

Sixth Sunday of Easter
Youth Sunday 05/13/07
By Bethany Dietrich

Please pray with me. Dear God, Thank you so much for all the mothers, aunts, grandmothers, stepmothers, and godmothers that have blessed our lives with their love, care, and wisdom. Please keep them safe throughout the year help them to keep their patience with us unruly children. Thank you for the peace you brought us when you sent your Son amongst us. Amen.

I love my mother, as I am sure everyone in this room does. Her love is not just restricted to my dad, my brother, and me, but extended to everyone in- and outside of this sanctuary. I'm so lucky to have such a wonderful mom, and I'm really going to miss her when I leave semi-permanently in a few weeks and much more permanently in August, just as I am going to miss this church and the people here who have impacted my life throughout the years I've been a member. Thankfully, when I'm really lonely, I can look to God for the comfort He bestows upon us.

In case you didn't know, after this summer as a camp counselor at Briarwood, I will be attending Midland Lutheran College in Fremont, Nebraska. That is a long way from Texas, a long way from loving friends and family, a long way from y'all. And while I may love you all to pieces right now, it didn't start that way.

When Mom accepted the position here, I was devastated. As any good Lutheran would, I detested the major change in my life. I slipped from a semi-shining, soon-to-be young woman, to a sullen, depressed teen. One member jokingly told me, a year or so ago, that during my first six months as a member, he expected to open the Temple Daily News one morning and see a headline exclaiming that a young girl had imploded from anger. I thought that I kept my irate thoughts well concealed, but apparently not. During those worst six months of my life, I rejected everything- my friends, my hobbies, and even God. I didn't even want to attend my favorite summer activity- Briarwood, the camp I had attended for numerous years and had thoroughly enjoyed. But Mom packed me up and shipped me off, despite my protests. I am so thankful that she did because that is where I once again found love and peace for being myself from new-found friends and from God. Briarwood turned my life around. I'll never forget Mom telling me some time later that summer that Daryl, who had been one of my counselors, had stopped her and said that he really enjoyed having my vivacious attitude and smile around. Mom told me that she had been confused and thought that perhaps Daryl had confused me with another camper since I had arrived at camp a surly teenager. He told me in July at Day Camp that he was glad that he and the others in our village had helped me come out of my shell. I, too, am grateful for the love that they showed me, for it led me back into the arms of God. And as a counselor this summer, an active member here at First Lutheran, and a child of God, I want to help others, troubled or not, doubting or assured, morose or spirited, find the love, acceptance, and peace that Jesus shared with his

disciples that I found once I reopened my heart to the love of family, friends, and God.

My involvement here would never have taken a hold of my heart without that summer at camp, the peace that Jesus shares with us, or from the love and support I receive from y'all. You and God both love me through my mistakes and my accomplishments, both here and at school. Y'all love me for my logical ideas and my crazy ones. And I love you, too. Thank you to Cindy and Charles, to Birgit, to Sherry, to Becky, to Sara, and the many others who have impacted my life for the better. And thank you Brian, Troy, Christian, and Ryan for not totally ignoring and shunning the only girl in our senior high. All of the church activities I participate in are such a large part of my life, I know that I wouldn't have grown into the mature, Christian, young woman that I am today without them or God's helping hand.

Last year, my friends and I independently studied European history so that we could take the Advanced Placement exam in May and receive college credit. Sundays were the days that we got together to study, and I would always be late since I had more rewarding activities at church: the learning and spreading the Word and Love of God. And that is more important than who was the king of in 1517. However, while I couldn't care less about the king of in 1517, I do care about progress of the Reformation, because without Martin Luther and his 95 theses, y'all wouldn't be here with the same unconditional love that God imparts to us all. Thank you for your love, support, and prayers that I have received the

past three and a half years, and in the years to come that I will happily return.

Thank you for our wonderful time together. I will never forget the memories I have experienced within these walls.