

As You Go...

Pastor Luke Ham

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I think it important for us to recognize an event that has rocked our community to its core. On Thursday afternoon, Jake Javier, one of the graduating seniors at San Ramon Valley High School was involved in an accident at an after-school pool party which has left him largely paralyzed.

I have heard stories from our youth and parents who know Jake and his family and I think it is important for us as a congregation to take a moment to pray together for Jake and the Javier family. I was able to let one of Jake's siblings know we would be doing this and the family has expressed its gratitude for our prayers.

Will you pray with me?

(PRAYER)

Today is one of the most bittersweet and in many ways emotional Sundays of the year.... On one hand we get to celebrate these wonderful High School graduates who have been involved in the life of our church---but on the other hand we recognize that many of them will soon be headed away across the state and country as they begin the next stage of their lives.

And in a few ways this day is extra meaningful to me....Because I came onto the scene here at San Ramon Valley the summer before these students began their 8th grade confirmation class. And the first three people I met after starting my time here were Megan Bain, Mandy Bain, and Kelly Vanderwerf...all members of the class of 2016. And the way they welcomed me into their lives....welcomed me to this church....Well I will never forget it.

And because of our confirmation teachers Dory Schramm and Marla Nakaso I was able to get to know this class more closely as I went on many great field trips and retreats with them,

During my first year here, this class was always the biggest contingent at our middle school Youth groups and continued to stay involved in the church through their high school years in ways that many other classes do not.

Through mission trips, youth groups, 30-hour famines, Freshman kidnaps, sports games, Sunday school classes, Disneyland trips, college road trips, Thursday Night Dinners out, choir concerts, Fall Retreats at Monte Toyon, and the countless other hours we have spent together---I can tell you first hand that this group of graduates are a truly exceptional class and it won't be the same without them in our midst every week.

And this of course, this is a unique and to be honest an emotional Sunday for me as this is most likely the last class I will be leading a graduation Sunday for. As most of you know, we are currently searching for and hope to soon be welcoming a new youth director as I assume pastor Sunny's responsibilities.

So what can I say to a group such as this....A group that has meant so much to the life of this church and to me.....what can I offer to a group of adults who are so accomplished...

If you have ever been to one our youth Sunday school classes we usually watch an introductory video on the lesson and have in depth conversation about that week's teaching. But we always end with something called the bottom line: This is usually just 3 or4 words that sum up everything we have talked about so that the youth can communicate all that we did in a simple and quick way when their parents inevitably ask: "What did you learn in church today?"

So I thought the best advice I could give this morning is to share the Bottom Line of what it means to be a Christian in the United Methodist tradition.

3 Simple Rules that you may have heard before.

#1---Do No Harm: This is the first thing we should strive for. Youth when thinking about what can get you ahead in life...there will be temptations to take shortcuts...temptation to keep someone else down in order to prop yourself up. But you must remember to Do No Harm.

#2---Do Good: This is the rule that I believe the class of 2016 has exemplified the most. Through their mission work, fundraisers for various causes at school, helping

their friends and teammates- you have all experienced the importance of doing good in the world.

However, as pressures get even greater in adulthood, you may find yourself changing your priorities. But I strongly encourage you to not let the acts of kindness and good that you do fall to the back burner. Make them a priority.

If you can't do good in the world then the whole point of being a person of faith is missed. Jesus constantly called the disciples to action. Our Christian faith is not meant to be lived out in isolation...it is not meant to be a mere academic exercise...Bible Study and worship are very important...but we cannot forget to be Christ's hands and feet for good in the world.

Finally, Rule #3---Stay in Love with God. The traditional way this was stated was attend to the ordinances of God. This is where worship, communion, prayer and the study of scripture come in.

And I believe this can be the hardest one for college students and young adults to remember. It can be hard to make these things a priority. But I assure you, that they will be such a blessing to your life if you make the time for them. Your college campuses will be full of faith-based clubs and organizations and I encourage you to check them out.

The experience you have had with the church does not need to end today....you do not need to take a 4 year break from the church.

And when you are back in town for break---please come back and visit us....worship with us....share with us all the adventures you are having.

We are your family and we love you and we want to remind you that God loves you.

As you go from this place remember....

Do No Harm

Do Good

Stay In Love With God

That's the bottom line...that is what we have tried to instill in you during your time with us...

Do No Harm

Do Good

Stay In Love With God

Class of 2016, Those are the words I have to share with you this morning...But...I know that you also have words to share with us...

With that in mind we have a tradition at San Ramon Valley UMC- The Graduation Sand Ceremony.

I am going to ask the graduates to come forward and introduce themselves and first they are going to share a memory, lesson or experience that they are taking with them as they move on to the next adventure in their lives---this might be a memory from school...something they experienced in sports...or something they experienced at this church. After each one shares, they will take one of the crosses on the alter that is filled with sand. Each cross contains a rainbow of sand with each color symbolizing an individual in their class. Each one of the class of 2016 put some sand in each of these crosses. This will serve as a reminder to them of the wisdom and experiences they have gained from their time with one another as well as their SRVUMC family.

After each has received their cross, The graduates will then share a piece of wisdom that they would like to leave us with.... after which they will place sand in the container as a reminder that their influence and impact stays with us even as they leave.

Each graduate has their own color of Sand to represent them and this is a time where we take can take pleasure in seeing the beautiful piece of artwork they create together with their unique experiences, wisdom and personalities.

We keep each class' vase of Sand in our youth room to remind us of the everlasting impact they have had on us and that the church has had on them.