

Witness to Reconciliation

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“To have meaning, our lives require both passion and purpose. A life without passion is like a furnace without fuel, and without purpose, like a ship without a rudder.” Dr. Mardy Grothe is very right when he made this quote. Life without purpose isn’t life. It can’t go anywhere or do anything. Without purpose, we can’t do what we are made to do. We are stalled because we don’t have our rudder.

My name is Kate and for a long time in my life I was stalled and I couldn’t get anywhere or do anything. I have been lost inside myself for so long trying to make sense of who I am. All of my life I had been struggling with something that I never understood, an emptiness that couldn’t quite get filled, a yearning to be complete. The only problem was that my struggle and only solution available for it was condemned by the faith I grew up in. And having that knowledge caused many walls to start to form that kept me from understanding what was going on.

I am Transgender. I have been a girl all of my life even though I may not have looked the part. I may not have understood what was going on as I was growing up, but as I look back through all that I have experienced in my years of living I can see the signs and implications of what was going on. Throughout my adolescent years my emptiness kept growing worse because my soul was telling me one thing while my body was becoming another. Every time I looked in the mirror, the person staring back at me never matched what I expected to see. The girl I am could never be found. I went to bed many a night wishing to wake up and be able to see the girl I kept looking for in the mirror.

Throughout all of this, my life refused to find its place and I couldn’t and didn’t know how to move forward. I was distant from everyone. I didn’t want to do anything or be with anyone. I didn’t know what to do with my life. Even on the rare occasion I could figure out something to do, I lacked the drive to take action and I was fearful of what would take place. It got so bad in the months before I started living as my complete self that it was painful to even introduce myself to others because then it would be one more person to know me as someone that I’m not. Throughout all of this, my faith wasn’t growing either. It was at a standstill. I was depressed.

Eventually I started to piece things together and understand what was going on. I found others who were like me and I read their stories and I understood even more. I knew I needed to transition, though it didn’t happen right away. My withdrawal and depression steadily got worse and I eventually told my parents everything. While they were calm about it and tried to

understand, to this day, they have never believed anything other than transition to be a sin, and they believed that I would be going to hell for taking the steps I need to so that I can become a complete person. So that I can finally match in mind, body and soul. Through my own soul searching and examining the scriptures I knew it wasn't wrong to transition, and because I couldn't live the way I was, especially coming to the point of attempting suicide, I decided to start my journey.

I know my parents love me. That's actually why they have been trying to convince me that I am wrong. They don't want me to go to hell and they think hell is what's in my future if I don't turn back from this path as I would be living in sin according to their belief. I keep trying to explain to them that it not a sin to transition, but, as of yet, it hasn't helped. Again, I know they loved me, and continue to do so, but their actions were still in condemnation of what I was doing and it became harder and harder to be around that. Their church was a reflection of that belief as well. So I started looking for a new one, though I didn't know where to look.

My whole life was lived in the church and in the Christian faith. I went to reformed churches all of my life. I started in a non denominational church that left the RCA when I was very young, though they kept a similar belief system. From there I went to a United Reformed Church and throughout all of that I went through Protestant Reformed Schools. But my faith and church were important to me and I couldn't give it up. So I looked for another church, but I didn't think any reformed church would accept me.

All of the churches I originally found were outside the reformed faith, but I didn't feel like they fit me. They were welcoming, but I didn't feel like I belonged. I talked to my therapist about it and we both tried searching. Eventually I did a search online and I stumbled across the Room for All website. I found that in my state of Michigan, there was only one Reformed church which was open and affirming. It was Hope Church, in Holland, just 30 minutes away from where I lived. It was so close to me, I knew I had to go there and check it out.

Hope Church was so very welcoming and I felt very comfortable here. Everyone was glad to have me there, and I was glad to have found that church and to be here as well. I felt that I belonged. I was home. After a while I tried to transfer my membership from my old church to my new one at Hope. My old church wouldn't transfer that membership. Instead they started their "discipline" process and attempted to get me to turn back to what they believed or face excommunication. To this day, they never transferred my membership, but Hope Church still welcomed me with open arms. The elders of my old church stopped communicating with me and never even confirmed whether they excommunicated me or not, though I assumed that they did.

I joined Hope Church and joining this community, along with going forward in my transition, I finally found myself capable of growth, and not just on a personal level, but also spiritually as well. I found myself capable of acting and having a desire to act and live for God. I'm helping others when I can. I'm participating more than I ever have in life. I feel the desire to do more and want to be able to find ways in which I can do just that.

Before all of this, I only had a small handful of friends and then my family. I lost almost all of them when I transitioned. I even had to move because I didn't really feel welcome living in the same city anymore. There was too much sadness. Now, my family and friends have grown to include all of my church. My home is right here in Holland.

I felt like I lost so much when I transitioned, but in actuality, I have gained much more than I ever had. I have grown and have found a purpose in my life. I have found my fuel and rudder. I'm not at a standstill anymore. Though I'm not welcome in their house, I continue to talk to my parents through email in hopes that they will eventually be able to accept me. I believe it's important to continue fighting the good fight so that others don't have to go through difficulties like mine. I fight so they don't have to. When the fight gets difficult, my church is here to build me up and encourage me and stand beside me. I never would have made it to where I am today if I never found Hope Church. I found Hope through Room for All and I am growing because of all of it. I am thankful to Room for All and Hope Church. Most of all, I'm thankful to God for bringing this all together.