.

In my faith journey I have had some bumps in the road like track, homework or being sick, but I've gotten through it all and here I am today, reading my testimony of faith. I remember when I started this journey, I was in Seventh grade and my mom asked me if I would like to do youth group. Well at first I was a little skeptical, but my mom said it would be a good way to get closer to God. I accepted in the end, on the first day it was a little awkward, but eventually everyone got to know each other and we all became friends. Over the years it has been fun doing youth group with everyone, especially doing the fellowship events. I'm kind of sad that we won't be doing confirmation anymore because I had a lot of fun just hanging out with Youth Group friends, but it will be nice to have some free time and I can still go to bible study. I have learned from Confirmation that there are many ways to teach people the way of God and that learning about God can be fun and maybe in a year or so I can be a leader for a Confirmation Class

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I think the calling God gives me is to be an animator because I like to draw and I like making things come to life. I remember every Sunday after my sermon notes I would draw on the back of it. I would listen to the sermon then it would be like God would send me a picture in my head and then I would draw it. God helped me advance in my art. One time when I was in bible study Casey was reading a bible verse and while she was reading this an image started to form in my head of Jesus standing in a doorway of light, surrounded by darkness and his Disciples were standing on either side of him. Then Casey asked me if I could draw a picture to symbolize this verse for church, so I said yes. I drew it and it is now in the back of the church. God has given me the gift of creativity and I plan to use it to make children happy all over the world with the animated movies I will hopefully make in the future.

Many of people have affected my journey of faith in my life. I would like to thank my mother and father for helping me keep on track and taking my brother and I to youth group every Wednesday, my brother for coming with me, my Aunty Roe and Uncle Chris, my Uncle Nicky and Aunt Mary, and all my six cousins, for being good role models about the church and always coming to big events to support my brother and I through our Journey of Faith. I would also like to thank my deceased Grandpa Caputo and Grandpa Glover, and Grandma Caputo and Grandma Glover for always being with me in spirit. I thank and love them all.

Revelation 21:5b, 6

See, I am making all things new... I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. To the thirsty I will give water as a gift from the spring of the water of life.



James

"Forgiven"

Baptized:

December 20, 1992

*Immaculate Heart of Mary
Santa Ana, CA*

Spiritual Gifts:

- Intergenerational Openness
- Skilled Craft
- Technological Skill
- Listening
- Administration
- Advocacy
- Hospitality
- Service
- Encouragement
- Faith

One thing that sparks my heart is seeing everyone and everything that our God has created. It just makes me feel so well and warm inside. Cause when I see the life that He has created I know that He will always love us and never in a million years leave us in the dark. He will always give us light in the world and take the darkness out of this imperfect place.

The spark inside my heart grows every day from God helping me with his guidance and seeing what He does for the world, gives us new life, light, and fun. The little nudge that I get from God is everywhere in my body. From head to toe I can feel His presence. God is transforming my heart by always being there when I need him and listening to me when I ever have any questions. He gives me answers when I need them. Every day God is changing my view in the world by giving us a new day in our life and creating and making peace between countries and destroying the darkness.

My spark turned into a flame when I saw that God was there when I need Him when I was five. I had hurt my head really bad and He was there and heard me cry for his help and He came and stopped my bleeding, and healed me, then I realized He will never leave me when I am in need.

My faith gets excited every day. Because I see God everywhere in the flowers, in the sky, the sun, and in the stars. And that makes me want to read more of the Bible cause that light that God gives me is the Bible and answers my questions when I need it and my faith grows from that. From learning about what He does to help us with our life that makes my flame touch me. My faith leads me out to the world from seeing what God does for me and gives to me. My faith in a way gives me that extra jump to believe in what God does for us. That flame in the faith touches me everyday by showing and telling me what to do in my life and guiding me. Also when I learn more about God my faith jumps and that flame gets bigger every time.

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My flame became a raging fire a couple of years ago, when Katrina hit New Orleans. I saw that when there was great darkness God still shows His light when we need it. He sent lots of joy and love to the people who were devastated and had no hope whatsoever. Everyday God is calling me out in the world from giving us a new day, new life, and new light. He is calling me out to help those who need light. And when there is new life, God needs our help to guide them to and to help them when they need it. Also that God gives us glory when we help out others and guide them with the Ten Commandments. When we accomplish these things we can also feel like angels cause we are in Gods eyes.

2 Corinthians 4:6

For it is the God who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.



From the moment I was born, I was a Christian. I suppose you could argue that I was a Christian even before that, since my mother attended the Lutheran seminary in Chicago during my embryonic development. I was baptized at the age of one month at First Lutheran Church of the Trinity in Chicago, Illinois, so I obviously do not remember it, though apparently I hiccupped during the entire process. My parents and I became a part of Advent Lutheran Church when I was just over a year old, so therefore I have always chosen to be (and also forced to be) an active member here. Whether I was playing in the nursery, acting in Christian Music Theatre plays, going to Sunday school, singing in Pacem Children's choir, running the sound and lights board, singing in Teen Choir, acting in sermon skits, going to confirmation, fundraising for youth events, working at the Navajo Mission in Arizona, or helping with little jobs around church, I have always been an active and faithful Christian. I suppose that this was notably because of my mom's pastor position in the church. However, I know that I have taken my own personal and individual journey in my faith...with the guidance of

several dynamic mentors of course. Some of these mentors include my entire extended family, my dad Marc Northcott, my mom Anita Warner, Lowell and Judy Johnson, Debbie James, Jennifer Hamilton, Janet Renick, the Johanson family, the Zappe family, the Paulsen family, Casey Carlson, Bruce Naylor, Virginia Haberkamp, the Berkland family, all of the Siver-sons, Lamar Nix, and countless others.

I was never one for reading the Bible. Even as a younger child, I did not take particular interest in the holy book. Through weekly confirmation classes over the past three years, this has changed, but I still rarely find myself reading the Bible in my spare time. I enjoy reading the Bible much more now, and I like discussing the Word with others, but I still don't read it very often. I had seriously doubts about some of the content of the Bible, and I still have not discovered the complete answers to these issues. I think the foundation for my beliefs that are stated in the Bible itself are that there is one God and the Holy Trinity, that Jesus died to save us from our sins, and that God created everything for a purpose, and that he wants us to live out his word in everything we do based upon our faith. Some of my controversies and questions include the following: What happened to those who died before Jesus was crucified to give us eternal life? Which is true, evolution or creation? Or both? How is it possible for God to have always been there? Does God really forgive all our sins?

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Emma

"That one pastor's daughter named Emma who is kinda crazy but I love her."

Baptized:

*April 10, 1993
First Lutheran Church of the
Trinity
Chicago, Illinois*

Spiritual Gifts:

- *Artistry*
- *Drama*
- *Music*
- *Writing*
- *Administration*
- *Leadership*
- *Evangelism*
- *Wisdom*
- *Intergenerational Openness*
- *Listening*

Casey Carlson, one of my dynamic mentors, told me to look up Psalm 139 to seek an answer to this last question. Basically, it says that God is our creator and knows us better than we know ourselves, and that he challenges us with our utterly imperfect humanity, but in turn forgives our sins.

This brought some conclusion to this particular question, but there are still many parts of the Bible that I disagree with. For example, I refuse to believe that it is a sin to be a homosexual person, as many Christians believe. I think God created all people the way he did for a reason, and this is perhaps my biggest controversy with the Bible, or rather some peoples' "biblical reference" that in my opinion is false. I find great solace and comfort in most of the Bible, but I think the reason I hold many issues with it because although it is God's word, it is expressed through human thought and meaning, which always is and always will be imperfect.

My lack of interest in the Bible in previous years may have been due to my infinite struggle with the idea that God would answer my prayers in ways that would assist me in seeking insight into the solution to my problems. I often would become frustrated with my faith endeavor, because I prayed all the time but never thought I was receiving answers. I knew I had the support of those in my faith community, but I felt inexplicably alone. I would still pray and ask God for help and guidance, but I ultimately turned to my friends for this support. When I was having a problem, my parents would tell me to ask God about it, and I would be screaming in fury on the inside because I was sure that God wouldn't answer, but I would just say "Okay" and walk away. I would pray and pray and would become extremely frustrated and disappointed when God didn't answer my prayers. However, in the last year of confirmation, I realized that God had chosen a different path of faith for me. I discovered and took comfort in the idea that God really was speaking to me, but in ways that I wasn't open to seeing before. I understood that perhaps God didn't necessarily feel the need to answer me in direct ways. I became accustomed to the idea that maybe he was speaking to me through the guidance of my friends and family, or was revealing the solutions to me in ways I failed to even recognize.

Lately, I have been searching through the Bible furiously to find a verse that I think intricately details what my journey of faith has entailed. It didn't take long for me to find Ephesians 2: 8-10. "8 For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— 9 not by works, so that no one can boast. 10 For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do." As soon as I read this quote, I was completely filled with a sinfully amazing (no pun intended) joy. I knew immediately that God had been fulfilling me with this knowledge for quite some time. I knew that God had directed me to be his faithful servant, and to do his will by helping those in need and spreading his word. I am particularly intrigued by the part of the verse that says my faith is not from myself, but it is a gift of God. This revealed to me that God is constantly working through me, and knows my heart. He has a plan for my faith, and the only decision I make in this faith journey is to allow God to lead the way. So although it took me fifteen years to come to this realization, I know that God has been ameliorating me in my faith from the moment I was baptized into his body of Christ and his believers. I was a tiny baby when I was baptized. Now, as a maturing fifteen year old, I am choosing for myself to be confirmed into God's fellowship of believers. I know that I have been saved from my sins and myself in Christ's resurrection, and through God's eternal grace I commend myself in living out his word in everything I do for the rest of my human life.

Ephesians 2: 8-10

For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith – and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God – not by works, so that no one can boast. For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.



My name is Simon Schmidt-Senior, I am 14 years old and this is my statement of faith.

How I Grew Up

I grew up in a home where religion wasn't the highest priority, the only people that taught me about God were my grandparents and my mom occasionally. My grandparents prayed with me every evening before going to bed, we prayed for our family and thanked God for the food He has provided us and the privileges he has given us. I always had religion in school but I got taught about more than one religion all the time! The only time I went to church was on Christmas and Easter.

When we moved to England I kind of didn't get to go to church anymore. Until we found our village church we started going on occasions again. The day I got into Christianity was when I

met our new school pastor, Pastor Markus, in Denmark (We moved again) and he told the whole class about Christianity and a different way of believing! I got very fascinated and the day he told me there were confirmation classes I wanted to go. I went to church every second Sunday of the month, which was when we had our confirmation class. We learned more and more about the Bible and about Jesus and I really started to love the person that relieves us from all our sins. But then I had to move to America and it took me a while to find a church.

The day on my birthday was one of the best days of my life because I met Casey our confirmation group leader who told me about the classes. I was very excited to go and the following Wednesday I started the confirmation class in the advent Lutheran church.

The thing I like so much about the class is that we don't only learn the wonderful things about our belief but we also have a great group with very nice people and we all have a lot of fun together which made the confirmation class even more fun! I definitely want to carry on going to a church group because it is such a nice thing.

Simon

"Mixxy"

Baptized:

March 19, 1994

*Evangelical Lutheran
Bitburg*

Spiritual Gifts:

- *Administration*
- *Evangelism*
- *Hospitality*
- *Service*
- *Skilled craft*
- *Leadership*
- *Mercy*
- *Faith*
- *Giving*
- *Exhortation*

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I believe that God will forgive us all our sins and I love Jesus for the great things he has done for us when he came to earth and showed the people what Christianity is and what it means to be a Christian. He died for us on the cross so we can be forgiven! I love God, Jesus and the Holy Spirit!

How God Has Changed My Life

God has changed my life in many ways. Everyday I am thankful for being able to live in such a nice house and that I am so privileged to have enough food every day. I am a lot happier than before and I want to help people on the street and anywhere else if they struggle. I like to look at a beautiful garden or a nice landscape and say thank you God that you have made such beauty for all of us to see!

Philippians 4:4-7

Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice. Let your gentleness be known to everyone. The Lord is near. Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

