

# Why I choose to be part of the church

Andrea De Avila

Why have I stayed in the church? Good question. Maybe it's because I am an extrovert. I need people around me. I need a community of people to grow, laugh, learn, and cry with. I need a community to be challenged by, and a community to challenge back.

I've always been drawn to church—even when I've hated church or tried to distance myself from church—because of shared passions. I didn't grow up Mennonite, but I grew up pacifist and with a strong sense of equality for all human beings. Dignity, humility, respect, simplicity, love, and mutual care were part of my home congregation's consistent teachings. That message stuck with me. Children and youth had a voice in church. The church taught equality across ages and backgrounds. As these things became part of my identity, so did the church.

My grandparents and parents always made church a priority. It had to be a once-a-year-only occasion for my family to miss any church event. No parties, sports, arts event, or language lessons were a higher priority than church. We lived close to church and would often walk to it. It was part of my neighborhood. In fact, I grew up on the street where my church was. I couldn't explain to you who I am without talking about the congregation that I grew up in. It will always be part of me. And I guess that is partly why I've always sought out a connection to church.

But none of this is to say that I've always been happy with the church. I've had and continue to have frustrations with the church. But it's in those times of frustration that I realize that my relationship with the church is not about me; it's about Jesus. I need the church to be a faithful follower of Christ. I need the church to do the work it's called to do. And I am angry for Jesus when the church falls short of fulfilling its mission.

At times the frustration is so great that I want to leave the church. Nevertheless, my passion for Jesus's teaching keeps me in the church, because I know I would not be able to do a better job by myself. So, I guess that is why I am still in the church: because I am angry for Jesus!

## About the author

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