

**October 29, 2023 Reformation Sunday, Confirmation Sunday**  
**Rev. Jen Nagel, University Lutheran Church of Hope**

**Jeremiah 31:31-34, Psalm 46**  
**Romans 3:19-28, John 8:31-36**

**[This homily is meant to be an introduction to the four students offering faith statements as part of their Confirmation process.]**

**Grace and peace to you, Beloved of Christ Jesus. Amen.**

**Look around at the Reds today!**

This red is the color for Reformation Sunday, for it reminds us of the Holy Spirit's fire.

This same Holy Spirit that moved over the waters at creation,

and set tongues of fire dancing at Pentecost,

inspired reformers like Martin Luther in the 1500s to take bold stands.

It clarified that God's grace in Jesus Christ is absolutely central to our faith, and holds us in life and death.

And the Holy Spirit isn't done yet.

**This same Holy Spirit, she blows through the church, and our lives, and the world still today.**

At our best, we are a reforming people, not past-tense reformed,

but reforming: morning by morning, day by day, decade by decade.

The we and the church will continue to adapt, always, and the Spirit is out in front, into the future,

beyond our imagination.

The Holy Spirit in each season calls us again to what is central, what is core:

God's grace at the very heart of it all.

Of course we get side tracked,

sometimes nostalgia's grip is strong,

nations rage and the world is in a load of tumult,

so much pulls for our attention.

And yet by the Holy Spirit, we come again to the freedom we know in Jesus Christ,

to the grace-filled promise written on our hearts: You are Beloved.

This countercultural identity isn't earned or achieved.

Rather, it is gifted, and our very lives are a response to God's grace.

**On this Reformation Sunday we celebrate Confirmation Day,**

when these teens are affirming, saying Yes, to their baptisms and this identity as God's beloved.

**Confirmation takes a village. Our thanks to:**

Kit Bielenberg and our former pastoral intern Emily Brown, who have joined with me as co-teachers,  
Morgan Strudthoff ,whose ministry left a big impact on this group,  
Confirmation mentors Uli Koester, Karen Westwood, Rosalie Eldevik, and Wayne Westwood,  
And families, sponsors/Godparents, Sunday School teachers, summer camp counselors, and the whole  
congregation.

Today this village is in person and online, praying with us from afar.

**Let me say a few words of introduction about each of our students:**

**[I've removed these little introductions of each student simply to limit their personal details online.]**

**This morning our confirmands share their faith statements.**

Some of you recall the days of public examination and memorization.

These statements are not that!

Rather this is an opportunity to claim their voice,

to articulate *their* experience of God's lavish grace.

They do that with honesty and vulnerability,

with a desire to be in an authentic relationship with God,

a relationship strengthened by questions, not diminished.

Their faith, like ours, will grow and adapt through the years, I trust that.

**As we begin and then between each faith statement, we'll sing, indeed pray:**

Take, oh take me as I am.

Summon out what I shall be.

Set your seal upon my heart

and live in me.

As Niibin comes forward, let us sing now....