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## *Youth Sunday Sermon – Rebie Benedict*

**A sermon by Cathedral senior Rebie Benedict  
The Fourth Sunday of Easter – Youth Sunday**

Hello everyone. My name is Rebie Benedict and I'm a senior at North Atlanta High School, and I'm going to the University of Georgia this fall. I've grown up here at the Cathedral, and I can attribute thousands of happy memories to this church. Every Sunday for years my mom would wake up my two sisters and I up and drag us to the 8:45 a.m. service. I was a grumpy child and would complain about waking up early and leaving sleepovers and friends houses to go to church. The only thing I looked forward to was the little coloring packets and hot chocolate after the service. I am so appreciative of my mom for taking us to the services and Sunday School as a child. I wouldn't be standing here without that.

Psalm 23 says, "The Lord is my shepherd." This is arguably one of the most well known verses in the Bible, but it has always resonated with me. For as long as I can remember, I've had this little ceramic square hanging in my bathroom. It has a painting of Jesus with his crook and a small sheep by his side and in pink letters says "The Lord is my shepherd." Looking at this every day for 18 years, it's ingrained in my mind. I really like this analogy. I truly believe that Jesus is a shepherd for each one of us. Jesus will always lead you and guide you in the right direction. Even if you stay away from the flock, Jesus will always come looking for you, he will not leave you behind.

My faith journey has had a lot of ups and downs. Before March 2020, I was involved in every possible church event I could. I participated in youth diocese events. I was part of the diocese commission, planning and leading weekend retreats for youth across north Georgia up at Camp Mikell. I was on team for the Happening retreat. I've met so many amazing people over the years who I still keep in touch with. Here at the church, I participated in weekly Bible study. I am a confirmation mentor and was on the youth leadership team. I have also been an acolyte for six years. (Thank you acolytes here today.)

Once COVID hit, it was all gone. We still had diocese Zoom calls, and I helped lead worship and plan online events, but it wasn't the same. I didn't realize how much of my life and my happiness came from the church community until I lost it. My faith was rock solid but it slowly dissolved as I was isolated alone during quarantine. I've learned that my faith and my trust in God doesn't come from reading scripture or reciting prayers, but the environment and the community and being surrounded by people who love you and love God.

My faith was so much more than just coming and coloring during the 8:45 service. It is the atmosphere here at church; that is what I missed the most. It was the people here I know I can always trust. Special shoutout to all of the people who I've grown up with in the church, and explored our faiths together. No matter what the situation was at school or at tennis practice or at home, I always have my church community to fall back on. Every week I look forward to seeing the people I've trusted forever. The comfort I feel at church is something I can't find anywhere else.

Although I am sad to leave my friends here, I am excited for what's next. I have a strong foundation in my faith and I know what it means to me. I know that there will be times where I am tempted to stray away from the flock, but I know God will always be my shepherd and keep me grounded.

I am so appreciative of everything this church has given me. I've learned so much about myself and created lifetime friendships. (Go Dawgs!)

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