Happening # 12 – A Light in the Darkness

Friday, February 8th through Sunday, February 10th

“Happiness can be found even in the darkest of times,

if one only remembers to turn on the light.”

Ten years ago, I led my first Happening at the Claggett Center. Surrounded by the ‘church camp’ family I had built for myself over four years of service and ministry across the United States and Maryland, I spoke to my peers about finding God in the ups and downs of life. Our theme for Happening #2 in 2009 was “Life is a Rollercoaster,” and together we spent our weekend remembering to trust God in the lows, as easily as we turned to Him in the highs that life hands us. As I spoke that weekend, I remember feeling I was like closing a door on a chapter of my life. That Happening was the last Maryland Diocesan Youth Event I attended for ten years. It was also the last time I attended church for ten years.

As I left for college and moved to a new state with new friends and new priorities, I let my faith fall by the wayside. I nurtured the secular parts of my life and forgot the excitement that builds in the days leading up to a ‘church event’ weekend. I built new relationships with friends and school and forgot how important it had once been to me to nurture and build a relationship with my God. I forgot how to talk to God – and by the time I remembered that I *should* have been talking to Him, it felt too late to turn back.

I had walked too far into the wilderness, away from the paths I knew, and I didn’t know how to find the way home again.

And then I was invited to attend Happening #12 as an adult chaperone. It felt more than serendipitous – it felt like God. Just as I had begun to fumble and search for a way back on my own, through the last event I had attended all those years before, I was thrown a rope. As I searched through the darkness for a way back to my faith alone, the foundations I had laid over a decade ago reached out and turned on a light.

Happening was different, for me, this time around, then what I expected; but then again, so is my faith. The event runs far smoother than we on the original planning committee, so many years ago, could have ever dreamed it would run; but the feelings remain the same. Among people I had never met, youth who had never met me, I heard my name said with love and affection that I felt the echoes of my faith around every corner and in every faith talk. From the first day, to the last hour goodbyes, I felt welcomed and accepted in ways I hadn’t felt in over a decade. Among my small group of fellow adults, I was able to explore how to bring my faith back to front and center in my life.

Happening was and is still a gift. Ten years ago, my faith was a rollercoaster – I kept my love and devotion to God through all the ups and downs in my life. Now? My faith is a light that shines, even in the darkest of times – a light I found, again, thanks to Happening.