

Confirmation Class of 2020



*Statements of
FAITH*

Sophie Barron

Mentor, Shea Chambers

And now these three remain: faith, hope, and love. But the greatest of these is love, 1 Corinthians 13:13. To me this says it all, that there is nothing better/bigger than love, because without love we would all be alone and sad 24/7. Why mention love? I mention love because at church and throughout my faith journey I have found love in every place I turn whether that be at home, school, church, or any other place/time in my life. In relation to faith, I see love most in God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit, from whom we have learned about love and seen it first hand. God loved the world and the people in it so much that he willingly gave up his only son to make sure we all lived in a world with grace and forgiveness. And Jesus gave up his life so that that was possible for us as well. *For God so loved the world that he gave his only son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish,* John 3:16. And now because of all this I have the Holy Spirit who I can feel with me all the time, in the best and worst times of my life, no matter what. Throughout my life, my faith has been a little shaky. I have some Jewish relatives and I am a ¼ Jewish as well. One of my grandmother's is a regular at church worship and other church events. My parents and sister believe somewhat in God, but their faith is not as strong as someone like my grandmothers. And while my family's faiths are all a bit different, mine has grown and developed into something personal and meaningful. For me, church has always stuck even if I didn't love it when I was younger, I was always more eager to do something with the church. Having done confirmation, I realized how important faith really is in my life. It is one of those things that is always there for you to believe in even in the darkest of times or when no one else believes in you. To me, the Bible is an interesting thing and almost hard to believe sometimes. I find it amazing that through the years this sacred text has been protected and continuously interpreted to gain wisdom and understanding. I am a huge history geek and so things like this are very cool to think about in the sense of how remarkable it is that thousands of years later we are still reading this sacred book that gives us great insight into the world Jesus is from and the world God created for us. I believe service is an incredibly important part of faith and life in general. So many people and animals, and even our planet need our help, but we are so focused on ourselves and how many followers we have that we forget the important lesson Jesus taught us: *Just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it for me.* Matthew 25:40 . I believe that Baptism is a promise that your parents and church family are going to raise you in the Christian faith and that you have been adopted into the family of God. I believe that Communion is something that celebrates Jesus and all of us. We celebrate by remembering the last supper that Jesus and his disciples shared before he was crucified. Every time you receive communion you can see the sense of community around you and with you as you celebrate the person who sacrificed everything so that your life was full of...

Sophie Barron Continued...

love, hope, and faith. At the end of a good and wonderful life, there is the thing that no one wants to talk about: death. In my opinion, fear is a huge part of life and faith and it is hard to live life without it. I am scared of death, especially deaths of the people I love, but I know that God has a plan for me and that as followers of Christ, we are joined in his resurrection. I am scared for what is going to happen to me and everyone/everything around me, but I feel more prepared for it because I know God is there for me as he has always been and will always be.

Gram Chambers

Mentor, Corey Shanks

I believe in God the Father who created me to best serve him and his people.

I believe in Christ the only son of God who devoted his life to teaching us the ways of his father and died so that all of our sins may be forgiven.

I believe in the Holy Spirit who will counsel and lead me in the ways of the Lord.

I trust in the fact that God has a plan for me and that everything that happens is on purpose, even the sad times where death is present I trust in my love for God and his love for me. Through the church of God we may be resurrected to bring new life and love to the people around us.

I commit to worship God through studying the four gospels as they tell the story of Jesus, I will learn from the people around me and continue to discover my own personal faith. I will spend time listening to sermons and studying religious programs so that I may deepen my understanding of God and myself.

I will use the gifts he gave to me to serve all of his children. I will continue to worship God through service on work camps and ministry as I volunteer with the Avondale Adventures program. I believe that communion and prayer are meant to give you time to form a deeper understanding and relationship with God.

I believe that baptism is the promise from the elders to the children that they will guide and nurture them. Since baptism I have been nurtured by the elders and saints of my church, I pledge to spend my time guiding and nurturing all others.

Through God everyone can become Saints, by using the gifts given to us we can show compassion and kindness to others.

Owen Klepser

Mentor, Court Stephens

I believe in God as three distinct coeternal persons, that come together as one true God. God is the son, the father and the Holy Spirit who created us to live as one community. Times that I find this community is best represented are Sunday services and youth group discussions where we feel the presence of God through meaningful lessons and conversations. I believe in Jesus who became fully human to live among us and relate to our feelings but remains fully God. Jesus was the only mediator between God and man, the only one who could do so. I believe in the Holy Spirit proceeding from the father. I believe that we need a relationship with God, and that relationship is created by the presence of God, The Holy Spirit. I believe in worship, the form of communication and peace with God, most of the time done in a community, the body of Christ, the church. During these times is when I experience the true presence of God. I believe in the Bible being the holiest book, and by which God reveals his ways to us in scripture. The four gospels are each telling Jesus's story and carrying on the ideas of The Lord. I believe in saints of the Lord who call Jesus Christ their Lord and therefore are protected by him. Personally I feel that every person who makes up Avondale or our youth group is a saint because we all praise Jesus Christ our Lord during services and at youth group. Not only can we be called saints but we can also be called ministers, or servants to God and others. One personal time that I really felt like a servant to my community and God was when I was a part of a school service opportunity. A small group and I got to go to a local organization and pack meals to be distributed to the homeless population of Charlotte. While doing it, I felt great because I was serving someone other than myself and making a larger impact on our community. I believe the sacraments, communion and baptism, are the symbols of God's grace and presence constantly surrounding. I believe in communion in relation to the last supper which always reminds us what Christ has done for us and baptism, the rite of marking with holy water to symbolize our admission to the Christian church. I believe in resurrection, that after Jesus was crucified he was resurrected and as Christians we are included in that resurrection. John 14:2 "There's a place for all of us in this wonderful place and Jesus said he will bring us".

Leni Patterson

Mentor, Lisa Worf

To me God is the father of all creation.

Jesus is his son, sent to Earth to forgive us of our sins.

The Holy Spirit is faith that flows through us all.

Worship is where we come together to celebrate God and learn his teachings.

The Bible helps us to better understand the story of both God and Jesus, as well as other important spiritual figures such as David, Noah, and the twelve disciples.

Saints are holy people who can be used as examples of true faith in God, these saints were sometimes given gifts by God like Moses gaining the power to part the sea in God's name to save his people.

Ministers are servants of God.

Baptism is a sacrament used to accept new members into the church.

Spiritual life is living to adhere by God's principles the best you can.

Death is leaving the physical world to enter God's kingdom, resurrection is how Jesus was able to rise from the dead on the third day.

And life in the church is not just attending worship but living as a good and holy person who treats their neighbors with kindness.

Makayla Pride

Mentor, Lynn Wilkerson

A statement of my faith seemed simple to write. As I was typing my supposed faith statement for what I believe and understand in my faith, I had a realization of what a strong word faith is. Also, how much it meant to me. It can be hard to convey and reflect on such a deep concept. But, over this journey, I have learned more about how to understand and act upon God and his scripture. At 15 years old, I understand I'm young, learning, and growing. This has helped me realize it's okay not to have everything figured out. As humans, we are not supposed to. For some reason, I believed I was wrongful for questioning God and my faith. Now, I understand it's a normal issue to question and you should not be ashamed. As of my faith today, here is what I believe in.

I believe in one powerful almighty God, who is the creator of all things. I believe he is an all-loving God who forever lives in the holy trinity as three divine powers: the father, the son, and the holy spirit. I believe Jesus Christ was sent down to earth as God's eternal son. At first, I was questioning the topic that Jesus was divine and perfect. But after studying, now, I believe Jesus was fully human and divine. I believe he lived a sinless life, he was crucified, dead and buried. He descended into Hades. On the third day he rose again from the dead, ascended into heaven and sits on the right hand of God the Father.

Makayla Pride continued...

Makayla Pride continued...

Those who trust in him and put their faith in him will therefore have their sin penalties paid for. I believe the bible is full of scriptures from the old and new testament inspired by the holy spirit. But sometimes I question if there are errors and the stories get lost in translation. For example, Jonah is swallowed by a whale. It can be hard to believe because I have never seen anything like that. This is also another important aspect of faith because you can't see God. You have to put trust in your faith and God because when you can't observe the extraordinary miracles that we read from the bible it can be complex to contemplate that those events occurred. So, that is something that I have struggled with in my faith journey. I do believe the bible has morals or lessons to help people to learn to understand the word of God and how to practice it in your everyday life. It also can help you when you fall off track from your faith journey and helps revive your understanding of God and your faith. I turn to the bible, journaling, devotions, and mentors whenever I am looking for guidance in my everyday life and or faith. I believe every human is a sinner by nature and that we all make mistakes. I also believe the penalty for sin is eternal separation from God, and we are not capable of choosing our salvation. I believe when you put your faith and trust in Jesus Christ, as your Lord, your gift is salvation. I strongly believe God calls us to have faith in him and to love everyone always no matter what. I believe we need to have compassion for the poor, justice for the oppressed, and to always love your neighbor as yourself. I believe God has given every person their unique gifts and one of our duties as Christians is to go out and serve others with the gifts that God gave you. This has been one of my passions and joys to try to find out what gifts God has given me and how I should better use my gifts to serve the Lord.

I am still growing daily in my faith. Are there setbacks, doubts, and questions? Yes of course!! But I am probably going to have those throughout my entire faith journey. No one has everything figured out! Not even the preacher. But, I do know that God's love for us is more powerful than we can imagine. My favorite verse right now is Joshua 1:9 "Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go." I love this verse because it reminds me that God is with me always. It reminds me to also, be kind to one another, love, and to be the reason that someone smiles today. I am beyond grateful for my mentors through my faith journey so far, and I am excited to forge a stronger connection with God.

AJ Schilling

Mentor, Tom Stout

Throughout the last couple years of church service and youth group, I have learned a lot about God's work. I feel my relationship with God has been strengthened throughout these experiences, including Avondale Adventures, youth retreats, and missions.

I believe God is our savior and guide in life. He guides me through rough times and helps me to do the right thing and influence others to also do the right thing. To me God is the Holy Spirit.

I believe Jesus is the one who died on the cross for everyone's sins no matter who they are, and the one who will judge and grade your life story at the gates of heaven.

I believe that the Holy Spirit is continuous love that is carried with you even when you can't see it.

I believe the role of the Church and Christians in the world is to spread God's word, help and support those less fortunate than ourselves, and be kind, giving, loving, and caring people.

Claire Schilling

Mentor, Jessica Shanks

God-

I believe that God is the only God, and the creator of everything. He is the Almighty, the one I answer to. I believe he created us to love and care for others.

Jesus-

I believe that Jesus was sent to earth to teach and to love others. He was a humble slave, of human likeness, teaching others about love. He welcomed all with open arms.

Holy Spirit-

I believe that the Holy Spirit is God's voice and actions through humans. I believe that the Holy Spirit gives meaning in peoples lives. The Holy Spirit teaches us through others.

Worship-

I believe worship is giving time to God, he addresses his people in a group. I believe his message is spread through scripture, music, and prayer.

The Bible-

I believe that the Bible is stories and affirmations of faith in a book. It has the Word of God and helps remind me that we are only human and it is okay to make mistakes.

Claire Schilling continued...

Claire Schilling continued...

Saints and Gifts-

I believe that saints are people who show compassion to others, and somebody who calls to God. I also believe that they are always looking to help people better themselves. They love their neighbors as themselves.

Ministry-

I believe ministry is acts of service from the Church to its community and other communities. I believe that baptism is a call to ministry.

Baptism-

I believe that baptism is also a commitment to the family of the church to be part of the community.

Spiritual Life-

I believe that spiritual life includes prayers, asking for guidance from God for others, and attending worship, and bible study. I believe that I can pray at any time anywhere. These activities can also change my look on current events.

Death and Resurrection-

I believe a funeral should be a celebration of life here on Earth, instead of death. I believe all people who realize they sin and make amends for those sins go to heaven.

Life in the Church-

I believe people join churches to be part of something bigger than just them. I believe each member brings a different strength to the community, which makes the church stronger. Each person matters in the church.

I believe I can help others in the church by helping the Elementary kids by volunteering during Avondale Adventures. I believe that the church has multiple resources to help if I advocate.

Tommy Wray

Mentor, Andrew Patterson

While proceeding through the Confirmation process, I have been able to acquire a better understanding on what it means to be Christian and some fundamental ideas that are associated with it.

Our first few sessions were about God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit. I always knew their name but never quite understood what each of them stood for. Now that I have gone through confirmation I know that God is everything, God is Jesus, yet Jesus is not God. An analogy we often referenced was a flower, a flower has leaves, a stem, and petals. Yet the stem is not the flower, but only a portion of it.

Tommy Wray continued...

Tommy Wray continued...

Some other sessions were about worship and the Bible. I'm grouping these together, because I have come to the realization that they mean different things to different people. Through different denominations and separate ideologies, people will worship differently, and will read the Bible differently. There is no correct way to pray, nor is there a proper way to pronounce your love to God. For God made us all special and of his own idea, and we shouldn't try to change that.

Shortly after these topics we covered Saints and Gifts, as well as Ministry. I found these lessons to be very similar, due to the fact that they appear to be a motive to get out and do. For instance, the title "saint", although very righteous and powerful in thought, is something anyone is able to achieve. The way you do this is by using your gifts and talents bestowed upon you from God to help and aid your fellow Christians. This ties perfectly into ministry which is what we often use to channel and project these gifts to help others. We don't always know where or what God is, but it is through your gifts and ministry we will find him, or more often, he will find us.

Another little grouping I've made is Baptism. Spiritual Life, and Death And Resurrection. As that baptism is often your entrance into a spiritual life. There is only one and it is absolute. As you dip your hands in the fount, you are allowing God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit to work their will through you. This is done up until Death, where you are then Resurrected into Heaven.

Now finally I have my last section, Life in the Church and the Faith Journey Continues. Through Church, you encounter wonderful people and events that change your life. And as we grow we can use these changes in our lives to help the church grow. Even after we leave the church or become confirmed, it is but the beginning for our progression and God's people.

Congratulations to our confirmation class of 2020! You have worked hard and with such great intention and effort to learn about our shared faith and grow spiritually. Thank you to Rev. Jim Ewing and the mentors for your wisdom and leadership.