



Affirmation of

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# BAPTISM

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essays

Written by the **2019 Confirmation Class** of  
Hope Lutheran Church, Arcade, NY

**What if you struggle with belief?** How is Jesus different than the prophets before him? **How do people go to hell if God always forgives?**

Can you believe in God and in science?

**Is being gay a sin? And if it is, why do some Christians treat it like it is worse than all the others?**

Does God ever leave us in our struggles to get ourselves out?

Does God want me to be successful?

How does the Bible talking about not honoring money and material things connect to my desire for financial wealth?

**Why do I have to love my enemies?**

Do non-believers go to hell?

These pages are full of things this year's confirmation class believes about God, faith, and human life. But with what we believe, we also bring our questions and our constant desire to understand more. The questions on this page as well as on the back page were questions asked anonymously by this year's confirmation class (7<sup>th</sup>-9<sup>th</sup> graders). With our statements of faith, we also wanted you to hear the questions we bring to our faith journey.

We share them because we believe the life of faith is not merely about having the right answers. Rather, it is about wrestling with complexities of life. We search for Jesus' truth—the kind of truth that sets us free and brings us peace, over easy answers. We recognize that faith is not belief without uncertainty, but beliefs and hopes with our doubts and fears held in tension. We do not ignore our questions, but embrace them recognizing that like doubting Thomas, it is in our doubts that Jesus meets us and we are led to confess, "My Lord and my God."

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# Tyler Bley

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Throughout my past years of being a part of Hope Lutheran I have learned some key lessons of what I believe in. From the retreats I have participated in to our youth gathering in Houston last year, I have gained a real perspective of what I truly believe in. I know in my heart God is always watching over me and that he has a plan guiding me into his path no matter how hard life seems at that moment.

I have truly seen some amazing miracles performed by God throughout my journey even before I started as a confirmand. Throughout my life God has shown His grace towards my family from the time when I prayed on Christmas Eve that if it snowed the next day it would be a sign that my very sick Aunt would get better. The next morning when I woke up and saw that it had snowed, I knew I had witnessed God's work. She began to heal a little bit every day and become stronger. My Aunt is a true living miracle, even to this day. That Christmas really made a lasting impact on me. I believe that God is always listening to me and my prayers all the time. God has also performed and shown a miracle on my Grandmother when she had suffered a terrible stroke and was slowly and gradually getting worse and worse until one day, when surrounded by the love of her family, she made a miraculous recovery. God had shown his love for us and changed her life and ours where she had come back to life by God's grace. She amazingly was taken out of Hospice care and was able to come home. Again, this really makes me believe that God

“The human  
mind plans the  
way, but  
the LORD directs  
the steps.”  
—Proverbs 16:9

is there for me and my family and that God's Grace is truly an amazing gift to us.

With God's amazing Grace also comes death which has happened multiple times with my family and me. For example, when my pet dog named Bella had been diagnosed with cancer it was only a matter of time before she would pass away. But God was there for me by giving us friends and family to comfort me and help me through the tough time. This makes me believe that God is looking out for me and for all of life by guiding us to heaven. As a second grader, soon after my First Communion, I lost my Grandpa suddenly and watched how sad my Grandma, Mom, and aunts were. Again, by the grace of God they were able to find comfort in each other. My Grandma was guided back to God's path by finding her faith in a new church, the same one that had surrounded her during a very sad time. I believe that even through death comes new life.

Everyday God's teachings affect how I live my life in church and outside of church. God truly affects me in school for when I say I go to church on Sundays I get made fun of. Usually I just brush it off, but sometimes it gets to me. That's when I remember all things happen for a purpose. With God's hand I never show any shame in or out of school for my love for Him. I believe His work is truly a gift to us. I need to embrace it whenever I can with no shame. I show God's love and how much he cares for me by wearing a cross every day to remind myself that He is always with me and that I'm never alone.

Overall going through Confirmation and learning about God has been an amazing gift. I just know that God loves me and is always watching out for all of us. He will always be with me as I go through this journey of life.

# Ashley Bliss

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First off, I believe that God is the holy spirit, the creator and the giver of life who made us who we are. I also believe that he loves us for the way that we are no matter what we believe, the decisions we make, what we like and dislike and the people we hang out with. We just know that he loves us no matter what. This leads me to one of my favorite bible verses in Mark 9:23 which says, "if you can believe, all things are possible to him who believes." This bible verse is one of my favorites because when I'm having a stressful day or time it helps me get through it and it is very inspirational.

Secondly, I believe that life is a wonderful thing and God gave us this life to enjoy it to its fullest extent, to love one another, and even make mistakes (but that's life). In life we will always have our ups and downs and we just have to persevere and know that God is always going to be with us

Jesus said, "**All things can be done** for the one who believes."

—Mark 9:23

through all the good and bad times we all face through our life. Also, there is this one song by Miley Cyrus called "The Climb" which is a great example of living your life and how it's not about reaching the top it's about how you get there. Many times through life we always look at the big prize at the top and forget about all the trials and tribulations (The Climb) until many years into our life we

look back and start to realize all the things we have been through to get to the top.

Also, I believe that death is a terrible thing that affects many people, but I believe that God puts us to rest when he knows we have done our best and lived a good life. A lot of people don't fear death as much because of their faith in God and because they have put their life in his hands and he will guide us every step of the way. Sometimes we don't understand why good people are taken to soon or have to battle sicknesses but they say that God has a plan and we might not understand that right now but it is something that we have to believe when we are going through tough times.

In conclusion, what I believe helps me live my life by knowing that God gave me this life to enjoy it, to be happy and to help others so they will help me in return. I also know that God will always be with me to guide me through the good and bad times and know that I am never alone. He also will be there through every obstacle that comes my way so I can get to the top to reach my goals in life.

# Tyler Day

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I believe in God because I grew up in a Christian household. It is always common for my family to go to church on the weekend to worship God. God created this beautiful earth that we all live on. He causeth the grass to grow for the cattle, and herb for the service of man: that he may bring forth food out of the earth; Psalms 104:14. This verse is one of my favorites because it explains what my family does for a living. I am a 4<sup>th</sup> generation farmer fighting every day to feed the people of the community. Without the man up above, we wouldn't be here today.

Every person on this earth was put here for a reason. Whether we live in poverty or in wealth, God has a plan for all of us and we all have a purpose for being here. God is in everything we do even though we don't see it at the time he is always with us and will always help us no matter what type of life we live.

I believe that if a person does something wrong, God will forgive them. Everybody does something wrong in their life, it's natural, nobody on this earth is perfect or the

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same. God created us all equally but none of us are the same. This helps me live my life because I know that if I do something wrong, God will forgive me. By correcting my wrong doings, God is helping me become a better person in my community.

I believe there is life after death. I believe in heaven people are made whole again, their minds and bodies are healthy, and everyone is living a happy everlasting life. For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life; John 3:16. I also believe that there is a hell and when you go to hell it is impossible to get out of it and go to heaven. And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever; Revelation 20:10. This verse supports why I believe there is a hell and people that go there don't leave there. It is God's grace that save us from going to hell and instead we go to heaven. Each person who turns to God in genuine repentance and faith is saved.

# Evan Frazier

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Believing is special, it's as if you had made a commitment to something. Believing in God even more special, but sometimes we cannot have a special relationship with God without believing in several other things as well. These beliefs help our relationship with God as well as our relationship with others and the Church.

First, you must believe in the church because without the church we wouldn't be where we are. The church provides stability, it provides something to commit to. The church is a place to gather and worship and meet new people. It is most importantly a place to strengthen your relationship with God and make new friends and grow as a community. The church helps us satisfy ourselves because it gives a sense of purpose by giving us opportunities we never would've had before. These opportunities could be the ELCA Youth Gatherings, Fish Fry's, luncheons, or helping at the Ronald McDonald House. All of these have something in common, they either help us strengthen our faith or they allow us to help the community. We do more than just believe in the Church we trust it, we trust it to give us opportunities to let us grow.

I wouldn't be where I am today if it weren't for certain people who strengthened my faith or showed me the way. These people showed me that church isn't boring it's a place to have fun and expand your relationship with God. These people showed me that it's okay to have fun and talk and participate in activities. I am so thankful for these people because if it weren't for them I wouldn't be who I am today, I wouldn't have the memories I have today, and most importantly, I wouldn't have the

relationship I have with God that I currently have. It is impossible to express the gratitude I have for these people and this is as close as I can get.

I believe that nobody could get to this point in their faith by themselves without the help of the church and the people. I believe that God has a plan for every single one of us. I believe that no matter how low in life you get you will always have the potential to be brought back up. These are all beliefs that I have been taught and have

acquired because of the people I'm around and the environment I'm in. I have a strong relationship with God because I have a strong relationship with the church and the people who worship there.

Believing is special because it is complex, it takes time and effort. You can't just lay back and expect your experiences to be the same, you have to come out of the box eventually, once you do

your world changes. I believe and I wouldn't have it any other way because I enjoy the people I'm around and the good that we do and the fun that we have. Believing is special because it changes your life for the better. Believing gives you faith in humanity, it gives you friendships, it gives you memories to hold onto, it gives you hope.

**“For surely I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord, plans for your welfare and not for your harm, to give you a future with hope.”**

—Jeremiah 29:11

# Nick Rimbey

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I believe that God loves us all. I believe that God is always there for us even when we do not think so. No matter how much we are hurting, scared, or sad, God is with us. I like the feeling that when my brother or my dad are hurting, God is with them.

My favorite Bible verse is Joshua 1:9. It says, "Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go." I like it because it reminds me that we are never alone. I first heard it in one of my favorite movies, *Courageous*.

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# Madisen Sonner

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What do I believe? That is such a large question. This essay has made me think what do I truly believe. It's made me think I believe in everything that we say at church and talk about but what do I specifically believe that's not general but what I believe personally. That made me think harder about what I believe.

I believe that no matter how big or small a sin I have made God will always forgive me. God will wipe my slate clean and forgive anything that I have done and love me just as much as he did before. Everyone sins, God will not hold sin against anyone, he will forgive and love everyone.

I believe God's grace is never ending. It can be seen by people doing good deeds. God's grace can help people in hard times and show them that they will be ok, and they can get through this and they don't have to go through this alone God will be there with them to help them through all the hills and valleys. Like going to the Ronald McDonald's house and cooking dinner for people who are less fortunate. Also, donating food to food pantries for people without money to buy food. God's grace can help people and can teach people to be kind and give back to others. Grace is doing something to spread God's love to others doing some good deed to help others.

I believe that people should except everyone and not discriminate against anyone. I believe that people are who they are. It shouldn't matter their gender or race. Everyone is different, people should be able to be themselves. God taught us to love everyone, just as he does, no matter how different we are from each other. I

believe that people should be able to love who they want. Not everyone will end up loving someone of a different gender. There is nothing wrong with someone loving a person of the same gender. People should be allowed to love who they want, that's just who they are and who God made them to be. Just because they're different doesn't mean that something is wrong with them

I believe that kids shouldn't bully other kids because of how they dress or who they hang out with. It's not right for other kids to put some in such a low place. It hurts them so much they could hurt themselves or end up with depression because they never think they're good enough. I believe that every kid is good enough. No kid deserves to be bullied whether its face to face or over social media. Every kid is enough, every kid is perfect.

What I believe helps me with my life because I know that God will always be there, and I will never be alone. Even when I am in a dark place and I feel alone, I know that God will be there to help me through it. It helps me to know that I can be me and God will always

love me. I know that if I mess up God will forgive me, and I can start again and try to move on. I can do kind things and help people less fortunate which makes me feel good. I believe being my own person is a way that I can share God's love.

“The light shines  
in the darkness,  
and the  
darkness has  
not overcome  
it.”

—John 1:5

Why is the cross  
the symbol of  
our religion?

What if I don't  
believe God  
made the world in  
7 days?

Why did  
they  
crucify  
Jesus?

Are psychics a part of  
Christianity?

Are we with our  
loved ones in  
heaven?

How did Jesus get his  
name?

Why do some  
people say

Is suicide the  
'ultimate sin?'

women cannot  
be pastors?

Why do some  
Christians eat meat  
on Fridays while  
others don't?

Why didn't women  
write anything in the  
Bible?

**C**onfirmation is a faith formation ministry of Hope intended to serve as an opportunity for youth in grades 7-9 to grow in their faith and make an adult commitment to following Jesus. It culminates in either baptism or affirmation (confirmation) of a baptism that has already taken place.

In everything there is **hope**.