

Youth Sunday Talk – Chelsea Greene

Good Morning! My name is Chelsea Greene, and I am currently a senior at Princess Anne High School. Next year I plan to either attend the University of Virginia or the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill to major in business.

For as long as I can remember, Emmanuel has been a constant in my life. I have been attending this church since my family moved to Virginia Beach from Rhode Island when I was about six months old, and I cannot remember a time when Emmanuel did not play a big part in my life. In fact, my first memory of our church dates back to this time, but not to a specific event—more to a specific person. You see, to a three-year old, the whole hierarchy of the church and the Episcopalian religion as a whole can kind of go over your head. So, in my mind, God was a parishioner of Emmanuel Episcopal; however, he was not just any parishioner. In my mind, Father Peter was the man, the myth, the legend; the one and only God. I remember staring in awe at “Father God” as I used to refer to him as, and the picture down the hall of Father Peter wearing the angel costume still provokes a little admiration. It took many Sunday school lessons of “God lives in your heart” as I used to repeat constantly, to clear up this little misconception. My other very vivid set of memories as a little girl are of me screaming to my parents regularly because I was scared to death of, you guessed it, clowns. In my memories, it seemed like those scary sticker-giving, creatures were at EVERY service and entirely devoted to scaring me with those “Jesus loves me” stickers. I mean, what could possibly be more intimidating?

But, regardless of my three-year old misconceptions, all of my memories at Emmanuel have placed it in my life as a place of great comfort and security, and this comfortable air has allowed me to learn much about myself and my faith. Every year I have learned more and more about myself, but, as many people in my youth group can point to, my most significant experience by far has been my pilgrimage to California a few years back. Though the change I experienced is nothing I can really even attempt to describe through words, I can point to a few factors that provoked the change: first, the scenery of the area we traveled through was phenomenal. During this experience, I finally understood how nature can affect your faith—to see the vastness of my surroundings and the beauty of it all really did affect me spiritually. The other major factor in this trip was the group of youth that I traveled with. Though we went into this trip absolutely sure that we were as close as group could get, we left more of a community than I could ever imagine. I learned so much about these wonderful people, and they helped me to learn about myself. I realized that Jan and I were scarily similar with our issues with perfection and slight cases of OCD, I realized how good of sports the boys on that trip were as we forced them to parade around in tie-dye hot pink shirts twice throughout the trip, but most of all we grew comfortable enough as a group to talk about our beliefs and faith, which the difficulty of finding a group like this I did not even realize until my return to reality.

This is my favorite part of Emmanuel: not the crazy clowns which I have come to adore,

not the soup Sundays which are delicious beyond belief, but the welcoming nature of Emmanuel. Because I have been the worrisome, over analytical child my whole life, I made the realization quite a long time ago that at some point I will graduate and no longer live in Virginia Beach and that this means that I will be able to attend Emmanuel Episcopal. I also realized that not many churches are like Emmanuel: warm, accepting, and welcoming to all. So while I do blame this whole congregation for spoiling me as a child, I also thank you for being my role models for these past 18 years. Though I am still scared that finding a new church like Emmanuel may be near impossible, the time has almost come to make my attempts and because I have grown up around the sort of people that attend Emmanuel, I know I will have the strength and courage to give it my best shot.