

“But I am only a little child and do not know how to carry out my duties.”

A child’s cry to God for help. A child who has had a world of responsibility thrust upon him and who has no idea where to start or what to do. A child who is afraid of not being able to live up to the great ruler before him cries for help from an even greater ruler. But, now that he is to rule the land as a child, is he truly still a child?

With responsibility comes growth, with growth comes maturity, and with great maturity comes even greater responsibility. It’s a never ending cycle, which we all learn throughout our lives. It is where and when we start to learn this that is important. What would we be if sudden expectations were never thrust upon us unexpectedly? Where would we be if we never learned even the smallest of responsibility as children? Many don’t get to learn so young what the real essence of family means. I was fortunate to grow up with this meaning, love surrounding me in every step I took and every step I still take today. I found this here, at St. Michael and all Angels.

With responsibilities we feel important, we feel included. As children we must be able to enjoy childhood, but there needs to be a point in which they start to grow.

Solomon started early, with greater responsibilities than any of us have taken on as children, and would grow from it. And although I never had to rule a kingdom, I started at six, and I started here.

To me, St. Michael and All Angels has been my family, an extended family. Here, I have always felt a part of something, of a community where I am both loved and respected. Through St. Michaels I have grown and learned some very important life lessons with everyone at my side ready to help. Through this church I have come a long way, and even now, while I am no longer able to attend every Sunday, due to my now very adult responsibilities, I still walk in the doors and feel like part of a family.

St. Michaels has helped me learn to relate to people at all levels and all ages. You have taught me diversity, and unconditional love. I learned at a very young age what community meant outside of my immediate family. Through all the support and encouragement I have received throughout everything I have gone through with life and my family, I have felt loved, completely and wholly. I have suffered the loss of fellow parishioners as if my own immediate family, and I have gone through change with each of you always at my side. This relation to so many people has brought me to where I am today. Without the church community I would not have the job I'm in today, I would not have been babysitting for eight years of my life, and I would not have the knowledge and respect for music that I have today.

Through the years here I have not only learned to love and respect everyone within these walls and out, but I learned to understand that pull of my heart towards music. From the age of three, sitting in my backyard swinging on the tire swing, singing my own lyrics to "Spirit of Gentleness", my parents knew I loved and would love and embrace music. And even though I learned that hymn's tune at St. Barnabus Deep River, it is here at St. Michaels that I discovered music as a love for myself.

My first experience was at a Karaoke fundraiser for sacred dance. I got up to the microphone and asked the DJ to play "Lucky" by Brittany Spears. Some of you may remember this. It's hard to believe it was eleven or so years ago.

As the music started to play, the words lit up, and I started to sing. I remember when I was done seeing the looks of shock and recognition on people's faces as you all realized that the PK could sing. I was told over and over again how beautifully I had sung, and realized then that my career path was to do with music. Something in my future would always contain a melody of some sort.

Many of my musical experiences came with being involved in a youth group, which started when I was twelve. Quickly it grew to be a place of great friendship, trust, fun, and learning. I had some amazing experiences. My second truly memorable musical experience within the church was at a Talent Show we were holding. I decided that this time I would go up and sing. My favourite song at the time was "Beautiful" by Christina Aguilera, which I chose as my special song. I got up on stage and knew then that my place was just there, on stage, singing in front of many. When I was done, I had a lot of good feedback, and that is when I decided I wanted to audition for the vocal program at Canterbury High School. "Beautiful", which I had first performed in front of you, my fellow parishioners, was my audition piece for Canterbury. And I was accepted.

A wise teacher at Canterbury once wrote in my yearbook a quote by Hans Christian Anderson. The quote read "Where words fail, music speaks." Which I believe speaks the world of who I am musically, but also of all your support through my growing music career. So many of my performances attended and supported by so many of you.

But youth group was not just a source of musical events. Throughout my years in the group I also developed some great friendships, some of which I still have today. I had some truly touching and memorable experiences learning life lessons through games and tasks, the greatest of them all being our pilgrimage to Albuquerque, New Mexico in 2005. All of us on the trip were able to talk to each other, play games, laugh and be with God in different ways. It was a trip I will never forget, and Albuquerque was the perfect place for us. It fit us all perfectly and was so well supported by the parish.

Through youth group and St. Michaels I was also introduced to the start of a new diocesan program: Youth Synod. About two years ago now, at synod, I had my first personal

experience of God. Although I had never questioned God, I had never really had that chance to see him working with me that I was searching for. This was the year that Synod was once again bringing up the topic of Gay Marriage within the Anglican Church. As well, it was the first year that youth synod was being held at the same time as synod itself, and it was the first time I met Linda.

One day Linda came to talk to us about what was going on. Many of us thought it was a very important topic for the future of the Anglican diocese.

When the topic came out on the floor of synod, it was voted on before the floor opened to see where people stood. As all of us youth looked over, the majority was against the subject, and we were disappointed.

When the floor finally opened, it was suggested that the youth be able to have the floor as well, to be able to speak our minds as the church's future. Suddenly, we had our chance. We watched as the many adults of the church debated back and forth with their opinions, us youth debating with ourselves whether we were going to go up and speak. Many of us, although scared and intimidated did go up. It was an unforgettable day.

I waited in line behind a microphone, heart pounding at the thought of speaking my mind on such a controversial subject in front of so many superiors. I looked at the head table, down at my written speech, around at everyone, and then I spoke:

“Growing up in the church, especially as the daughter of a priest, I have always had a dream of walking down the aisle of my church, under the roof of the Anglican Church. Many people have this dream. To be married within their faith, to have a priest celebrate their union, but to know that this would be denied to them based on their choice of spouse, to me, as the future of the church, is appalling. I believe that everyone should have a fair choice to marry

within their church, no matter who they fall in love with, be it same sex or not. Everyone should be able to fulfill that dream.”

When I was done, I walked back to my seat and was suddenly greeted by a hug from Pat Brush. She said thank you with tears in her eyes and it felt to me like I had suddenly, with so few words, helped a lot of people. As the floor closed, they voted once more. The hands rose in favour, and the majority spoke for the movement to proceed, instead of being shut down before. I felt like the decision to let us youth speak really helped. I sat there, feeling amazing, knowing that there had been my first very personal experience of God himself, watching over us and working with us as the decision was finally made to go forward. It was such an incredible privilege to be there and to be a part of the decision.

Without St. Michaels, without all of you sitting before me today, I would not have been there. I would not have felt the presence of God standing right there with me and I would still be searching. Thanks to St. Michaels I helped make a difference within not just our church, but the whole diocese of Ottawa.

When my dad left St. Michaels later that same year it was a devastating change. To have had my father as my priest my whole life and to be so attached to a family such as this right here and now have him leave was hard. However, the choice to stay was not.

I was anxious to hear who the new priest was to be, hoping it would be someone who would be good for St. Michaels. When I found out Linda was to take his place, I was happy because I knew that we were all to be in good, creative and caring hands. Even though I am moving on to a different place and a different city, I look forward to working with her, and all of you, in future.

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And God said "I will give you a wise and discerning heart, so there will never have been anyone like you, nor will there ever be."

As God was there for Solomon, God is here for me. Solomon could have asked for anything, but to have been only a child and only ask for wisdom to be a successful leader is truly beautiful. This is all I ask for, all I have ever really wanted, and here I have received it. Through St. Michaels I have come to know God in my own way. Through friendship, family, commitment, community, responsibility and unbelievable love and caring, God has given to me what he gave to Solomon. And now, only now, am I ready to move on in life, always remembering where I am truly accepted as a person in faith and in life.

With all of your help, I have the knowledge and wisdom to be my own great leader, in my own life, along whichever paths I chose along the way.