

## **Pentecost Sunday**

May 15, 2016

Haven Lutheran Church Hagerstown MD

Readings: 1 Corinthians 12: 1-13; Acts 2: 1-21

On Pentecost Sunday 2016 two Haven teens made a public Affirmation of Faith, often called "Confirmation." In place of the sermon, the confirmands read "Statements of Faith," essays prepared for the occasion. Using a Bible verse meaningful to them, they each wrote about what was of great importance to them about God, faith and their relationship with God. May you be blessed and inspired by their words, hearts and faith.

God's peace, Pastor Linda M. Alessandri

### **Statements of Faith**

Hello, I'm Anna Bergschneider. The Bible verse I selected for my confirmation is from the twelfth chapter of First Corinthians:

*"Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit;  
and there are varieties of services, but the same Lord;  
and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same  
God who activates all of them in everyone."*

The verse to me at first seemed cliché, but once I read it over multiple times, I understood the verse, as I interpreted it, to mean this: God gives many gifts and there are also a variety of ways to service in the world, and so many activities in this world that listing them all couldn't ever be done. But God chooses which gift(s) you have and, through the Holy Spirit, leads you to services and activities that can use those gifts. It is God who makes our gifts, service and activities possible. I always have seen this in me, and I'm about to explain how this is.

You see, I'm a band geek, who does have two other talents. I can also act and sing, though, with some, the singing has always been debatable. But I AM good at the saxophone. I love music. My other talents are really great, but they just don't compare. We all know the repurposed phrase, "born to" and then you fill in the blank with whatever you are good at, but I haven't said that once. I know any gifts I have are from God. I have doubted my number one talent of music, but it is the one that God gave me with the intent that it goes to good use.

The kind of service that I sense God thinks is a good use of my gift of music (and I agree with God on this) is that I should become a band teacher who can lead her band to get a superior or excellent score at large ensemble festival. If we somehow end up with a less than stellar score and we have another festival coming up, I will lead the band through it step by step, to help each band member use their gifts better.

The last point in my verse is the activities to which the Spirit leads us to use our gifts well. For me, a band geek, these activities this year have been marching band, percussion ensemble (in which I was learning a new instrument) and Jazz Band. I also took part in an extracurricular concert in February, contributing what I can to the band. Being in the band and the other activities that go along with it is really fun, which, is what seems to happen when you use the gifts God has given you to bring goodness into the world. I do well in these activities, and I'll give the credit to God to whom it is due.

Yes, practice matters in developing your gifts. Service and activities are tied with your gift. God gave each and every one of us gifts--- I think, for me, one gift outshines the rest for a reason. You do what you can with it. From what I understand, God gives us guidelines for what we do

with our gifts so we don't go too crazy, we stay on the difficult but right path and we don't take shortcuts. I confess I try to take shortcuts all the time, all the time, and it gets me nowhere. That's not what God wants us to do. God gives us gifts and we can excel at them but maybe not right away. The strongest gift is likely the one where we'll have the most trials and errors, but will lead to the career or the service we might not have thought of pursuing at first, but then **we find out we like it.**

**This is where my message ties together The service and activities** we do tie to our gifts. Our gifts, service and activities are given so that we can serve the world and God. I am Anna Bergschneider, and I approve that message and give thanks to God.

*Anna Bergschneider* 1 Corinthians 12: 4-6

### **“For we walk by faith not by sight.”**

From the start of confirmation I have struggled with finding a Bible verse. I had heard verses that I liked, but none spoke to me except for this one. I have spent a long time trying to figure out what this means. When I finally did, I saw the verse through a whole new light.

Most people have never really seen God. We all see him in others and in the world around us, but no one has ever really seen his face. For some people that is what they need to believe in something. They need to be able to see it, but not for me. I can feel God and I see him in others actions, when you hear stories of someone being healed of sickness or someone is rescued from disaster for that is God's hands at work.

When you walk by faith you don't need proof you just have to have hope and put your trust in God. Sometimes this can be difficult not knowing what is going to happen or how something is going to work out. You start to drift away from God. To walk by faith means that you have to be okay with not seeing the future or always knowing the answer. You have to have faith in God that it will be alright because it is part of his plan for you. To be able to walk by faith you have to take a leap, close your eyes and allow God to lead the way down this

winding path that we call life. You have to take his hand and not be afraid of what is to come. And if you start to waver, open your eyes --- God will just remind you to have faith that it will all be okay.

I don't need to be able to see God. He speaks and shows himself to me in much more meaningful ways. I am not a perfect Christian. I sin on a daily basis but one thing that I will never do is need proof of God. I will just have faith that everything will be okay because my life is in God's hands. Through all my doubt and struggles, he will be there. I have faith that when I die there is a life after death with God. I have faith that with all of the challenges that are to come ahead, God will be there. And I have faith that even though I can't see God he is really there. Who needs to be able to see God or have proof of him when you have him by your side and you have faith in your heart?

*Abby Byers* 2 Corinthians 5:7