



DAY 25

Love Like Jesus

Romans 15:7 - Therefore welcome one another as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God.

Between growing up at Mantua Center Christian Church and going to Camp Christian every summer, I have had an extremely healthy experience with religion in my life. With love, acceptance, and community being at the core of MCCC and camp, both are very special places.

Throughout over 10 years of being a camper I met people with various religious backgrounds. Some came from big churches, others from churches even smaller than ours, and some who didn't go to church at all. Having conversations with fellow campers about their faith journeys made me feel extremely lucky that MCCC has been part of mine. While some have a church somewhat comparable to Mantua Center, numerous people experience judgement and dysfunction at their place of worship, finding themselves without a real home. I have been at MCCC since I was two years old and it is the only church I can remember calling home. I also grew up under the assumption that all religious institutions functioned like this one, which is sadly far from true.

While every church can always seek to be more welcoming, some have a very long way to go. Talking to my friends and fellow campers, some have felt unwelcome in their churches because of who they are, how much money they are able to give, or even because of personal disputes and drama. For many, Camp Christian is the church where they feel most safe, accepted, and loved. My faith grows with every summer at camp as I see my friends experience love like I have at Mantua Center: love like Jesus.

Unconditional and unquenchable, this type of love gives me faith despite a world that so often feels overrun by hate. Lost in the political and social turmoil of today is the fact that we are all God's children and deserve to be loved and to love as Jesus did. I knew people who came to Camp Christian year after year despite the fact that they did not believe in God, because the beloved community had touched them so profoundly. That unconditional love and acceptance, whether one calls it God or by any other name, inspires and comforts people more than anything else. Again and again in my young life I have witnessed that loving like Jesus is infinitely more moving than simply talking about him.

**Loving God, may we as a congregation continue to strive to live and love like Jesus.
Amen**

– Josh Delaney