

“Very truly I tell you, whoever believes in me will do the works I have been doing, and they will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father”

Growing up in the episcopal church, I learned a lot about this really cool guy named Jesus. He lived up in the clouds, taking care of his sheep and watching over me. I knew he loved me because that's what the bible said. I talked about him every Sunday with my friends while eating goldfish and drinking apple juice after church. It was great.

What I didn't understand is that Jesus is not just a person who lived a really long time ago. He was the son of God who I could and would form a relationship with. And little did I know that he would take me on a wonderful journey laid out in his perfect image.

I started my relationship with Christ in Sarasota, FL at a church called the Redeemer. I grew up going there and felt so comfortable there despite the relatively large congregation size. I knew everyone there, and everyone knew me. It was home. It was comfortable. But sometimes comfortable isn't in Jesus's plan. He wants us to have new experiences and take advantage of growing in ourselves and in our faith. That's when he decided my family should move to Greenville, South Carolina. It was a big jump. 10 hours away from where I formerly called home. I didn't know anyone and I was uncomfortable with that.

I longed for a church exactly like Redeemer where I could continue my relationship with God. Though I never found it because no one church is exactly the same, I was presented with something equally as great.

St. Peter's Episcopal Church. A special place right around the corner of my house where everyone was welcoming and had the biggest smiles on their faces. This was the place I had been looking for, where God had intended

for me to be. And St. Peters gave me much more than I could have ever imagined.

I met two of my best friends within these very walls and I cannot imagine my life without them.

I was introduced to the wonderful community of Diocesan Youth Leadership Committee where I extended my family and built relationships through Christ. I was given the opportunity to go to Happening, a retreat for high schoolers, and experience the love of God in a completely new way. But most importantly, St. Peters gave me three amazing priests during the time i've been here that have helped shape this congregation into such a wonderful group of people. I could not be more happy for the experiences and times that I have had here. And for that I would like to say thank you to each and everyone of you for making St. Peters such a special and sacred place.

In the Gospel reading today, we heard about the disciples fishing after Jesus had risen from the dead. They went out one night expecting to catch at least a few fish but they turned up empty handed. They had almost given up hope when a figure on the beach told them to change what they had been doing. In this new day, the disciples changed their perspective. They took advantage of a new opportunity presented to them and did as Jesus said. They fished on the other side of the boat and the results were a million times greater than before.

We have to take this lesson into our own hands and apply it to our lives. This congregation is filled with many different people in all different stages and in all walks of life. However, whether you are 5 years old or 80 years young, you can always take advantage of new opportunities. And as I leave this wonderful church and group of people, I know that I am just taking the next step in my faith and in my life. Though it may be scary, I know I need to take full advantage of every opportunity presented to me and trust in God because I know he has a plan.