

Khanum (Hana) Gevorgyan;
Waimea United Church of Christ
Grace Scholarship
29.03.2018

“For He will command his angels concerning you to guide you in all your ways” (Psalm 91:11)

A few days ago Pastor Olaf emailed me to let me know about the Grace Scholarship that Waimea United Church of Christ offered to WHS alumni. The essay question was, “What your Christian Faith has meant to you during high school.” This question made me think back more than any photo or video that I have taken in Hawaii. For students, who leave their country at the age 17 or even less and have a specific religion they follow, their faith towards the religion grows more and more while they are away from their beloved. They know that whatever they plan for themselves will be blessed as they carry their beliefs. For me, my faith was what pushed me through my senior year, my exchange year and continues to push me through any challenge that life puts in front of me.

For a 17-year-old girl, who never traveled outside of Armenia and suddenly was in the middle of a mixed-culture community, the Christian faith was what pushed through the adjustment process. It is not as easy as it seems to be a senior at a high school where there are representatives of different races and religions. I have been in a lot of situations when I was tired of the comments on my skin color, my accent, my English and everything else that was different. I have even had a few disagreements with students because of this kind of situations. No-one knew about this, and if my host mom reads this essay one day, she will as well be surprised. But, when you have your Bible under your pillow, which is the only thing in Armenian that you have, and you read, you can overcome any kind challenge that hits you. My faith told me to be patient and do good to be accepted by everyone as the angels He has sent are guiding me.

How do you motivate a student who thinks he/she is ready to give up? This is the question that I asked myself every time the teachers would assign us an essay or a reading which had words that I have never seen. It is the hardest thing to write an essay, a paper or even read a book in a language that you are not proficient in. When your heart speaks Armenian, it is impossible for your mind to read/write in English; therefore no writing in English, no graduation, no experience, and no exchange. Such catastrophic situations were overcome by a simple prayer in Armenian, “Հայր մեր, որ յերկինս ես... [Hayr mer, vor yerkins es].” Every time I prayed, I felt like I was being baptized. My soul would relax, and my mind would focus and tell itself, “Faith did not bring you all the way to Kaua’i to bring reason for failure.”

Lastly, I would like to mention that my Faith was with me all the time during the exchange and the academic year at Waimea High School, which is one of the best memories that I have made so far. But what made my faith stronger was the Waimea United Church of Christ, Aunty Teri, Pastor Olaf and every single person that attended the Sunday worship services. Every single person, no matter the age, the race, the personality and all the other factors, made me believe in God and Christianity more as sometimes I would get confused between the

crossroads of religions in America. These people, no matter how difficult it was to wake up every morning around 8:30 to attend the service, made my Sundays brighter and soul lighter. The Waimea United Church of Christ was completely different from the churches in Armenia, but I enjoyed it fully. The speeches, the chants, the smiles and gratitude in people's eyes made me believe in the real power of Christianity in uniting people. Today, I am grateful for the experience.

Surrounding me with such people, having my faith in them and myself helped me to become open-minded, tolerant and patient. Christianity has been, is and will be my religion even though I like to surround myself with people who have various religious beliefs. To sum up, I am happy I wrote this essay, as I have never really had a chance to look back at things and people that pushed me through my Waimea experience and say "Thank you."