

Witness to Reconciliation

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Dear Hope Church friends,

I grew up in a conservative Reformed Church congregation so my conservative roots were implanted early and impacted many of my beliefs, including my disapproval of an LGBT lifestyle.

Over the years I've been a resister of many of Hope Church's moves and movements.

In the late 1960's I was shocked by Rev. Glenn Peterman, our pastor, who said that if a snake doesn't talk today, it probably didn't talk in Adam and Eve's day either—a hard truth for me but one that I now believe.

When Elsie Lamb and JoAnne Brooks traveled across our state marching for peace and against nuclear proliferation and going to jail for it, I was the skeptical cynic. But Dave De Block believed in them and eventually, through them and him, so did I.

Later I worked hard to block the calling of our first female pastor. However, Don Luidens' voice was stronger and wiser than mine and ergo---Marty Rienstra.

Through the years God has been moving around me, over me, under me, and sometimes through me----movements that have often surprised and amazed me.

The last 6-8 months have been, for me, such a period of surprise and amazement.

For many years I've sat in pews near Doug and Dave and viewed them with disapproval. When the letter arrived this past summer from our consistory avowing its support of gay marriage I was incensed. I had been a firm anti- gay proponent all my adult life, and did not expect to change.

But then came the beginning of an amazing work of the Spirit.

We've sat in the same pews with Jane Dickie and Dave Myers for many years. I know and respect them and knew they both had a much different view of homosexuality than me. I know it was God's Spirit using them as well as the gentle prodding of the members of my small study group, and importantly, the four weeks of Hope church's "Discerning Holy Relationships" classes last spring. I began to change. More recently the book "*A Letter to My Congregation*" by Ken Wilson moved me further along my evolutionary faith path. By whatever means the Spirit used, all of these influences were effective.

I have come to understand that what God wants from me is not merely to accept LGBT people, not just tolerate their intrusion into my life, not sit with them stony-faced in the same pew, but to embrace them, to accept them as people who love each other as much as I love Karen, and much the same way. I may not completely understand the why's and how's of their lifestyle but I do know how I'm meant to react---with love, respect, and acceptance. This I will do for the years I have left.

Thanks be to God for his redemptive working in my life.

Thank you Hope Church, and thank you Ann for reading this letter.