

YOUTH SUNDAY 2017: April 30th God is My Rock

GATHERING IN THE NAME OF GOD

Greeting Kim Ness

The Lord be with you. And also with you.

Prelude Joseph Clarke

Words of Welcome Luke Osborne

Minute for Mission Georgia Blue Simmons

Today's Minute for Mission is about Montreat Youth Conference! This year's theme is A Missing Peace. We'd like to ask for your support. In addition to your prayers, we are introducing a new fundraiser called the Wall of Envelopes. On this "Wall", there are 83 envelopes, the same number of days until we leave for Montreat! Each is labeled with a number 1 to 83. If you take an envelope, we ask that you return it with that amount of money. So if you take #5, return with \$5. All together, we can really help to cover the cost of our housing for the week. Thank you!

Call to Worship Maggie DeMaria

This morning, I'd like to invite all children to come forward with Miss Natalie to lead the congregation in Call to Worship. Today, we'll be singing the Call the Worship in a call and response format as printed in your bulletins.

Children: This is the day

Congregation: This is the day

Children: That the Lord has made

Congregation: That the Lord has made

Children: Let us rejoice Congregation: Let us rejoice

Children: And be glad in it

Congregation: And be glad in it

ALL: This is the day that the Lord has made

Let us rejoice and be glad in it

Children: This is the day

ALL: This is the day. That the Lord has made.

*Opening Hymn GATHER US IN (HERE IN THIS PLACE – 401)

*Call to Confession Eliza Downs

Now let us confess our sins to the Lord. Join me in the Prayer of Confession.

*Prayer of Confession

Evelyn Moser

Dear Lord, we have not followed in your footsteps and we are sorry. We have pushed out fellow Christians and have forgotten to see what brings us together. We have focused on our differences and not on you. We have been more worried about getting ahead and getting more than on getting closer to you. We are sorry. Help us to change our ways. We will rejoice in you, and make friends along the way. We will look past ethnicity, homeland and politics to see our community as you see us — one family. And most importantly, we will come together to live in your Holy presence, as your Son taught us to live.

*Silent Prayer

Lord, have mercy. Amen.

*Assurance of Pardon

Katie Sue Martin-Williams

God has forgiven us. So, as we go on to the next week, help us to live in His ways and be kind to others.

*Congregational Response CELTIC ALLELUIA

*Passing of Peace

Erin Osborne

The passing of the peace follows the assurance of pardon where God reminds us that we are loved and forgiven. Today, we are going to do things a bit differently. I invite you to share a hug with one of your neighbors. Show them that they are loved and forgiven. We are going to give everyone a bit longer of a time to meet and greet with your neighbors and feel free to venture out of your pew to meet someone new or even someone who sits on the other side of the sanctuary!

The peace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. **And also with you.**

HEARING THE WORD OF GOD

Prayer of Illumination

Katie Norris

Gracious God, help us to have hope for the future and to know that you will always be there to direct us on our way. Let us listen to your word and learn your Truth. Let us be open to hearing your words in new and different ways. Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

New Testament Lesson A skit based on Luke 24:13-35 about the Road to Emmaus

Narrator – James Williams Cleopas – Emily Gaskill Apostle – Henry Marrett Jesus – Julian Attaway 2 women – Katie Norris, Elizabeth Gaskill

Narrator: It was dawn on the Sunday after Christ had been crucified and laid to rest in the tomb. A group of women, who loved Jesus in life, walked silently to anoint his body with spices for burial, as there had not been time to do this before He was placed in the tomb. Arriving at the tomb, they found that the stone had been rolled away! They went in only to find that the tomb was empty.

Suddenly two men in "dazzling clothes" appeared beside them making amazing claims...the kinds of claims that you just cannot believe.

Pause for the women to depart and Apostles to stand.

Later that day, two of the Apostles were making the seven-mile journey from Jerusalem to a place called Emmaus.

Cleopas and Apostle stand up by the baptismal font to say next two lines.

Cleopas: Can you believe those women? After all we've been through in these last few days! We've barely had a moment to grieve and they come at us with this story. What are they thinking?

Apostle: I will never understand some people. I'm not sure if I should be angry or feel sorry for them. Truthfully, without Jesus, I'm not sure how to feel anything at all.

Cleopas and Apostle 1 start slowly walking across the front of the church down center aisle. Jesus who had been standing in the back, begins to walk down the center aisle.

Narrator: All of their questions would soon be answered. As they walked, a man they thought was a stranger joined their conversation. They should have known His voice but perhaps their grief over His death clouded their hearts and minds. Or maybe it was simply that the stranger was not ready for them to realize who walked with them again.

Jesus meets the two in the middle of the center aisle.

Jesus: What's this that you two are discussing on your long walk?

They stop and turn toward Jesus.

Cleopas: You've got to be kidding! Are you the only stranger in Jerusalem who has no idea of what's happened there the last few days?

Jesus: What's happened?

Cleopas: The things that happened to Jesus from Nazareth. He was a prophet. He did amazing things! His Word was so powerful you felt every syllable. He was truly a man blessed by God and all the people loved Him, but our chief priests and leaders betrayed Him. They chained Him in the night and handed Him over to be crucified! (points to the cross.)

Cleopas turns his back to Jesus, hangs his head and covers his face in sorrow at his own words. Apostles 1 pats Cleopas' shoulder and turns to speak to Jesus.

Apostle: We hoped that Jesus would be the One to redeem us. It has only been three days since all of this happened. On top of it all, some women from our group have everyone stirred up. They went to Jesus' tomb early this morning and came back talking on and on about Jesus' body being missing and angels telling them that He was alive again!

Cleopas: Some of our friends went to the tomb and found it empty, but they didn't see Jesus or angels or pink elephants with purple polka dots for that matter. They didn't see anything at all. It's all crazy talk!

Jesus places his arms on the shoulders of the two apostles and begins to walk, saying...

Jesus: Wow, you guys are thick-headed! How slow of heart that you can't simply believe what the prophets have said! Don't you see that these things had to happen? The Messiah had to suffer these things before entering into His glory.

The three continue to walk slowly to the steps.

Narrator: Then beginning with Moses and all the prophets, He explained to them the things about himself that were written in the scriptures. Soon enough they neared their destination. Jesus walked ahead as if He were continuing on His way.

Cleopas: Hey! Where are you going?

Apostle: Why don't you stay with us?

Cleopas: Come on! We insist. Have dinner with us. After all it will be getting dark soon.

The three of them walk to the edge of the steps and sit down on the marble landing. There is a bowl of water for washing and a towel. There is also bread in a basket and a cup. Cleopas and the other Apostle sit talking quietly. Jesus picks up the bread.

Jesus: (breaking the bread as he speaks.) This is my body broken for you... (gives the bread to Cleopas and the other Apostle)

The two look on in astonishment, realizing that it has been Christ who walked with them on the road to Emmaus.

Jesus slowly walks away, through the side door.

Narrator: It was suddenly revealed to the two that the story the women had told them was true. It was Jesus they met them on the road that day. He was alive!

Apostle: Could it really have been him?

Cleopas: Didn't you feel it? I felt on fire as He spoke to us on the road! The way he spoke of the scripture to us! How could it not have been Jesus?! We have got to tell the others!

The two run back down the center aisle into the narthex.

Anthem DRAW THE CIRCLE WIDE

Celebration Singers

Draw the circle wide. Draw the circle Draw the circle Draw the circle wide. No one stands alone. We'll side by side, Draw the circle Draw the circle wide.

Old Testament Lesson

Psalm 31: 1-5

Lucy Ferguson

In you, O Lord, I seek refuge;
do not let me ever be put to shame;
in your righteousness deliver me.

²Incline your ear to me;
rescue me speedily.

Be a rock of refuge for me,
a strong fortress to save me.

³ You are indeed my rock and my fortress; for your name's sake lead me and guide me,
⁴ take me out of the net that is hidden for me, for you are my refuge.
⁵ Into your hand I commit my spirit; you have redeemed me, O Lord, faithful God.

Multiple Mini-Meditations

FAITH Georgia Blue Simmons

My rock is faith. "Complete trust or confidence in someone or something." That's the definition of faith. I don't know about you but that sounds really intimidating to me. Putting all of my trust in one person, god. That is definitely not easy for me especially since I feel more comfortable being in control of a situation. Understanding that I am not in control of every aspect of my life is a concept that I struggle with.

There has been a lot of change for me this year. First, my sister left for college. I was really happy for her but also very sad that I wouldn't get to see her as much and there was nothing I could do to change that. She lives four hours away in Winston Salem. Then I transferred schools. I left my friends and comfortable environment. That was also a change that I couldn't control. I got stuck in the mindset that there was nothing that I could do, and there really wasn't anything i could do but accept the situation.

Once I accepted it, things seemed to turn out alright, maybe even better than alright. I realized that my sister and I were still close, snapchat and instagram helps. I ended up making new friends at school and ended up transferring to a different school which is now my favorite. 3rd time's a charm right?

The serenity prayer really helped my through this time. I used it as a mantra:

"God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change; the courage to change the things I can; and the wisdom to know the difference."

Coming to terms with the fact that there are many things that I cannot control gave me the faith that it would all work out in God's time. God is my rock, my rock of FAITH.

HOPE Celeste Covington

My rock is the rock of hope. Sometimes, it is hard to have hope. It is hard for me to see all of the problems in the world and to justify living as I do. Because I am a kid and still in school, I am learning about the injustice in the world but find myself unable to make a big difference. I have hope that someday, my generation will be able to make a real change in the world spreading God's grace.

We are growing up in an interesting time in history, living our entire lives after 9-11, growing up during the war on terrorism, and intense elections. I think that this gives us an interesting perspective on the world and its problems. I realize that I am also heavily influenced by adults in my life like my teachers and parents, and I have learned that what happens during your coming of age experience can really shape your life. Each generation

turns out a little bit differently based on their childhoods, and our generation's unique coming of age time can really shape the future (for the better?). It might be my innocent view of the world, but I hope that I can make a real change in the world. There are too many people in our world who need help for me to continue to live oblivious to their problems.

- I HOPE that I will have the strength to make a real change in our world and to make a real difference.
- I have HOPE that I can realize that my problems are not as big as I think they are, and that I can work to fix them and others problems.
- I have HOPE that I can put my faith in God and let him lead me where I need to go and follow his path for me.
- I have HOPE that this is not just me youthful optimism and innocence, and that I can follow this path for the rest of my life.
- I have HOPE that I can grow in my faith and help make the world a better place.

There is so much to be done, and I hope that I can start now. God is my rock, my rock of HOPE.

LOVE Erin Osborne

My rock is love. I say the word love all of the time. I am constantly telling my parents, my friends, my brother and my sister that I love them. However, I feel that the word love is thrown around almost to the point where the meaning behind the word is lost. I am guilty of this. When I am telling someone that I love them, whoever it may be, even I sometimes fail to see the heavy weight that comes when someone says love.

When I searched for the definition of love on Google, it said that love was an "intense feeling of deep affection." Immediately hearing that definition, my mind flew to my dog. I have an almost two-year-old Golden Retriever named Murray. He is literally my best friend and we have so much fun together. Dogs are the types of animals that give endless affection and expect nothing in return. They only wish to see you happy and proud of them. Now I'm sure many of you can see where this is going. Relating God to a dog may seem odd, but the similarities are worth noticing. God loves us unconditionally, without fail, and that love will never end, similar to a dog's affection towards its owner.

Jerry Bridges, who was an evangelical author and speaker said that "God's unfailing love for us is an objective fact affirmed over and over in the Scriptures. It is true whether we believe it or not. Our doubts do not destroy God's love, nor does our faith create it. It originates in the very nature of God, who is love."

So, next time, you are playing with your dog...remember that the love you feel from that furry animal is only a fraction of the love that God has for you. And there is nothing that you can do to lose that love, for God IS LOVE. God is my rock, my rock of LOVE.

COURAGE Jay Bangle

My rock is courage. For the past six months I have been injured with Osgood Schaltter's Disease. Osgood Schlatter's Disease is the inflammation of the growth plates just below the knee. This inflammation causes pain just below knee which prevents me from doing some of my daily activities such as running.

Running is one of my favorite things to do because it helps me to relieve stress and I always feel happy and accomplished after my runs. When I'm not able to run I feel like I'm missing a part of my life. For these past six months I have been doing whatever I can to get back to running, whether that be going to physical therapy, the chiropractor, stretching, strengthening exercises, or cross training. I have tried to get back into running on multiple occasions but they have all ended in pain and disappointment. It has been a tough six months not being able to run. But I believe God has a plan for me and He chose for this to happen so I will become stronger.

Joshua 1: 9 states, "Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go." This passage occurs when God is speaking to Joshua after Moses death, where He tells Joshua to lead the Israelites across the Jordan River to the Promised Land. God tells Joshua to be strong and courageous and to not be afraid because He will always be by Joshua's side. God is always by our side through the toughest times even when we don't feel like he is there. This can be hard to believe sometimes.

During this period of time I sometimes have trouble believing that God is there with me and He is there to help me. Sometimes I feel that God is there to just punish me and make me feel miserable even though my experience is minor compared to others such as losing a loved one. I just have to realize that God has a plan for me and that I just need to keep pushing and believing that I will overcome this challenge with the help of God.

Jeremiah 29:11 says, "For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future." God is not there to harm us even though it seems like it sometimes. God has plans to give you hope and a future. We will all go through tough times. But during those times we need to believe that God is there for us and he knows what's best. God is my rock, my rock of COURAGE.

PEACE Anna Palmer

My rock is peace. Peace. In these past few years I think peace something this world desperately needs. From the Presidential election to equal rights and the problems going on like displacement of refugees, Syria's war, and day to day news stories about racism and violence. It seems like everyday its harder and harder to imagine what a war-free, love-filled, accepting-of-all, world would be like. The world that God described in the Book of Genesis.

Jubilee Partners is the place that I imagine it could be. For those who don't know, Jubilee is a safe haven for refugee families just outside of Athens. They live in Christian community with other refugee families and long term American volunteers, as they begin their new lives in an environment of love and support.

Our youth group spent a Sunday night with them in January. We took a tour of the property, then went on a silent walk imagining the long walk that many refugees had to make through war, risking theirs and their families lives for freedom. After the walk we sat down for a worship and listened to music in different languages. Bringing everyone all together in one room as just ONE. It would seem to me that is the definition of peace: agreement and harmony among people. God is my rock, my rock of PEACE.

KINDNESS Maggie DeMaria

My rock is kindness. Holding open a door for a stranger. Offering advice to a friend. Loving someone no matter what. All of these things are different ways of sharing kindness. Kindness is something we see in our everyday lives, but we don't always know it's there. It likes to hide in the deepest, darkest crevices of our world, but it happens to come out in unexpected circumstances.

Kindness reminds me a lot of the Holy Spirit, which is always nearby, waiting to assist us when we need it the most. However, kindness seems to be a lot harder to find lately. In a world torn with wars based on religion, gender, sexual orientation, and political preferences, we seem to forget about kindness. Even kids can see the lack of sympathy we grant towards one another simply because we disagree on something with someone. Just because your sister voted for the presidential candidate you dislike doesn't mean you treat them differently. Just because someone sees themselves in a new light that you don't agree with doesn't mean you treat them differently. Our differences should bring us together instead of apart, and this happens by kindness, not hatred or violence.

We never know really know the impact our kindness can have on others. This past summer, I had a friend who went on a mission trip and became best friends with a girl named Allison. While my friend didn't know this, she was showing a kindness to Allison that was much needed. At the end of the week, Allison's uncle, who was also on the mission trip reached out to my friend. He thanked her for reaching out to Alison, because that small bit

of kindness was helping Allison to move forward after her grandfather's recent death. God is my rock, my rock of KINDNESS.

GRACE Grace Ferguson

Hey my name is Grace Ferguson, and my rock is grace. I have been hearing the word "Grace" everyday for my whole life, but not until recently have I really understood the whole truth behind the word. I grew up hearing it all the time in church and thinking it was so cool that I was always so talked about. I mean the bible never mentions an "Ed" or a "Pratt" (my brothers), but it didn't take too long to realize that they weren't referring to me as a person but something much bigger.

If you look up "Grace" on google, like I did before writing this, it would tell you that "Grace in Christianity is the free and unmerited favor of God as manifested in the salvation of sinners and the bestowing of blessings." It took a second and a couple times re-reading this to understand what it meant. What I took from it is that God's grace is like his love for us, kids learn about God's love early on and is much easier to understand. But grace is a little harder, at least for me it was.

I have two quotes that have helped me to better understand the meaning of grace. The first is by Suzanne Jones, she said, "Grace is God's love that seeks us out when we have nothing to return". God will always love us no matter what and it is his grace that allows him to do it. It is everlasting and will never fail. The second quote is by Gerald G. May, he said, "Grace is a boundless offering of God's self to us, suffering with us, overflowing with tenderness. Grace is God's passion".

When asked to write this for today, I panicked. I have never done anything like this before. I have never enjoyed public speaking, but who does? It is always scary. God's grace pushed me to say yes to Miss Kim who thought I could do this. God's grace is the reason I am up here talking to all of you.

On our church ski trip that I got to be a part of in February, we were asked to think of a word or a phrase to put on a bracelet. My phrase was "God's grace". This is because when I look at the words, I remember to try to act through them. This is MUCH easier said than done. But they still make you think about being better or at least trying to be better. God's grace allows us to try our bests to be better, through him we want to do good. His grace is why we are forgiven of all of our sins, why we mess up but keep trying. God keeps forgiving and keeps loving through his grace.

"May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all." - 2 Corinthians 13:14. God is my rock, my rock of GRACE.

GOD Campbell Abbott

My rock is God. God has been always present in my life. He has been there, solid like a rock, for everything i have done. He has blessed me with the good in my life and helped me through the bad. The keywords that have been used prior are all part of mine and everyone's journey in their spiritual life.

Faith, love, joy, courage and strength, peace, forgiveness, hope, kindness and grace.

Faith, that whatever happens in our life is part of His perfect plan. We have to have faith to see that whatever good and bad that happens is part of a perfect plan.

Love, His love for us is never ending, we also need to show this same love to other people as he has shown to us no matter what, race, preferences, belief system, or political spectrum they represent.

Joy, joy in knowing that God is our rock and will never leave us and be there for us. Joy in realizing that He sent His son to us to die for our sins, and that that son is not dead and is also with us.

- Courage and Strength, having courage to believe that whatever happens, good or bad, that God will never waiver, and strength to persevere through the bad that happens and for our trust in him to never waiver either.
- Peace, having peace knowing that all that happens in the world is all temporary and that one day this world will know what that is. Peace that knowing God is here to fix all our problems, in his own way. Peace in knowing that there is eternal life after this one that that eternal life is nothing but peace.
- Forgiveness, God forgives us because he is a loving father. We also need to show forgiveness to all those who have maybe done something wrong to us as God does for us.
- Hope, we do this alot. Hope that someone gets better, we get a job, and other things like that. We hope God does the things we ask. He does, but that can come in a variety of ways. And if not, we hope He has a plan for us. Which he does.
- Kindness, similar to love, we get this from God when we do not deserve it. He is kind as well as loving.

 Kindness, also like love, is something we need to show to people in every way we can as God does for us.
- Grace, maybe the thing that God gives to us the most that we deserve the least. His grace is amazing. Even more amazing is that he gives it to us. He could just let us go as soon as we sin and leave us there like we should. But no, His grace saves us and keeps us with Him. Ephesians 2: 8-9 says "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: 9 Not of works, lest any man should boast." We have not saved ourselves, but God's grace has.

All these things are why God is my rock.

RESPONDING TO THE WORD OF GOD

*Affirmation of Faith David Magrino

Please stand and join me in the Affirmation of Faith, as we state what we believe using part of the Belhar Confession.

We believe that Christ's work of reconciliation is made manifest in the church as the community of believers who have been reconciled with God and one another;

We believe that the unity of the people of God must be manifested and be active in a variety of ways: in that we love one another; that we experience, practice and pursue community with one another; that we are obligated to give ourselves willingly and joyfully to be of benefit and blessing to one another; that we share one faith, have one calling, are of one soul and one mind; have one God and Father, are filled with one Spirit, are baptized with one baptism, eat of one bread and drink of one cup, confess one name, are obedient to one Lord, work for one cause, and share one hope; together come to know the height and the breadth and the depth of the love of Christ; together are built up to the stature of Christ, to the new humanity; together know and bear one another's burdens, thereby fulfilling the law of Christ that we need one another and upbuild one another, admonishing and comforting one another; that we suffer with one another for the sake of righteousness; pray together; together serve God in this world; and together fight against all which may threaten or hinder this unity;

Prayers of the People

Ann Harper Covington

Loving and merciful God, we thank you for helping us gather all together today to come so we can worship and celebrate you.

Lord, we ask that you help clear our vision that is being clouded with unhappiness and to help us see what needs to be done to accomplish peace and justice in this world. We give thanks for the places that are peaceful, and ask that you help continue it.

We thank you for being with us during difficult and troubling times.

Lord, thank you for this loving community that we, as your children, have the privilege to be a part of. Please give strength to our community to keep loving each other and you. We ask that you look out for those who govern our community and other communities around the world, and that you are with them through easy and hard times.

Merciful God, help us share your love by helping those who are poor and oppressed. For those who are homeless, help them to take your hand so you can lead them to shelter. For those who are hungry, help them to look at you when they need nourishment, so you can assist them in finding food to satisfy their empty stomachs. For those who are suffering in poverty, help them to not lose sight of your love for them, and for those who have lost sight, help them to gain it back and trust in you and your path.

Lord, we ask that you hear those who seek love and who are not cared for, as they raise their voices and pray for your help.

We ask that you be with your children who are suffering from a sickness, and to help them through this troubling path. Be with them through the pain, the struggles, but also the recovery.

Please help the bereaved, and let them know that you are with them through their loss. Help them to turn to you in their times of sadness and to be wrapped up and comforted in your undying love for us.

We ask that you comfort the lonely, and that you are with your children who suffer in spirit. Help them to soak up your love, and to trust you at all times.

Thank you for giving those with special needs organizations that help them to live life to the fullest. Please help these organizations keep prospering and for more organizations to be made. We ask that you look out for those with special needs, and help them to be accepted and loved by all around them.

Those who have passed are remembered with thanksgiving. We ask that you help their families find peace and that they keep loving and praising you.

We give thanks for our wonderful church and it's congregation. Thank you for our ministry an those who minister, including the ecumenical council. Thank you for inspiring our ministers to devote their time to teaching your word to others. We thank you for churches all around the world, where everyday thousands of people gather together to worship you, learn from you, and to thank you for all that you have provided us with.

Great and glorious God, we thank you for granting us the privilege of getting to know your Son, who taught us to pray by saying...LORD'S PRAYER

Presentation of Offering

Offertory Elizabeth Gaskill

*Doxology Hymn 592

*Prayer of Dedication

Reid Bangle

Dear Lord, We thank you for all these amazing gifts, given to assist others so that we may see God's love for us all. Amen.

SENDING IN THE NAME OF GOD

*Sending hymn Dream On, Dream On (new 383)

*Benediction Robert Simmons

We want to thank you for worshipping with us today, and invite you to join us for a reception following the postlude in Fellowship Hall. As you leave the Sanctuary, ushers will be handing out rocks painted with the words we shared about today.

We'd like to ask you to find a place to leave your rock – maybe on the sidewalk, the grocery store, at school, the park...somewhere that it will be found by someone else, maybe just when they needed to be reminded of God's presence in their life. You can take a photo of where you leave your rock and post it at #AthRocks.

And now...

Go out into the world in **PEACE**;

have **COURAGE**;

show **KINDNESS** to your brothers and sisters;

bring **HOPE** to the fainthearted;

May your life be a witness to your FAITH in GOD's unending LOVE

And may the **GRACE** of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all.

*Congregational Response

We are one in the Spirit, we are one in the Lord We are one in the Spirit, we are one in the Lord And we pray that our unity will one day be restored And they'll know we are Christians by our love, by our love Yes they will know we are Christians by our love

Postlude

Maggie DeMaria and James Williams

Fellowship Hosts Eliza Downs, Katie Sue Martin-Williams, Evelyn Moser

Wall of Envelopes Charlotte Moser, Frances Thrasher

Ushers and Greeters Reid Bangle, Head Usher

Julian Attaway, John Ferguson, Charlotte Moser, Katie Norris, Frances Thrasher, Carolina Turner