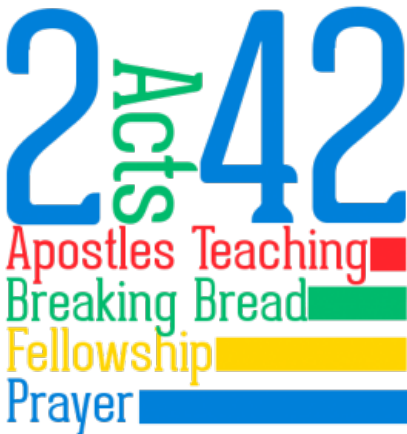


# I Believe

...in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic (universal)  
Church, the communion of saints...



"And they continued steadfastly in the apostle's doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers."

Acts 2:42

In Matthew 18 Jesus is speaking to his disciples. He has just posed the question, "Who do men say that I am?" Peter responds with the confession that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the Living God.

After Peter confessed that Jesus was the Christ, He said, "I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not prevail against it."

Jesus speaks of "my assembly" or "my church." This church is Jesus' assembly. It belongs to him. We, the church, are his people. I love how Peter says it: "Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people."

This week, we look at that phrase in the Apostles Creed which says, "I believe in the holy catholic church and the communion of saints."

We are not saying that we are a perfect people. We are saying that we belong to God. The church is a place for sinners who begin a process of transformation and become the people God wants us to be.

In stating we believe in the holy catholic church we are not referring to the Roman Catholic Church. The word means all around, or universal. Perhaps we should use a more modern form and say, "Christian." The church is a group of people pledged to each other through their commitment to their Lord Jesus Christ. (Look at Revelation 7)

In the New Testament the word “church” translates the original word ekklesia, which itself comes from two other Greek words that mean “out of” and “to call.” When you put those two words together, you get ekklesia, which means “the assembly of those who have been called out of the world to follow Jesus Christ.”

We are part of the “communion of saints,” of which Peter refers when he says, “You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s own people, in order that you may proclaim the mighty acts of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.”...

Do you feel chosen, royal and holy?

Jesus is the head of the church and loves the church (Ephesians 5:23,25).

Throughout Scripture we find that the Church is seen as a fellowship (Acts 2:42), a family (Galatians 6:10; Hebrews 2:10-12; I Peter 4:17), a body (I Corinthians 12:27, Ephesians 5:23, Ephesians 1:22-23), a flock (John 10:1-30, Matthew 26:31) and as the Bride of Christ (Ephesians 5:25-27, Revelation 21:2, John 3:29).

Our church family offers us the opportunity to live on purpose as a people committed to Christ, to love, to grow, to live so that we might magnify His name. We come to celebrate God’s presence and love, grow in faith, and equip ourselves to go into the world as ambassadors of God’s kingdom.

The tangible presence of God is most often revealed in living among the communion of the saints.

Can we grow spiritually without the church? For a while perhaps—but not for a lifetime, and not in the way God intended. We need each other—for friendship, fellowship, discipleship, prayer, encouragement, support, worship, united outreach, and when necessary, for correction and redirection.

We are better and stronger when we find our place in the church, and the church is better and stronger when we are there.

What does Jesus say is the value of believers of the common hope meeting together on a regular basis? Matthew 18:20

Hebrews 10:25 reminds us never to give up meeting together with the saints. Why do you think it is important for believers (saints) to get together often?

What does it mean to you that the church is a family? The Bride of Christ?

What is the mission and purpose of the church? (Look at Ephesians 4:11-12, Ephesians 1:11-12; Mark 16:15, John 14:12; Luke 4:18-19; Revelation 4:11, John 4:23)

How can we protect the unity of the church, share the responsibility of the church, serve the ministry of the church and support the testimony of the church? (see Romans 15:19, Luke 14:23, I Peter 4:10, Philipians 1:27)



“Oh, magnify the LORD with me, and let us exalt His name together.”

Psalm 34:3