



A Confession from One Once Dechurched *by Luke Hansen, iNVERSION intern*

It's hard not to be jaded after decades of seeing the strongest ties, the most important moments, the safest places dissipate, break down and lose their places in our memories. My experiences with entropy and loss are not unlike those of many others: once nestled in the warmth and security of a happy home, of relationships heading toward marriage, of church bodies that offered acceptance and accountability...only to see them corrode and crumble one by one. I believe that those wandering the maze-like aftermaths of betrayals, excommunications, divorce, failure and loss, begin to forget what it feels like to belong.

We have lost our "home bases." And since we no longer hope to feel safe in a relationship or community, we approach these situations with a sort of abusive mistrust: where churches and potential friends and spouses must pass our selfish auditions. "Belonging" with a person or to a group hinges on the degree to which those people are pleasing us, can serve and benefit us. We forget that "belonging" means playing a role—serving and sacrificing ourselves for the community which we are part of. This is why so many of us feel alienated in church: no matter how much we are entertained or moved by the spectacle of a service, we will remain outsiders as long as we are merely part of the audience and not part of the action.

My interest in iNVERSION was a general hope that I could play a role in a community. After many years of being a judgmental church spectator (if I showed up at all), critiquing sappy worship music or shaking my head at

the seemingly superficial attitude of the church "greeter" handing me a bulletin, I realized that even if there was no way I would ever love the church service, there might be a way to love the church.

The awesome thing about iN is that when I moved out here (from Colorado) I found I was surrounded by people who were a lot farther along than I was in this vision of serving and belonging. iNVERSION truly seeks to be an "every member mission". We talk about it all the time—and it is becoming more and more of a reality.

As I've attempted to serve this community, I've been met by dozens of folks trying to serve me. Although our Sunday night service has many of the forms of an ordinary church service that I have often criticized, the movement and motivation here is in the mission and relational ministry.

Though I'm on staff as an intern with iNVERSION, I feel that almost everyone I talk to on Sunday nights is on staff with me! Almost everyone here is eager to get to know each other, to meet outside the church building and to bring in Christian and non-Christian friends. I've never seen a group so eager to invite others. I think the motivation here is not just bringing people in to hear an awesome message—we are wanting to give them something sorely lacking in our society: a place to belong; a place where people can love enthusiastically and sacrificially and be loved selflessly, out of the true, earth-shattering belief that God first loved us.