

The House of Hope Presbyterian Church
May 8, 2022
Youth Sunday

Good morning and Happy Mother's day!

My name is Christa Feldbrugge and I am a high school member of the House of Hope.

We are gathered here this Sunday to celebrate the youth of our congregation, I myself was baptized and raised in this church, and over time I have been presented with so many amazing opportunities. I've sung in the Saint Nicholas choir, served on session as a youth elder, volunteered for Sunday school activities, and participated in many service projects.

To be very honest with you all, I wanted to come up here and give a thoughtful and perceptive sermon this morning with a clear and precise message, though the more I tried to come up with something insightful the more I felt as though that would not only be unmemorable but also a waste of an opportunity on my part.

As I mentioned I have been an active participant in this church from even before my confirmation.

I have sat through countless meetings both in person and over zoom, and as a young person sometimes I find it incredibly difficult to feel heard. We talk so much about including and uplifting the young people in our community but I feel as though there has been a real lack of action.

We encourage youth to participate and express their opinions yet don't help in realizing their presented ideas.

To clarify, we have some of the best and most kind youth ministry personnel I have ever met leading and teaching our youth and to be

totally honest with you they are some of the few people who have fought for our voices to be heard. I am talking about all of you sitting here today. Whether you are someone who is a part of 12 different committees or someone who simply comes to enjoy our talented musicians.

As members of the church and the community, you have the power to reach out to the youth, to listen to their ideas, to guide them through their exploration of faith, and empower them to become loving and outstanding young people in our church.

They need your help and we need them to preserve our future. This church and the people who attend put so much love and energy into the community that fosters it and because of this I couldn't be more grateful to call myself a member and contributor of the House of Hope.

In leaving here today I encourage you to remember our promise at baptism, encouraging our children to grow in faith and love.

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Hello, my name is Merete Nelson, I am a senior at Central high school, and I have been attending the House of Hope since I was in preschool.

I chose to reflect on Psalm 23 today, as it incorporates both God's love and comfort for us, but also reminded me of a mother, and so as today is Mother's day, I thought it was only fitting to incorporate both.

As I am one of six children in my household, family is very important to me. I consider my siblings some of my best friends, and I have the most supportive and wonderful parents I could have ever hoped for.

As I was reading over the passage that I'm preaching on, one particular line kept coming back to me. The line reads: *"Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I fear no evil; for you are with me; your rod and your staff-they comfort me."* This line felt important to me, because I felt like I could apply it to both my relationship with the Church, but I could also apply it to Mother's day, and the motherly figures in my life.

As I mentioned before, I have been attending house of hope since I was about 4 or 5, so this place has become one of my favorite places to be. I've met some of my closest friends here, I've worked here for four years in the Sunday school program, and have gotten to know all of the amazing families that I get to work with every week. I am so fortunate to have had this space to grow and learn throughout my time here. Being able to have experienced so many different opportunities, like Feed my Starving Children, going to lock-ins, and being confirmed, has allowed me to become so welcomed in the loving community that is the House of Hope. Church

events are things that I know I can count on to lift my spirits, any day. Having a youth event to look forward to always makes my day more exciting. Being able to be around my friends and learn and grow my knowledge of spirituality, is something that brings me so much joy.

As I start to make the transition from high school to college, I think about how I won't be able to attend youth events, or work in the Sunday school classrooms every week. Thinking about this reminded me of another part of the passage. It reads "*Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord my whole life long.*" Knowing that I'm taking the steps out of the youth program and into my future, I know that the church and the congregation will always be here for me when I come back, and will help support me through this transition.

To me, God's main message is one of love and acceptance, and allowing everyone to be themselves freely, and to feel comfortable in doing so. In this way, I think God's love feels motherly. Mothers are seen as care-givers, as loving, as caring, and as beautiful people, and I think that encompasses God quite well. As God created earth and all of the wonderful mothers that live on it, I think it is only fitting that our divine planet is portrayed in the form of a mother. Not only do we have our mother figure God watching over us, but we have our own mothers, our grandmothers, our aunts, our sisters, our friends, watching over us, caring for us, and protecting us. Especially in the hectic, uncertain world we're living in right now, taking care of ourselves, and taking care of others it is the most important thing that we can do right now. Amen.

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Hello, my name is Evan Bergstrom, I am a senior at Central high school, and I have been going to the House of Hope ever since I was a baby. My time here at church so far has given me a lot of great memories, such as making friends in the youth group, singing in the choir, and being a part of all the various aspects of church. It has also taught me a lot about who I am as a person, and how God is calling on you in all different forms.

I chose to reflect on Acts 9:36 today as it has the message of how God bears his power on the less-advantaged people of the world. It talks about how no matter who you are, if you are a follower of Jesus you will be taken care of. One of the lines in the passage that I think influences the meaning the most is, "Now in Joppa there was a disciple whose name was Tabitha, which in Greek is Dorcas. She was devoted to good works and acts of charity." This line symbolizes how Tabitha made her life about others, and how because of that she was a follower of the lord and his values. This reminded me of church and all the acts of charity that we execute, such as Feed my Starving Children, hosting Project Home during the fall, and collecting food donations and presents.

To me, I've learned that God's message is of love and acceptance. I got to learn that especially through confirmation, which brought me some of my greatest memories. I was

taught how faith is something that you have to find in yourself, and that you should never stop digging into it. That has allowed me to keep on discovering myself as a person, as well as even recognizing other people's beliefs and who they are.

Because I have been coming to the House of Hope for so long, it has become a routine part of my life. From getting baptized all the way to getting confirmed I have been fortunate enough to be a part of a loving community. I hope that someday in the future I can share my experiences of being here with others, and even add to them. Going back to the scripture, what my time here has taught me is to follow the good in life, and it will follow you. If you follow good role models like Tabitha in the Bible, then you will never be left alone. Even if you veer off of that path there will always be someone there trying to get you back on. I think that the House of Hope here is similar, and that's why even when I'm somewhere else it will always still be a centerpiece in my life. Thank you.