

Youth Sunday Talk – Becky Watson

Good morning! My name is Becky Watson, and I have been a member of Emmanuel Episcopal Church for about 11 years now. I am currently a senior at Salem High School, and it has been a great four years, but I am definitely ready to graduate!

I can't say that I necessarily remember much about my first few years at Emmanuel. I came to church and Sunday school because my parents told me I had to, and that was pretty much the end of that discussion. I used to sit with my friend Suzanne in Sunday school, and we wouldn't let anyone else sit with us because as far as we were concerned, boys were gross. Church and Sunday school seemed boring, but those few times when my teacher brought in cupcakes made it worth coming.

During Middle school and into High school, I went through a rougher patch with church. I whined and complained every Sunday about having to come, and then I whined some more while I was here. I got to know my parents evil eyes very well during this period of time as I occasionally acted up during the service. It wasn't that God, my religion, and my faith didn't mean anything to me, it was just that time in my life where I thought I had more important things to be doing.

I continued to believe that church was pretty uninteresting and kind of a waste of time up until about the fall of my sophomore year. This is when I attended my Happening. I didn't know it at the time, but this weekend would end up being my first big step in the right direction towards God. I can't really tell you why this weekend was so special because I am still trying to determine that myself, but all I know is that it was amazing, and it changed my life.

After that, my faith started on an uphill path. I began attending every EYC retreat offered every year. I developed a great network of friends from other Episcopal churches all around southern Virginia, and I came back after every retreat feeling so revived and enthusiastic about being a Christian. I went on a pilgrimage with my youth group and discovered that some of the people that would become my best and truest friends had been right under my nose all along; and I gave a talk in church last year about my faith and received an overwhelming amount of support from the congregation.

This past fall, I received what I consider to be one of the biggest honors of my entire life; I was chosen to be the next Rector for Happening #53, which is coming up this Friday. This is the weekend that originally started me on my path towards God, and it is such an incredible feeling to know that I will be leading the next group of Happeners through hopefully that same experience. I have to thank my Emmanuel family, especially my youth leaders, Melissa and Mary Lou, for encouraging and supporting me throughout all these years because without them, I don't think I would have had the confidence to pursue a role like this.

This coming August, I will be starting my next life journey as I head up to Blacksburg, VA and become a Hokie. I am going to be studying Biology with hopes of one day working in a Neonatal Intensive Care Unit. I am excited about starting this new chapter, but I am also sad to be leaving Emmanuel for so much of the year. I have friends here; I have adults that care about me and look out for me, and I have kids that I have been babysitting for years that I absolutely love and adore. I will be away from my home away from home, but I find great comfort in knowing that I will be welcomed with open arms when I come back to visit.

I can't thank my parents enough for all their love and support through all my good and my bad times and for keeping me involved in the amazing community we have here. I love my Emmanuel family; it will always have a very special place in my heart no matter where life takes me. Thank you.