

Student Work

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Why I Want to Work in the Church

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Why I Want to Work in the Church

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Marta Vander Top

A few years ago I went to a concert with a friend. The band played some of their hits, and everyone sang along. It was loud, it was chaotic, and it was fun. About halfway through the concert, the mood changed. The band introduced one of their songs and said it was dedicated to a friend of theirs who had passed away from cancer. The friend was always positive and full of joy. Even though cancer took his life, he didn't let cancer take the best of him.

All of the lights dimmed, and the crowd was silent and still. 15,000 people stopped what they were doing, joined together in one communal thought, and shared an experience together. Suddenly I saw a light from a cell phone shine from the right side of the arena. Just like a fire, the light spread to the entire stadium almost instantly. I've always loved stars and constellations, but dare I say this was even more beautiful. It was the crowd's way of saying "We know. We understand what you're saying. And we're sorry too." No one told us to do anything, but as a very large group, we were able to convey a message of deep love just as the band was conveying theirs.

When I got home from the concert, I couldn't help but think "That felt like church."

When people ask me what I want to do after I graduate from college, I usually answer "I want to work in the church," and this is true. Through my worship arts classes, I have learned so much about the church. We spend time in the book of Acts and in the epistles, learning about issues that the early church faced. We take classes learning the history behind the creeds and confessions of many different denominations and backgrounds. We study liturgy and why the Reformed church uses the liturgy that it does.

All of these things are important, and I'm thankful that we have such a large history to rely on in the twenty-first century church, but when it comes down to it, what is most important about being the church is being a community of love.

When Christ came, he did not leave behind a liturgy for his church to follow. He did not create a list of appropriate songs to sing in church, instructions on how many services a church should hold per week, or how many people make a church or ministry "successful". The command that he left for his church was to love each other. "Just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."¹

[Hebrews 10:22-25](#) says "Let us draw near to God with a sincere heart and with the full assurance that faith brings, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful. And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching."

Once we draw near to God, accepting the love and freedom that God gave to us, it is our job to act that way to others. If we want to show the world that we are Christ's disciples, we must work to spur one another toward love. Dietrich Bonhoeffer said that "human love is directed to the other person for his own sake, but spiritual love loves him for Christ's sake." Christ tells us to love God and love others, not for our own sake, but for his. Christ gave us the ultimate example of sacrificial love, and calls us to live in the same way.

When I tell people that I want to work in the church, what I mean is I want to work in a community of love. I still love all the liturgy, the details, and the formalities that go into the church, but more importantly, I want to be a part of the living, breathing, and fully alive body of Christ. I want to be deeply immersed in a place where people support each

other, encourage each other, challenge each other, and serve one another. I want to be in the community that listens to each others stories and points to a hope that remains true. And maybe sometimes being the church is not about being in a sanctuary on a Sunday morning, but raising the light on your cell phone in a concert.

Certainly the church is messy and complicated. Even with thousands of years of church tradition we are still left with questions of what to do and how to do it. But no matter what happens in our churches, we must agree to be a community of love, meeting together and encouraging one another to abide in the one who loves us perfectly.

Footnotes

1. [John 13:34-45](#) ↩