

Towson Presbyterian Church  
Presbyterian Youth Triennium Sunday  
Rebecca McKenna, Ella Simet, Max Burkett  
Psalm 100 and Matthew 14:22-33  
2019 Triennium Theme: *“Here’s My Heart”*

**Rebecca McKenna**

I came into Triennium with high hopes after an inspiring and life-changing trip three years ago to Triennium. This year’s theme was all about offering your heart to God. I came into the week fully ready to commit my heart to God and explore my faith in whatever manner that may be. During the very first worship service I became aware that this week was about to be even more impactful than I expected. They played a song titled “Come As You Are.” My friends and I put our arms around each other and most of us couldn’t help but shed a few tears. The song’s main message was that no matter what burdens you; bring it to God’s table. He accepts you. This song set the tone for my week. I was constantly reminded that whatever pain was in my heart, I did not have to carry it alone. God is prepared to take anything that we offer him.

Throughout the week I began exploring the burdens on my heart; the biggest one being that this was my last youth group trip. I had no idea how I was supposed to grow in my faith or have these impactful experiences without Youth Group every Sunday and the 5 summer trips that I participated in, all of which had life-changing impacts on my faith. The next step in my faith journey seemed very unclear. Now I wish I could stand up here and tell you all that God came down and spoke to me and told me exactly what to do but unfortunately God doesn’t work that way most of the time. Instead, God presented with me the most amazing group of friends to experience this trip with and it was through them that I found peace in my heart.

After a pretty rocky senior year where I was surrounded by people who did not truly care about me, I was stunned to be surrounded by a group of people who were so loving and accepting. No one was ever left behind, and every person’s opinion and wellbeing mattered. I have never met a group of people who are so unapologetically themselves. We were constantly the outgoing group: dancing while we sang in worship, starting dance parties on the lawn that weren’t planned, and trading pins with everyone we met. The bonds that my now best friends and I formed in one week were incredible and I know it wouldn’t have been possible if we didn’t open up our hearts to God and each other. These friends gave the confidence to be totally myself without the fear of judgment and hope for my future because I know if I can surround myself with people like them in college then I will never be without God’s presence. For anyone who has the opportunity to go on youth trips or is still awaiting the day when they’ll be old enough to participate: please go because you are so lucky to have that opportunity and I promise if you go into it with an open mind and heart, God will speak to you in ways you’ve never known before.

## **Ella Simet**

Good morning, my name is Ella Simet and I will be a sophomore at Towson High School. The theme for our week at Triennium was “Here’s my Hear.t” This was my first time attending a youth gathering. Honestly, I was a little nervous going to Triennium because I have never been far away from home for this long. But I was also excited, I wasn’t sure what to expect but I had a feeling that it would be fun.

The week was filled with ways to build my faith and feel closer to God. There was music, dancing and singing. I was able to experience the presence of God through awesome sermons, positive energy, and kindness of others throughout the week.

When I first arrived, I was surprised at how many people were there and where they were from: England, Ireland, Guatemala, Puerto Rico, South Korea, and Japan, just to name a few. I found myself in a situation where I was encouraged to create new friendships and bonds with not only my fellow TPC attendees, but with many other people from around the country and the world. This was something I had never had to do before, and it was a lot of fun.

At Triennium, whenever I met someone, I would receive a pin from their state or country. This was a fun way of meeting people. Some of the pins were unique and that made pin trading very intense. One of the rare pins was from McKinley, Texas. Everyone wanted this pin! Some even offered to pay for it or trade all their pins for it. I approached one of the girls that had the pin and I offered any of my pins for her rare pin. She took a hard look at my pins and looked at me, laughed, tossed my name tag with my pins on the ground and told me they weren’t good enough! Intense, right? Needless to say, I didn’t get the rare pin, but I did get a pin from my hometown Buffalo, New York that meant more to me!

I was assigned a dorm room and roommate who I didn’t know very well and we soon became friends, talking into the late hours of the night about our trip and other topics well past “light’s out” at 11:30...sorry, Joel!!!

It was amazing to see four to five thousand people at the daily worship service. While at the worship service, the Reverends spoke on topics directly related to things that are on the minds of young people. Especially how social media impacts the lives of young adults. It expanded my faith in God, helped me become more aware of how I can help the less fortunate, and made me realize we are all intertwined in the world and should always be thinking of ways we can help each other. The music was very upbeat, and we could not help but get lost in the moment and break out into a dance group on several occasions! During the worship services, you could feel the power and presence of God.

Once I returned home, I reflected on how my relationship with God has grown and I feel like I can put my trust in God more than ever and feel that God is involved in every aspect of my life. I never feel alone. Also, attending Triennium and hearing others share their stories about their trust in God helps me put my trust in God as well.

I would like to thank the many people at TPC that gave so generously to TPC stock and helping us make this trip...thank you!

## **Max Burkett**

This is the second time I have been called to Triennium. The first time I was but a wee little freshman. I was unsure what to expect, very shy, and extremely awkward around other people. 3 years later I'm taller, a bit more comfortable talking to other people, and much more extroverted; however, I would still consider myself reserved when it comes to emotions or feelings. Good, bad, happy, sad - I always struggle to let others know. The theme of Triennium this year seems no coincidence to me: "Here's my Heart." The one thing I don't like doing with thousands of people I don't know and yet it was one of the best weeks of my life. Twice.

One of the stories we talked about over the week of Triennium was Matthew 14, the famous walking on water story. I've heard this story about a hundred times and each time I hear it I become desensitized to the ludicrousness of this event. The disciples are in a boat in the open ocean with high winds and choppy waves when they see Jesus walking on the choppy waves out to the boat. Now I don't know about y'all but 1) that sounds pretty crazy and 2) I would definitely want to stay in that boat where its, for the most part, dry and safe. But Jesus tells Peter to come and he steps out of the boat. He steps out of comfort and puts his trust and his life in the hands of the Lord.

Given the chance to go to Triennium twice, I have been lucky enough to be called out of the boat twice. Once to overcome my fear of others' perceptions of me and the other to overcome my fear of being vulnerable to others. I stepped out of my boat, out of my comfort, and right into the raging waves of my fears. In order to get the most out of the trip this year I had to try to relate to the wee little freshman that I used to be, even with my past three years of experience and entirely different issues, as I was the oldest in my small group. Over Triennium I learned that telling the world "Here's my Heart!" and making myself vulnerable to others is not one of my strengths, but if you offer it to God and let him seal it and hold it, you can find comfort in your faith because God knows how you feel even if you don't let it show.

Triennium has been one of the best weeks of my life both times and I learned in two very different ways that you just have to step out of the boat and put all your trust and heart into God because He often hides the best joy behind fear. Facing a fear doesn't always have to be instant and it doesn't always have instant gratification; however, I challenge you all to take the first step toward stepping out of the boat. If that's figuring out what your boat or comfort zone is, what/ who is calling you out of the boat, how you can step out of the boat, and if you've thought of all of this already: just do it. You won't regret it.