

An Open Letter To The 2009 Confirmation Class    May 3, 2009

Confirmation Sunday is not just about you believing in God, it's about what God believes about you!

Text: I John 3:23-24

Dear Confirmation Class of 2009,

We your church and family are very proud of you today. I know that you sometimes get tired of hearing these words. But we are proud of you. You see, confirmation represents a change where you go from childhood to young adulthood, where you enter a time of more freedoms, and yet more responsibilities. We are proud because you are not the same persons we waved good-bye to when you entered first grade, or when you first took a trip on your own. Today we recognize that you are able to think for yourself, believe for yourself, and make decisions for yourself. We are proud because we adults in the church see ourselves mirrored in each of you. We remember what it was like when we said "I believe" for the first time, in my case on a Sunday in 1963 with friends I still cherish today. We see you stand before us and we remember our confirmation way back when...when our parents and leaders expressed their pride in us, and we took important steps on our journeys of Faith. Hear me clearly, we are proud of you and hope that some day years hence, you will lead your sons and daughters to a worship service like this one to make their confirmation promises. And you will catch yourself saying to them what you are hearing this morning: We are proud of you because you take this step of Faith!

We need you! We need your enthusiasm. We need your joy. We need your vision and wisdom about a world that is changing so fast many of us can barely keep up. What we embraced as new today becomes old tomorrow. You are members of the digital generation, spending so much of your time in cyberspace. We need you to lead us in the world of Facebook and Twitter, personal blogs and personal websites, video clips and you tube phenomena. We need you to help chart the future of the church of Jesus Christ in a world where email and voice mail are becoming passé in favor of instant text messaging and local economies are intertwined with global networks. We need your wisdom and commitment. I am afraid that we are not handing you a world in better shape than the one we inherited. We need you to make the difference between being boring and being awesome. We need you to help clean up some of the messes where neighbors hate neighbors rather than love each other. We need you to keep building the church where boredom is not an option, where the excitement you write about in your statements of Faith is an everyday occurrence in and around the lives of fellow Christians. We need you. No matter what may happen to lead you away from the church, please know that you are never a stranger here! In fact the Word from the Lord I hear today is a beautiful word. It is as though I hear Jesus Christ calling you by name and with laughter and energy, saying "welcome, I am building my church and you are the building blocks I have been looking for!!"

And if we need you, I can assure you that you will need the church! You will regularly need the church and the presence of your Lord throughout your days. You will need the church when life comes unglued and you don't know where else to turn. You will need the church when you lose someone important to you to death. You will need the church and all its love for you when a grandparent dies and you feel a little more alone in an uncertain world. You will need the power of Easter whenever the tears come and you cry out "Why?" You will need the church and the reminders of your Faith in Jesus Christ when you leave home again, perhaps to college where your beliefs are challenged and your morals tested. You will need the church and the reminders of the power of your Faith in Jesus because there are many voices which will rise up to tell you that you are not beautiful. That you are not lovely. That you are not worthy. That you are not wise. That you are neither accepted nor acceptable. Do not believe these voices for a minute! You will find out what many have discovered over the centuries. We need the church and its Good News message even when we think everything is going great. We need the church and its reminders of what we believe and in whom we believe. We need the church because it proclaims what nothing else can proclaim...a love that will never let us go! We need the church to remind us that we are part of something far greater than just ourselves. We are part of the Kingdom of God, and our destiny rests in God.

The American Poet Robert Frost wrote in his poem *The Death of the Hired Man*, "Home is the place where when you go there, they have to take you in". Likewise this church and any church for that matter is your home, a home where when you go there, they have to take you in. That's why Jesus died and rose again, to make sure the doors to heaven would never be closed, and the doors to His Church on earth would never be closed as well. Confirmation Class of 2009, there may be times when you feel awkward in church. That may not be your fault. But, let there never be a time when you feel like a stranger here. Today, by virtue of the promises you have made, and the promises God has made about you, this place and people are your home. Nothing can change that. Nothing at all!!

We love you in Christ! We are very proud of you! We need you, and in some areas desperately need what you can do to lead the church! Yes, you will need the church for all the reasons I have stated and then some. This is a day where you have said what you believe. It is also the day when we declare what it is God believes about you...that you are a child of God on whom Jesus continues to build His Church. May God bless you. May God bless you. Believe me, your very presence here is already a sign of how many ways God is blessing the rest of us. Welcome. Welcome in the name of Him who never met a stranger, who keeps on building His Church. I have a hunch He is very happy today with the decisions He hears from each of you. Very happy indeed.

Keep the Faith!

Pastor Chuck