



First United Church of Oak Park

Youth Sunday
John 21:1-19
Matthew Aeschleman
May 5, 2019

Good Morning. My name is Matthew Aeschleman and I am one of the current moderators of FUSH. I have been a part of this church all my life and a part of FUSH for the past 4 years.

Throughout my time in the church, I've looked for my connection with God through prayer, Sunday school, and service. I didn't intend at all to find this connection in youth group. At FUSH, we rarely break out bibles, or try and figure out why Jesus helping the disciples catch fish means anything. In my first few years, it was an amazing time. I made many new friends and had a myriad of new experiences. However, throughout this year, and looking back, I can see that FUSH is the place I have seen God the most.

I see God in the smiling faces of my friends. I see God in the lake with us on work camp. I see God in the group of FUSHies huddled in a circle at Ridgeland Commons trying to figure out how to save the group we love so much, and I see God with us today on this beautiful Youth Sunday.

In today's passage from John, we see Jesus accepting Peter and forgiving him. Peter denied Jesus 3 times, yet Jesus is able to forgive Peter and encourage him to continue his work as a disciple.

FUSH has been in a rough spot of late and we have made mistakes. We have asked for forgiveness and the support the group and I personally have felt from many in this congregation is incredible.

This group has made me far more confident and outgoing. I can say with absolute certainty, FUSH has changed my life significantly for the better. I can't imagine my life without FUSH and the church. My fellow FUSHies are the best people I know and they are already working to improve FUSH. We've been discussing how to be more inclusive, and the progress we've already seen is encouraging. We want FUSH to be a place for everyone. Discussing the issues we have isn't fun for anybody, but it is incredibly important. Through our discussions I've seen the best way to solve a problem is to start by talking to the people it affects most. My time on Council and as a moderator of FUSH have helped me arrive at the conclusion that no matter how great you believe a group to be, change is inevitable; and rather than resist it, we should actively seek out the positive changes we can make.

Just like Peter, we all make mistakes. He let Jesus down and we sometimes let people down too. But we are called to forgive. Our mistakes made us all realize how important the time we spend together is, how lucky we are to have this place, and how valuable a program like FUSH can be. We are trying to learn how to love others better, just like Jesus told Peter to do by telling him to care for his sheep and his lambs.

We are not defined by our faults or failures, just as we should not define others by theirs, because God sees the incredible good in all of us. AMEN