

“Senior Reflection”  
1 Timothy 4: 1-16  
June 7, 2009

Billy Barkhausen  
First Presbyterian Church  
Lake Forest, Illinois

Good morning,

I’m honored to have been asked by Kristie to reflect upon what church has meant to me throughout my childhood and young adult life. My relationship with the church began even before I was born. One of our previous senior pastors, Henry Warkington, was devoted enough to visit me in Evanston Hospital before and after I was born 3 months early. It’s compassionate and selfless people like him who have made me and so many of my peers feel welcome and loved by the members of the congregation.

My early connection with the church continued with my Baptism and later the church’s pre-school. I have vague but fond recollections of making pink play-doh with Mrs. Anderson and Mrs. Zilka, eating animal crackers, and drinking lemonade. My childhood memories also include singing in the cherub choir and participating in the Christmas pageant as a sheep. It wasn’t exactly a lead role, but then how many of you had the chance to come down the aisle on your hands and knees?

My senior classmates and I have benefited from the dedication of the patient members of the congregation who have taught us in Sunday school over the years. All of the activities ranging from arts and crafts to writing our own prayers have taken a great deal of organization and thoughtfulness. They have clearly reflected God’s love for us.

Our foundation in faith was made even stronger when we were confirmed as freshmen. We participated in spiritual discussions that deepened our understanding of God’s role in our lives and the teachings of Jesus, and were warmly welcomed as members of the church.

Of course, I cannot stand up here today without taking some time to reflect upon my four year participation in Youth Group. Our Sunday evening meetings have further developed the sense of community that my classmates

and I have grown to love. The subsequent work trip is always a summer highlight for youth participants and adult advisors alike. For us, it provides the perfect opportunity to unwind from a busy year at school or at work and reflect on what truly matters in life. New friendships are formed between students and adults as everyone always comes together during the course of a week like one collective family. The meaningful work that we do for people in need is one of the most vivid and heart-warming memories that I will have of high school for the rest of my life.

Whether in a Sunday School classroom or on a blisteringly hot roof teaching a first-timer how to shingle a roof, so many members of this congregation have positively influenced our lives of both my classmates and me over the past eighteen years. Before we embark on the next stage of our lives later this summer, I want to thank everyone for all they have done for this years seniors and the way this congregation feels like a second home to many of us. The sense of compassion and good-heartedness the church has instilled within us will make us take God's love with us wherever we may go. Having been fortunate enough to grow up in such a nurturing and supportive environment, I will miss being apart of this family of faith that has guided and raised us over the past eighteen years. It will certainly be a reason to look forward to coming home next year for I know I will always receive the same warm welcome. Thank you.