

This church has been my home for 18 years, 3 months and 2 days. Over the years, I have been raised to know that on Sundays- except for a few summer Sundays- I belong at church. Like every teenager ever, I resented that sometimes, but now I'm nothing but thankful.

Life has been a wild ride and things are always changing, but this church never has. Everything around me is constantly changing- best friends, schools, boyfriends, people dying and people being born and even the people sitting in the pews around me- but one thing that never changed was that on Sundays when I walked through the doors, someone would shake my hand and the chandeliers would still hang and the carpet would still be red and Larry's organ playing could still be heard from any place within a 100 mile radius.

I knew that God was there and is here but for the longest time, I just couldn't figure out where. Over the past summer, I was reborn in my faith working at a christian summer camp. At first, it was just a job, decent money and on a lake so I couldn't complain. But one day I was sitting in chapel listening to a paralyzed teenager tell us about how God got him through everything he's been through. I burst into tears and my camp best friend hugged me and prayed with me. That was the day I realized that God is everywhere. He was in the chapel that day and he is in everyone- working tirelessly all the time. Luke, the kid who was never supposed to even be able to feel below his rib cage can now walk with a walker-- incase you were wondering.

I realized that if I ever needed advice, I could open my bible and no matter what passage I was reading, God would tell me something- whether it was was I was looking for or not. I finally realized that I was never alone with God. I would spend every morning sitting on the dock with my feet in the water- reading my bible and drinking coffee. I realized that whenever I looked at a lake or ocean I was moved because I knew that God was there in the beautiful things

Your makeup
looks too good to
cry!

When I was five, I saw God every Sunday morning when he walked down the aisle, because I thought that Pastor Mark was God. Today, I was asked to tell you all about how and where I see God now. I've sat in this choir loft and listened to so many seniors give this same sermon, and the wheels have been turning for so long, but now that it's finally my turn to do this I'm not even sure where to start, so, I guess the answer is everywhere and nowhere all at same time.

Don't look at mom...
She's crying.

I look at the world, and I see things that scare me and worry me and sadden me- I see the Detroit Public Schools students not getting an education because teachers aren't getting paid to teach them; I see residents in flint not able to even drink water; and I see women being beaten, raped and forced into prostitution. I think how could all these bad things when God is so good. How could the same God who created the people in these pews and the never ending beauty of the ocean and music be the same God who lets these bad things happen.

At the beginning of my senior year, a friend of mine committed suicide and one of my close Friends Rochelle, who worked at summer camp with me taught me something I think about everyday. She said that God doesn't hurt us, he hurts with us. I have to want to see God in everything and I will. If I just open my eyes a little bit wider, I see the teachers who give up parts of their paycheck to provide classroom materials for their kids because they deserve and education no matter what. I see clubs, schools, and organizations all over the state having water drives so that people can drink clean water, and I see programs like Women At Risk International that tirelessly raise money and save women from the brothels that they live in.

that he created. ^{Pause} There's endless water and endless possibilities and endless creatures in it, and beautiful sunsets, but when even when I'm ~~in water all by myself~~ ^{I'm all alone,} I'm surrounded by God.

He most certainly has a plan for all of us. Since this summer, I've really lived by the motto "let go and let god" as Kendall Jennings told me once. When it came time for me to choose where I was going to go to college, I was planning on going to Michigan State, but then they ended up messing up my application, and I remember being in the school hallway on the phone with anyone and everyone that could quickly help me get this problem solved. In between phone calls, I was in tears and I just put my head into my hands and then looked up out the window at the lake and I knew right then that this was God's plan for me to not be at Michigan State, so In the fall, I will be attending Hope College.

T-Rex making a bed
don't cry

In this month, I will have gone to my last prom, taken my last tests, been with my friends for the last few weeks together, and graduated. I'm really full of unknowns. Everything in my life is changing, and I really have no clue where else God will take me in life, but I'm not worried because I know it will be somewhere and he will be with me every step of the way.

I know God and this church
will be with me every
step of the way.