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14 years old  
9th grade  
Hamilton County

My church gives me the most love. I'm embraced by complete strangers every time I go. I meet new people and those new people become lifelong friends. Love is welcoming.

My church friend group is the strongest group I have. We hardly see each other, but when we do it's special. I can always count on them, we push each other, our love for each other is genuine, and we're completely different but we all worship God. Love is coming together.

I've always felt included at church. Once they had a vegan buffet, and I was excited because normally I face criticism for choosing to not eat meat, so this made me feel less alone. We have sermons and songs in different languages. We have disability services and activities for kids, and there's tons of different life groups for people. Love is inclusivity.

I see Africans, Asians, Latines, Europeans, and Americans of all races, all showcasing their cultures through language, clothing, and food. People of different cultures, ages, wealth, and abilities all come together to worship Jesus. Love is diversity.

Adults have poured into me and others with knowledge, encouragement, open ears and open hearts; they truly demonstrate love. I have a group leader who's taught us for 9 years, despite having 3 kids and a job. She constantly reaches out to us, plans activities, buys us food, listens, and offers advice. Love is sacrifice.

Last summer I went on a mission trip to Shepherd Community Center in Indianapolis, where I helped teach 2nd grade. I went on this trip to love these kids, but after the trip I realized they showed me *more* love. They laughed with me, held my hand everywhere, danced with me, played games, and drew pictures for me. It doesn't seem like a lot, but I needed it then. When I was there, I didn't worry about my insecurities, my own desires, or worldly things. I didn't have anxiety either. Love is freeing.

I saw how happy kids were even while being at school in the summer, even in the midst of chaos and poverty. They were excited for their futures and worked hard at school. Love is hope.

Whenever someone leaves for a mission trip or another career. We all put our hands on that person or people and pray for them. When we receive good news, we celebrate. Love is supporting.

Each month we focus on one of the 6 broken places of our world: decay, isolation, hatred, pain, injustice, and separation from God. We have a weekend of service to work on these areas,

which I've helped with. For decay, we planted a garden at our church. For isolation we had a car wash and breakfast and chances to talk with counselors. Love is helping one another.

My church has built me up by loving me, enabling me to love others. Love to me is welcoming, coming together, inclusivity, diversity, sacrifice, freeing, hopeful, supporting, and helping. Martin Luther King Jr. preached love in a world of destructive hate and he did so with God by his side, his church in his hands. He preached to love your enemy, the most difficult task. "The very root of love is the power of redemption... they'll react in many ways in the beginning... they'll hate you a little more... keep loving them and they will break down under the load, that's love you see it is redemptive which is why Jesus says love. There's something about love that builds up... so keep loving your enemy." I've been redeemed by God's love, and I will be love to my community and world, for it's like my church. I will love my enemies, heal the broken places of the world, and be a changemaker, like my hero, MLK.