

Witness to Reconciliation

Karen Mulder
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I'M NOT OK!

In Kindergarten I stole a box of stars from my teacher's desk. I wanted them not only because they were shiny and pretty, but because I had a deep desire to stick the stars all over my life. Then I could feel like I was ok—a person worthy of a shiny star.

Why did I not feel not ok? I suspect that the title resulted from kids teasing me because I was chubby. I can still hear their raucous chant, "Fatty Fatty 2x4, can't get through the kitchen door."

As a teenager I did slim-down, but still my inner voice still said, "I'm not ok." So I tried to convince others that I was in fact ok by being a cheerleader, being a good student and by doing kind things for other people.

One surprise during those years occurred in eleventh grade speech class where I found my voice. For some reason (hmmm maybe it was God preparing me for a future role), when I gave speeches I forgot my negative self-image and earned my longed-for stars.

In college I majored in education and speech. Still I found myself trying to project the aura of being "ok" while below the mask lamenting the fact that everyone around me had gifts and talents. All around me were people with starring roles, people who could sing, act, paint entertain or play football, basketball and run track. I kept asking God, "What is my talent? My gifts? What am I here for?"

I remember Carol Myers once saying, “In retrospect we can often see that God was working out a plan for our lives.” So as I look back, I can see that God was preparing me for the ministry I cherish today.

Hope Church played a significant role in this journey.

During the 60’s, Marlin VanderWilt, my pastor, introduced a 2-year Bible study to our congregation. I enrolled in the teaching phase of this program being taught by Rev Jim Cook. There I fell in love with God and God’s word, and discovered how all those stories fit together into a wonderful love story.

At the end of the teacher training, Marlin called and asked if I would teach The Bethel Study to our congregation. I thought, “I can’t.” I don’t know enough. I have never had a desire to teach adults.” The other voice said, excitedly, “Yes, you must do this! You are prepared for a time such as this.”

When I walked into that first classroom I was intimidated and scared and wondered why I had said “yes.” Facing me were doctors, lawyers, college professors and a famous text book writer, but I forgot myself and much to my surprise found my place, my answer to the question, “Why was I here?”

I am grateful to all of you who have been on this journey with me. I learned so much from you. You affirm me. You energize me.

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Also always encouraging me has been my best friend and husband, Larry.

Also instrumental in my discovery journey was a seminary class on Congregation Care taught by Stan Rock. Through that class, I began to understand how to care for those who were suffering.

A Bible study with a Hope church circle inspired the writing of, *The Compassionate Congregation: A Handbook for People Who Care*.

Seminary professor, Tom Boogaart encouraged us in the writing of this caregiving book, and suggested the perfect title, *Wisdom of the Wounded*. Though the publisher chose another title for the book, in 2011 Tom's suggestion, *Wisdom of the Wounded*, became the name of my current website and radio program. The purpose of all facets of my ministry was and is to help others care for those who are suffering

I've been asked, "As you extend healing to those who visit your website, you encounter many stories of pain and suffering, how do you carry such stories and maintain a spirit of joy? I believe that when one is using the gifts which God has given them and using them to foster reconciliation, then one will have quiet joy and peace even in the stormy times.

Emily Dickinson reminds us of this truth, She said:

If I can stop one heart from breaking
I shall not live in vain
If I can ease one Life the Aching
Or cool one in Pain

Or help one fainting Robin
Unto his Nest again,
I shall not live in Vain.

So now I have a purpose.
So now,
I am ok. (most of the time)
You are ok.
Thank you God
Thank you people of Hope Church.
Thank you Larry
Amen.