

5 Minutes for Faith – “Graduate Your Faith”

This month, we are celebrating our graduates. It is a familiar rite that is practiced all through this month, even with large stadiums and gymnasiums filled with graduates from college and other houses of learning.

In our church, high school students recently led our Sunday worship services by sharing meaningful stories of where they've been, where they're going, and how their faith has played a part of who they've become. Very inspiring!

As a contrast, our church-sponsored Wadsworth Christian Preschool just held its end-of-year celebration program where 3–5-year-olds joyously shouted out memorized scriptures and songs, and several of them also donned red caps and gowns for a ceremony in which they received their preschool diplomas. Families filled our church sanctuary to revel in this wonderful display of youthful exuberance.

It is certainly a happy and rewarding time of year as we observe the hard work of these students and many others, for their achievement of learning advancement and accomplishments.

But seeing these young graduates made me think of our own personal “faith education,” and whether we're all doing enough to earn our “Christian degrees.” What if we were in “church classes” – not necessarily Sunday School – but in situations where we have the opportunity to achieve perfect attendance, study God's word, take daily life tests, and really grow our faith?

Are we getting enough out of sermons and other church-related learning opportunities, creating a structured curriculum that takes us from basic to advanced theological concepts? Has church become our “school” that serves as a place to learn how to live out faith, with a focus on studying scripture to help us transform other people? Just as a student learns from being in attendance, are we also “showing up” and taking notes, asking questions, discussing with others, and actively growing?

Each of us must ask ourselves: When it comes to our faith, what grade are we in right now? Are we advancing ... or repeating a grade? Do we ever get out of kindergarten? Do we eventually graduate, or is it a matter of lifelong learning?

In the Bible, Jesus was referred to as “Teacher,” mentioned this way 45 times. He demonstrated his role as a teacher through direct instruction, parables, and modeling behavior. He taught in structured settings, such as synagogues and the Temple, and in assembled outdoor settings, but also in small groups with the disciples, or in everyday contexts, such as fishing, walking and in homes.

We can take Jesus' example and share our faith with others, as well. Likewise, we can continue to take steps to grow our personal faith through education and learning – working toward an eternal diploma.

So, congratulations to our graduates – those in preschool, high school, college ... and hopefully, all of us as we continue to pursue “higher learning.”

*I will instruct you and teach you the way you should go; I will counsel you with my loving eye on you.
(Psalm 32:8)*

With blessings, Rev. Hyun-Suk Kim (“PK”), Wadsworth United Methodist Church Senior Pastor

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