It's a beautiful image – let me tell you the story behind it…

When each confirmation cohort begins in November, I begin to start talking with our confirmands about *Future You*. "You should write this down for *Future You*." "*Future You* is going to want to remember this." "Just wait until you turn into *Future You*." Throughout the fall, we explore how we know about God (Scripture, metaphor, Spiritual autobiography). In the winter, we turn to who God is (God, Jesus, the Holy Spirit, Trinity). And as spring emerges, we dive into how we respond to who God is (everything from church to sacraments to Spiritual gifts). All the while, I keep banging the drum for *Future You*.

In late April, we come to the confirmation retreat. It's the capstone element of the experience, as we head to Montreat to spend time crafting our individual statements of faith and doubt, and then working as a group to write a statement we all can affirm. We reflect on all the topics and ideas we've covered since the leaves were brown. We introduce the concept of a confession (or creed) and why our Presbyterian tradition values them so much. Then we give each confirmand the time and space to write out by hand their own statement.

That is the moment that *Future You* becomes *Present You*. For some of them, like Leone (pictured here), that moment is on a large rock in Flat Creek. For others, it's on a couch in the rental house. For the few that have to miss the weekend, it's later, in their room at home. It is the time when they try to put together words they can say out loud about who God is, what they believe (or doubt), the importance of a community of faith, and what their faith might look like in the days going forward. Like any statement of faith, it speaks to a moment, and while it will guide them, it is not sufficient once and for all (just like no one meal, now matter how sumptuous, will sustain us forever). But inevitably, it will be earnest, beautiful, and authentic.

Confirmation Sunday is May 17. On that morning, I invite you to pick up a copy of our confirmands' statements of faith. (Packets will be available.) And in the meantime, send a prayer toward the mountains, especially this Saturday in the midafternoon.

Grace & Peace,
John