

Growing up in the church by Ed Hagy

My mother was a Methodist. My daddy was a Lutheran. They got married here at Ebenezer on in December of 55 on the 26th by Pastor Shultz. My mother then joined the Lutheran church. She became really involved in everything in the church. All kinds of committees, programs, womens groups, everything. And she made sure us kids were too.

I was born into Ebenezer. I was baptized in this church by Pastor Shultz. Went to Sunday school every Sunday and bible school during the summer. I was in Luther League, and I remember when Pastor Shultz retired and Pastor Huntly came in.

We used to have so many kids in Sunday School, it was hard to find enough classroom space sometimes. We had classes in the old minograph room (where the kitchen is now), on the stage, in the fellowship hall, and in the tellers room, which I think used to be the pastors office. Even had catechism class in the tellers room-it brings back a lot of good memories. Also memories of a lot of people who are n longer with us. Pete Peterson, Harold Richardson, Bill and Joyce Greenwood, Inee Greenwood, and of course Ellen Greenwood, and Mary Pennington. Walter Clarke, John and Betty Tate.

I think the only time we ever missed a Sunday at church was if we were sick.

I was married in this church. Twice. Both times by Pastor Bangle.

Both my daughters were baptized in this church.

Brianna was confirmed here, sang in the choir and eventually even worked here in the WeeCare. My great uncle was the janitor and maintenance man here for years.

In 1975 I joined the U.S. Marine Corps. I started backsliding a little bit at this time. It was easy to sleep in late, grab brunch at the chow hall and go fishing. It got to where I found it very relaxing, especially overseas, to get up, go to chow, read the Stars and Stripes newspaper from cover to cover, go to the skeetrange or just go off base and wander through town. I didn't entirely quit going to church. Just not nearly as much as I used to or should have. There was always next Sunday.

My first Easter in the Marine Corps and first away from home, I was going to aviation school at Marine Corps Air Station, Cherry Pt. N.C. So I went to the ae

chapel for a nondenominational service. It was similar to our Lutheran service and pretty easy to follow along with.

I finally got stationed at Marine Corps Air Station, Beaufort, S.C. They used to hold nondenominational and Catholic services at the base chapel. There was a Lutheran church on Hady's Island about 10 miles from base but I didn't start going there for a few more years.

Beaufort, back in the 70s, had 2 Navy chaplains. I remember one was Methodist and the other was Episcopal or Presbyterian if I remember right. And of course, the Catholic priest.

I had a Mexican friend who invited me to go to Catholic services with him a few times. Sometimes it was hard to follow and I got lost a lot. The chaplains deployed just like the rest of us. Kaneohe Bay, Hawaii had a beautiful chapel on base surrounded by coconut palms.

When we deployed during big exercises like NATO or CAX at 29 Palms, California, a Navy chaplain might deploy with us. The Marine Corps doesn't have its own chaplains, doctors, or dentists. The Marine Corps is a part of the Dept of the Navy so all those, including chaplain assistants, and corpsmen (medics) came from the Navy.

After getting married in 1982, me and Karen joined the Lutheran Church in Beaufort S.C. It is a beautiful church on Lady's Island, set back among the live oak and pine trees. We even convinced a guy in my shop and his wife to join.

Big exercises like NATO exercises in Northern Europe or Team Spirit in South Korea left little time to go to church. We literally worked 7 days a week during those exercises. No days off. This might last 1 to 7 months. So the chaplains would do their best to hold modified service when and where they could, sometimes just stopping by your shop for 10 or 15 minutes to talk to the Marines during a coffee break between aircraft launches and recoveries. So they did their best. In the meantime I got more complacent in church attendance. Shipboard life aboard the USS America was 24/7. Little time for church. But chaplains have a way of being persistent and present.

When I was in Aviano, Italy in 1994 as part of the NATO contingent helping to explore the no fly zone over Bosnia during Operation Deny Flight, a Navy chaplain

from Beaufort deployed with us. I was over there from 1 January 94 through May 94. We lived in tents. The temperature hovered around freezing and it literally rained sometimes 24 hours a day for the first 2 ½ months we were there. We worked 7 days a week. 24 hours a day. 2-12 hour shifts. We got 2 days off in 5 ½ months. We kept fighters in the air 24 hours a day to explore the no fly zones and support the NATO ground forces trying to keep the people in Bosnia from killing each other off. After about a month and ½, Admiral Borda, the Chief of Naval Operations stopped in for a visit and the CNO gave us our first of two days off the next day. Neither day was a Sunday.

We had no formal church services while in Aviano. But the chaplain made regular, daily visits to the flight line, stopping by each shop for a visit. He would come in visit, drink coffee, pray with you, talk, whatever. He was a constant presence on the flight line and in the tent camp.

I remember a church service during another field exercise where the alter cloth was draped across the hood of a jeep. Another time, 20 mm ammo cases were stacked up to make an alter.

After I retired from the Marine Corps in 1995, I came back to Marion and Ebenezer. Me and Lori were married by Pastor Bangle in 1998. Pastor Bangle came in after I had went in service so I really didn't get to know him till after I retired. As I said, both my daughters were baptized here, both by Pastor Bangle. I took 15 days leave to come from S.C. to Ebenezer just to get Ashley baptized here in this church.

Me and Lori worked a lot of weekends, especially Lori. She was an ICU nurse and worked every other weekend. For a while, I hate to say it, but we got complacent about coming to church regularly. If we overslept, or were just too lazy to get up and get dressed, well there was always next week. Sometimes our weekends weren't even the same, which made it easier to miss.

I think our intentions were good, maybe not good enough though. We would say we wanted to spend time together, but we could have done that at church. Chalk that up to backslider logic!

I think everybody knows what happened to Lori. She suffered a stroke after surgery and ended up spending 5 months in hospitals. We came very close to

loosing her. I was even told to start getting my affairs in order with banks and lawyers. We brought her home from Shepherd Center in Atlanta on a Friday afternoon and on Sunday morning she was insistent on going to church. Now she hates to miss church.

While she was in the hospital I prayed a lot. More than I've ever prayed in my life. We also received unbelievable support from the people of Ebenezer. Phone calls, cards, letters, and prayers.

To quote Danny Slemph, if you doubt the power of prayer, look no further than Clive or Lori. It really does work.

After going through this trial, the church took on a whole new meaning. It became more important, and in some ways different. Its hard to explain. But I'm sure for Lori, she got a second chance and I think that would give anybody a new outlook on life. It did me.

I remember once Pastor Bansemer asked me, Merle Rogers, and Mike Williams to sit in with the youth group one evening and tell the kids about ourselves and why we were Lutherans. Something like this. What the church meant to us.

My turn came and I talked about my experiences in life and growing up in the church. I mentioned about going to different church services such as Baptist, Episcopal, Church of God, Christian church, Catholic, and the nondenominational generic services of the military. Ava Mucha raised her hand and asked me "after going to all those other churches, how did you know you were still a Lutheran?"

I told her because of what the Lutheran denomination and this church in particular meant to me personally. Everything from the childhood memories to the church we have now. I just like this church and the Lutheran service. That's how I knew I was a Lutheran.

So even after visiting other churches, years of backsliding and missing church altogether I finally came back (even though I have to admit one of the biggest bass I ever caught in my life, I caught early on a Sunday morning).

I still may have to work the occasional weekend, but that's few and far between now. One of the benefit of being retired.

So with all the memories of my childhood here, the support we received when Lori was sick, and the love I still have for this church—this is why I'm a Lutheran and an Ebenezer Lutheran.

Even though I got complacent in my church attendance, I never gave up on being a Christian or a Lutheran.