



March 21, 2017
The Apostles' Creed 3.2

[Read 1 Corinthians 12:1-12](#)

“...just as he calls, gathers, enlightens, and makes holy the whole Christian church on earth and keeps it with Jesus Christ in the one common, true faith. Daily in this Christian church the Holy Spirit abundantly forgives all my sins—mine and those of all believers.” (Luther’s meaning to the Apostles’ Creed, *Small Catechism*)

I spent several years as a dedicated, disciplined and determined philosophical atheist. I intentionally left the Church and the Christian faith. What I learned in those years was simple. I may have left the Church, but the Church never left me.

During those years when I wandered in the wilderness of wildness, when I dove deep in despair, when I left a path of personal destruction in my wake...I was wrapped in prayer and love. People of faith near and far held me close and made pleas for my rescue. They took every chance available to stay connected to me and to offer me ways back to hope in Jesus.

When I was ready and willing, the doors of welcome were open. And I walked through—a little bewildered by the whole experience, a little skeptical that it was all true, a whole lot ashamed of where and who I’d been. But the welcome was real and has never been rescinded.

This is the Holy Spirit at work. I may have left the Church, but the Church never left me. That is the life and work of the Church in this world—to be the called, gathered, enlightened and “holy-fied” people of God in a world of aimless, lonely, dim despair. I’m glad to be called into life with such a community of the faithful.

I have my moments and my days (and sometimes my months) where I still don’t “get it.” I have my stretches where my spirit is empty, my heart is cold, and my head throbs with anxiety. I still leave the Church sometimes, although it may not be visible. And the Church still does not leave me. I am so grateful that in the moments when I still don’t “get it,” you—blessed Church person—you DO get it.

And I am honored that in the moments you may not “get it,” I am part of the community that still does. Some church clichés have great power for me. The Church is a hospital for sinners rather than a museum for saints. Thank you, Holy Spirit. We are the Church—we don’t shoot our wounded. Thank you, Holy Spirit. You can pick your friends, but you can’t pick your family. It’s a good thing because who in the world would have picked me! Thank you Holy Spirit. Thank you for the gift of the Church always.

Let’s pray. Dear God, send your Holy Spirit into my heart today to create the gift of faith. Thank you for the Church, the body of Christ, that You use to strengthen that gift. In Jesus’ name. Amen.

Do something: Send a thank you note to someone who helped grow your faith when you were younger.

Pastor Lowell Hennigs
Emanuel Lutheran Church
2444 N Broadway
Council Bluffs, Iowa 51503-0499
www.emanuelcb.org