

“Creed: The Church and the Communion of the Saints”  
Matthew 16:18 (NLT), Hebrews 12:1-2 (NLT)  
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Rev. Dave Baldrige  
Palm Harbor United Methodist Church, Palm Harbor, Florida

I believe in the holy catholic church and the communion of saints. Oh...the perfect church.

A poem: The Perfect Church

If you should find the perfect church  
Without one fault or smear,  
For goodness sake! Don't join that church;  
You'd spoil the atmosphere.

If you should find the perfect church  
Where all anxieties cease  
Then pass it by, lest joining it  
You'd mar the masterpiece.

If you should find the perfect church  
Then don't you ever dare,  
To tread upon such holy ground;  
You'd be a misfit there.

But since no perfect church exists  
Made of imperfect men,  
Then let's cease looking for that church  
And love the church we're in.

[ Mavis Williams -- from Aiken Drum ]

And one of the reasons you don't have a perfect church is because you don't have a perfect pastor---and you never will! By the grace of God, I'm here, you're here—together imperfect, flawed and at times failing, but we are here today because we believe in a perfect God who loves us in our imperfections.

Holy church. The Greek word for holy is Haagen-Dazs. No, that's not it---the word for holy is Hagios. Hagios/holy means sacred. It means set apart for God it means it belongs to Jesus.

The church is not the building. Last year alone the Florida Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church closed and shut down 16 churches. Oh, the church building was there...but limited people---not vital churches.

The church is the people. You are the church. Without you there is no PHUMC. You are the real church.

The word church in the **Greek: Ekklesia**

**EK=out of**

**Kaleo=to call**

### **People called out**

A church is people called out. Call out and belong to Jesus. Called out to bring hope to the hopeless. Called out to shine light in the darkness. Called out to bring healing to brokenness. Called out to transform the world. You are the church.

The holy church is an assembly, a gathering belonging to the Lord. Who's in charge of the church? This is not my church. And breaking news...this is not your church----this is the church of Jesus Christ. It is not even what I personally want, or even what you want, but what does Jesus want.

I've been an Associate Pastor. I've been Pastor of small attended churches. I've been a pastor a medium sized church. The last 2 church's I've served have been large membership churches. Of all the churches I've served----PHUMC....is....one of them.

Ah, I love this church.... meaning the people.

Last year the Assistant to the Bishop was on our campus doing some training. He and I have known each other for years. You know you are getting old when the Assistant to the Bishop was once in your youth group of a church you were pastor at 20+ years ago. While on campus he said, "Dave, this is one of the best facilities in the Conference."

Now let me pause and restate that the church is the people. We are blessed with wonderful facilities in which we can minister. The buildings are a means in which we can serve and minister to the body of believers and the community.

Concerning church building. You may remember in the fall we had a feasibility study concerning a Capital Campaign for buildings. Surveys and interviews were held. We heard from you, and we heard you. At the end of January, the Executive council met and made the decision by consensus to not continue with the company that did the feasibility study, for the Capital Campaign. We will not be doing a Capital Campaign at this time.

We are waiting, praying and yet actively pursuing the next steps. We are strategically addressing the needs and questions you brought to us. One of the areas is that we need to do a better job with is communication---across the campus with all of our ministries. Tomorrow I will meet with a group of leaders from our church and school ministries as we work on the oneness of communication for all the vital ministries taking place on this campus.

We also heard from you about finances. We need to communicate better. Did you know that we paid the church mortgage in 2014? We have no mortgage. We are not in debt!!! Repeat...no mortgage, not in debt!!!! Praise the Lord!

Also, early fall last year I shared a real concern about where we as a “church” were financially. I have some exciting celebratory news. We listened, did some budget cuts and I am thrilled to let you know how you have responded with the help of God. As of last Sunday, the giving and what we have received year to date in offerings is the highest we have had in 4 years. We have received year to date 3% more than last year. We are on target and then some for our 2018 budget. Let me say a loud Woo-hoo!!!! Thank you!!! I celebrate and thank you. I give thanks and praise to Jesus for working in you. I also say, “Keep it up! Keep it up! Keep it up!!!”

Our attendance is 9% higher than last year. Keep coming! Keep inviting! Keep coming! Keep inviting! Let the church be the church...the church is the people---holy, called out to be an example.

The church, the assembly is not a social club, not a civic organization, not a group that simply gets together for coffee and donuts on Sunday----however, that’s not a bad thing---after all donuts are ‘holey.’ We are an assembly that is the body of Christ, the family of God.

Rev. Adam Hamilton says, “The church is the continuing presence of Christ in the world.” (Creed, Abingdon, page 118)

I believe in the Holy catholic church. Not a capital “C,” but a lower case ‘C.’ The word means universal. I believe in the holy universal Christian Church---not buildings but people. The universal church around the world---different ethnic groups, different races, different economic levels, different educational levels.... but believing in the same Jesus. I believe in this holy universal church to change the world.

**Matthew 16:18 New Living Translation (NLT)**

**<sup>18</sup> Now I say to you that you are Peter (which means ‘rock’), and upon this rock I will build my church, and all the powers of hell will not conquer it.**

Our Christian brothers and sisters in the Roman Catholic Church have a different interpretation of this verse. Many Protestants believe that Jesus was saying that, “Peter, upon your rock, on your statement of faith, I will build MY church.”

“And all the powers of hell will not conquer it.” I found these statements I liked. “Though He would be crucified and buried, He would rise from the dead and build His church. Jesus is emphasizing the fact that the powers of death could not hold Him in. Not only would the church be established in spite of the powers of Hades or hell, but the church would thrive in spite of these powers. The church will never fail, though generation after generation succumbs to the power of physical death, yet other generations will arise to perpetuate the church. And it will continue until it has fulfilled its mission on earth.” (gotquestions.org)

Now part 2 of the phrase: I believe in the communion of saints. Saint was the Apostle Paul’s way of referring all believers. Saints both now and in the future.

You may be wondering, “What me a saint?” Yes, an ordinary saint who ‘said yes’ to serving. Saints who go beyond the walls of the church to show love compassion and the grace of Jesus.

Communion here does not mean when we receive Holy Communion, but rather communion means sharing together. A communion of saints who gather in small groups, yes, a group of saints in the Multi-Purpose Room, the communion of saints who support and care for one another.

**Hebrews 12:1 New Living Translation (NLT) 12 Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a huge crowd of witnesses to the life of faith, let us strip off every weight that slows us down, especially the sin that so easily trips us up. And let us run with endurance the race God has set before us.**

I discovered an interesting way of looking at this. Surrounded by huge crowd of witness to the life of faith---imagine saints in heaven cheering us on in our journey here on earth. So, let us strip off those things that are weighing us and slowing us down not wanting to get tripped up, but running and enduring the race to the end. Saints there cheering for the saints here.

How do this? **<sup>2</sup>We do this by keeping our eyes on Jesus, the champion who initiates and perfects our faith. Because of the joy awaiting him, he endured the cross, disregarding its shame. Now he is seated in the place of honor beside God’s throne.**

What are your eyes on? Years ago I was in my car stopped in traffic. Took my eyes off the stopped car in front of me and looked down at a piece of paper on the passenger floor board. I reached down to pick it up and my foot slid from the brake to the accelerator. Yes, I rear ended the car in front of me. In fact, the airbag went off in my car, knocked my glasses off, swollen lip, bruised chest. I should have kept my eyes on what I was supposed to. Friends keep your eyes on Jesus, don’t let a spiritual airbag whop you upside the head.

Oh, the communion of saints---when we get to heaven to see all those that have gone on before us. To sit down and talk to Moses, talk to the disciples, to see Jesus face to face.

I have certainly been thinking about the life and ministry of Rev. Billy Graham with his passing. I saw this cartoon.

(image: [http://editorialcartoonists.com/cartoons/VarveG/2018/VarveG20180222\\_low.jpg](http://editorialcartoonists.com/cartoons/VarveG/2018/VarveG20180222_low.jpg) )

I can only imagine what it will be like...

Think of this...you arrive in heaven and someone comes running up to you, or flying if they’ve earned their angel wings ☺, and they say, “You may not recognize or even remember me, but it was through you, what you said, how you helped me, that eventually led me to my decision for Jesus and now I am here---and I want to thank you.” Wow! What a day that will be.

Yes, the communion of saints cheering us on here on earth on this journey of faith. A faith community that goes beyond space and time. We are linked, connected as believers. I don't understand it completely, but I am going to keep my eyes on Jesus and look forward to a grand communion---what a church family reunion that will be!

Oh...the church. I love the church. I love this church.

<https://www.sermonspice.com/product/43169/this-is-church>

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic, universal Christian church. You are that church.

