

Senior Reflection
Psalm 98: 4-9a
May 21, 2006

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First Presbyterian Church
Lake Forest, Illinois

Good morning. Eighteen years ago my family brought me here to receive the sacrament of baptism. Two years of preschool, eight years of Sunday school, one year of confirmation, and four years of Senior High Youth Group later, I find myself standing before you to reflect on this time of change in our lives as graduating seniors.

It would be an understatement to conclude that this church has become a concrete part of my life. From the church I have received an education, met a core network of friends, and found my passion for serving others.

From my first days in preschool, to confirmation class and beyond, dedicated members of this church have taught me about the word of God and the life of Jesus Christ. Beyond our scripture lessons, we were taught how to treat each other with respect. Through my teachers and mentors, I have learned the importance of love and compassion, and leadership by example.

My activities in this church have given me the great gift of friendship. It has been a pleasure to meet so many caring people in the Senior High Youth Group, in the Session, and on the First Presbyterian Church staff. The youth group has given me the opportunity to meet many kids outside of my much smaller group of close friends. Through events like the Work Trip and the Annual Rummage Sale, I have built lasting friendships that I will never forget.

On top of our youth group activities, my service as an elder has also opened me up to a whole new group of friends – the adults with whom I have been privileged to interact and who, more often than not, have treated

me as a peer. I appreciate the respect with which I have been treated in this position of responsibility. The church staff and other church officers have been great mentors to us all, and I feel blessed to have gotten to know them better.

Perhaps the greatest lessons we have been taught by our church have been those of kindness and charity. It was embedded in our foundation of faith at an early age that part of following God's word involves doing His work by serving others and our community. We have not just heard this message from the pulpit. We have been given the opportunity to put these words into action through church-sponsored events. The work trip and food drives like the Souper Bowl of Caring have allowed us to lend a hand to others and truly do God's work. There are no adequate thanks for Kristie Finley and the work trip advisors for all of their efforts in making possible this great experience of work trips.

The work trips have truly been the highlight of my involvement with this church. I have witnessed these trips bring out the best in all of us, as well as the people who we are helping. When I describe our work trip to people outside the church, they are always amazed that ninety high school students can be convinced to spend the first week of their summer building houses for complete strangers, generally in remote areas in hot summer weather. But we do not see it as a chore or burden; instead, it is a privilege to have the time to help someone other than ourselves. The trip is an event that we look forward to all year long and is certainly one of the highlights of the summer. My experience on these trips has reaffirmed my faith and strengthened friendships that I have gained from this church.

As we go off to begin a new chapter in our lives, I hope that we all remember the lessons we have learned through this church family.

I would like to thank all those who have supported our youth group, and those who have nurtured us through our first eighteen years. You and this church have given us a wonderful foundation on which to build our lives. Thank you ever so much.