

WGUMC May 4, 2014 "Letter to a Young Christian"  
Confirmation Sunday

I have been so excited! This is a ministry first for me. I've never confirmed anywhere near 17 youth all in one day. With a couple of baptisms to boot, this is one happy pastor today! I thought instead of a sermon, I would read a brief letter to the confirmands and their congregation, a kind of baccalaureate address, I guess. Here goes:

Dear Young Christian,

Even though I may not know you very well, I'm so very proud of what you're doing today. [With the exception of my daughter] I have known you at most for three years, but I know that you've grown a lot in that time. You are not a kid anymore. And I have a good idea that you are anxious to be making your own decisions and calling your own shots. Thanks to your parents, you don't get to do a lot of that, but tell them that the new regime begins today. Spiritually speaking, your parents got you to this point, and I hope you occasionally thank them

for that, but confirmation is entirely your decision. Your folks can do a lot of things for you, but they can't have faith for you. This step can be taken by no one but you.

Now this step involves, as our hymnbook says, making a confession of Jesus Christ as your Savior, putting your whole trust in his grace and promising to serve him as your Lord. You will soon be making that confession even though you have little idea of what it means. No matter. Neither did I. When I was a teenager, older than you, I wrote that believing in Jesus Christ meant for me that I believed in a Something that was bigger and better than me and all of humanity.

But even if Jesus is only a Something for you, that's a whole lot better than a nothing. Just don't stop at a "something." Keep your heart open to God and open to going new places, meeting new people, learning new stuff, and one day that "Something" will be a "Someone." Then the love that we are always talking about in church will grow some legs.

Jesus will start to be real for you and faith will be a joy and giving and serving will be a passion, as long as you're still on the way.

But you have to find a way to stick with it. You made a commitment to be at confirmation class, so you already know that it is possible, when you really want to, to find time for God in your life. But this is going to be a challenge for you your whole life.

What you don't need right now are parents who can't find time for God in their life. You see, we've been telling you that faith is a life-long journey. So it won't help you one bit if the adults in your life act as if everything they ever needed to know they learned in confirmation. Cause it ain't true. No matter our age, there is a lot of learning for every one of us to do. Let me tell you something: the best thing your parents can do for your spirit is to take care of their own. And once you are

confirmed, you have my permission to remind them of that anytime you want. "Mom, Dad, go get some God time!"

But there's another decision to be made here. You aren't just deciding to confirm your faith. You're also deciding to join the church, and you are doing that even though you know church is sometimes boring. But just because the people in the church and the pastor can be boring, don't you ever think God is. Simply demand that the grownups around here act as if God were the very best and most exciting thing that ever happened to them, because that IS true.

So when you become a member of this church, feel free to stir up some Spirit and kick up some Christ around here. We need you to, even if some of us don't want you to. Sadly, sometimes we can run into problems with other people at church, but don't bother looking for a church where all the members are perfect in love. That would be a church full of dogs [at least dogs like mine]. In *this* church full of people,

we're still learning how to love and to forgive. And so are you, so you're in good company.

One more thing: I know that you'll grow more and learn more in this church if you have more questions than you have answers about God. Sometimes teenagers think they know it all, but I guarantee you that as you get older you will start to feel dumber. What I mean by that is that as the years go by, God just keeps getting more mysterious, life keeps getting more complicated, prayers keep getting more urgent, and grace keeps getting more amazing. I studied God in college for 16 years and I've been a pastor for 25. I'm sure that I have no more answers today than I thought I did on the day I was confirmed, but I have some really great questions and they keep getting filled up with God.

My friend, I can't wait to watch you grow and get filled up with God. I can't wait for you to discover that you are the only one who can be the person God created you to be. I can't wait

to see what God is going to do in you and through you. In fact,  
the whole world is waiting for you. Go in grace. Go in peace.