



let it shine

Confirmation: Faith Affirmed and Strengthened

Greetings to my brothers and sisters in the
United Church of Christ!

My name is Jonathan Schmitz and I am fifteen years old. Almost one year ago, I was confirmed in the UCC faith and formally joined my church. Confirmation was always something important to me and is still something I consider sacred. To me, Confirmation is making a pact with oneself, others, and G-d to continue to look for the meaning and presence of G-d in one's own life. I have always looked for G-d in everyday life and Confirmation was a good way to focus that search. Discussion and questioning are at the center of my faith, and that is mostly what Confirmation was for me.

We all look for G-d in different ways and in different places. That's because we all have our own ways of seeing and imagining G-d. My own church is full of different belief systems, which stem from every member. But this is encouraged. Every Sunday, I see and hear support for various ideas and expressions of faith. I would have to say that is the single most important reason I sought confirmation in the UCC, and the Monroe Congregational Church especially.

No one can hope to leave any religious gathering or activity with a complete and clear understanding of G-d. Confirmation is a valuable tool to begin the understanding, though. That is how I utilized it. I would always leave thinking of whatever our topic for that night might have been. "What does G-d mean to us?" "What do we fear?" "Who is Jesus to us?" These questions and more like them have helped me to shape my current understanding of the Divine. My G-d is active in my life through my thoughts, feelings, words, and actions—never directly interfering, just influencing, G-d leads my conscience, or moral compass if you will, and is constantly poking and prodding me down one path or another.

Our Mission and Ministry

Who or what is your G-d? An old man with a flowing beard and robe? An energy force? Or something too awe inspiring for you to even put into words? (By the way, that's why I use the G-d spelling.) Whatever your G-d is, you formed that concept from somewhere. Confirmation helped me find my G-d. I owe a great deal to my church and give thanks every day for the great experiences the United Church of Christ has given, and continues to give me.

Reflection:

- Religious imagination and expression are personal—but they don't have to be private. Does your church encourage youth and adults to share ideas and images of the Divine?
- How is G-d described in your church? Challenge yourself: Try to pray by addressing G-d in a variety of ways—including images that are non-anthropomorphic. The Bible is full of them!
- Is the spiritual growth of young people a priority for your congregation? If so, what resources do you provide in that effort?

Resources:

- *Affirming Faith, Vols. 1 and 2*, from United Church Press. A congregation's guide to confirmation and a confirmand's journal.
- *My Confirmation: A Guide for Confirmation Instruction*, from United Church Press. Revised 2006.
- *The Rite of Confirmation: Moments When Faith is Strengthened*, by Peter R. Monkres and R. Kenneth Ostermiller, from United Church Press.

"Confirmation: Faith Affirmed and Strengthened" was written by Jonathan Schmitz, who was confirmed at Monroe Congregational Church, United Church of Christ, in Monroe, Connecticut.

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