

Confirmation Meditations

Oak Grove Presbyterian Church, May 3, 2020

Vaughn Sheff & Jane Propsom

Jane and Vaughn have been our Confirmation leaders for the past six years.

Good morning Oak Grove! My name is **Vaughn Sheff** and I'd like to share with you all this morning, a bit about my faith journey.

I have always been a spiritual person, i.e. I've always believed there is something greater than ourselves that connects us all as human beings. However, I have not always seen organized religion or "the church" as a mechanism to help me evolve my views on spirituality and faith. In fact, for many years I was suspect & untrusting of "the church." It was not until I found Oak Grove that I again felt a church, a community of faith, could help me in my faith journey. I am very thankful for that!

I really enjoyed Britta's scripture reading of "The Message" because it ties nicely to my views on faith. I think Christianity, and particularly Jesus' teachings, are key to helping us build our spiritual core. By that, I mean using your core beliefs to create a sort of decision-making engine that you can use in your everyday life. I now use the words and deeds outlined in the Bible to build that core, to strengthen my foundation, and make sure it's built on a rock, not sand, as Britta shared with us in today's scripture reading.

So church, and specifically OGPC, is now an essential part of my life. When I consider those words from the Bible that are part of my spiritual core, **compassion, love, kindness, respect**, I see them mirrored in the everyday actions of this congregation; and because of that, I am privileged and honored to call myself a member of Oak Grove, and stand among you all. God bless you all and thank you for allowing me to share my thoughts this morning!

My name is **Jane Propsom**. I grew up in a Presbyterian church in Northbrook, Illinois. Growing up in my church, we went to a Presbyterian camp in Saugatuck, Michigan, similar to Clearwater, every 4th of July for family camp. The Bible verse that Britta read was a wonderful camp memory for me -- one

year at family camp, this verse was used for a sermon. Saugatuck is right on Lake Michigan. We built sand castles right on the edge of the lake -- and the Bible verse came alive. Some of the castles were built just of sand and some were built with rocks to protect the base. Then we watched what happened as the "storm" hit. As the waves hit, of course, the castles made of sand fell into the water while the castles with the rocks held steady.

Similar to the sand castles, we all need to build a strong foundation in our lives to be prepared for when the storms hit because they will hit- whether it's a tough decision you have to make, bad break up or a fight with a friend. And how do you build a strong foundation? Surround yourself with the right people and a set of core beliefs. I was lucky enough to belong to a great church growing up and I was surrounded by people who were like a big family for me. We had a couple, the Lukes, who were our youth leaders, who hosted us at their house every Sunday night and allowed us to talk about whatever we needed to. They helped the youth to work our way through the difficult topics that we needed to navigate. At one point, the group had a loss when a dad died. The Lukes let us come and sit at their house and led us through our grief -- an experience that most of us had never been through. I learned to be a responsible caring adult from all the people at the church. When I go home now, I am still greeted with hugs and questions and a lot of love. It's still my safe place and my strong foundation.

For our youth, Oak Grove is a strong foundation. There are so many people who care about you, about who you are and what you're going to be. They're interested in your thoughts and in helping you grow in your faith. These people will always be around and will always have your best interest at heart. And that strong foundation? You will need it because those storms -- hurricanes, tornadoes, COVID-19 -- will come.

For me, my big storm was at 23 when my dad was killed in an accident. I lived in Texas at the time, but I went home and the people who supported me were my Village Church people. They were able to help me take a lot of personal destruction and put it back together. So Confirmants and youth, enjoy your relationships, build on your strengths, and hold fast.

The Lord gives strength to his people-the Lord blesses his people with peace.
Amen.