

“GIFT Rap” Autumn 2011 Additional Materials

God’s Call of My Life: A Testimony By Laura Busman, GIFT Board Member

Note: This is the full version of Laura’s presentation at the National Coming Out Day Service on October 11, 2011 at St. John’s United Church of Christ in Grand Rapids, Michigan. A shortened is in the “Autumn 2011 GIFT Rap” newsletter of Gays In Faith Together (GIFT), which you can find on the website www.GaysInFaithTogether.org.

It’s been a year, a year since I began this journey. A journey that I never fathomed being a part of God’s call on my life. It’s been a year since I’ve come out to myself as a lesbian. It has been the most radical, heart changing, and gut wrenching year.

Growing up you would have probably thought otherwise. Those that could see me when I was younger were probably thinking, “oh you poor soul.” I remember pointing to the boys section at a nice t-shirt and cargo pants saying, “Mom, that would be a nice Sunday outfit.” I can remember sitting in 5th grade looking at my clothes and how different they were from the rest of the girls’. And then looking at the guy sitting next me, whom all the girls were ga ga over, and thinking, “I just don’t get it!”

I grew up in a conservative Christian home and I wouldn’t change it for anything because I believe this is how I developed my strong faith as a believer in Jesus Christ. This being said, I still wasn’t aware of what it meant to be gay because the possibility didn’t exist in my mind to be Christian and to be gay. To be honest, I don’t remember homosexuality ever being talked about as a kid. And the best way I can put it is because in my world it was just assumed that you “knew” it was wrong and would be an issue someone else would have to deal with. So I suppressed anything I felt and called it a “phase” I was going through and it would be cured when I married the right man.

Throughout my life I felt a call to work with people – whether youth, adults, in between – but I wasn’t sure in what capacity. God began to develop in me leadership skills I didn’t know I had and I ended up serving at a church for the past 5 years. I fell in love with a place that became home and family that I saw daily. I was asked to serve as

the middle school intern spending hundreds of hours with my students on mission trips, small group nights, and trips to Wendy's to eat frosty's and talk about life, along with working 2 other jobs on staff there. They became an integral part of my life.

And then I met this girl, a girl who dared to be courageous enough to come out to someone like myself. At that moment I had never felt such a burning passion to understand something that the church had told me was wrong. Because in her I saw something, something different. I saw such a passion for life and for Jesus as I hadn't seen before. And this began my journey to study and exhaust every possible resource available that went deeper than saying, "Look at these 7 passages – it's clear God didn't create gay, lesbian or transgender people." I can passionately say now that I believe God most certainly did create the LGBT community and that girl, yeah, she's now my beautiful partner and I plan on spending the rest of my life with her.

This was obviously a huge deal for me – to have a reorienting on what I had always viewed as truth. I don't hide things well; I like to share with the people that are the closest in my life. This led me to tell the people I was working the closest with at my church that I am gay. I heard some of the hardest words I've ever had to hear. I was told that I was loved and appreciated for all of my service to the students, but I could no longer meet one on one with my students, someone else had to be present with me. And once I told them that I didn't believe I had to be celibate, I was let go from my internship, my administration job and facilities position; without being able to tell my kids honestly why I had to leave. Once the staff knew, I was sat down and told that life just isn't fair, how could you come to this conclusion, the bible speaks directly against it, and you know you're going to lose your friends right?

Then it came time to tell my family. I seriously underestimated their reaction. I chose to tell them at the breakfast table, all of them there, while talking about my sister's first child on the way. Here she had the gift of life inside of her and I was about to take a life away they thought they knew. I was told I was loved, but being prayed for that I would find the truth and find my way back home. I was told that my soul and salvation were in serious question, that I must die to my sin each day, I was being utterly

deceived, a man hater, and that if I chose to continue in this lifestyle I wouldn't have a part in my niece's or nephew's life.

The pedestal I had my family on was shattered. I began asking, "God, how can I endure this?" I had been seriously jaded.

But even in the doubt, the questions, and the pain I couldn't resist the undeniable love of my God and creator who wrapped me in his arms and said I got you! You are mine! And I'm going to rock your world! And Laura, I know it hurts – now you know what my heart feels like each time one of my children is persecuted.

If I could speak to all of those people who have left me, looked at me and said I'm praying for you and that you need to get back to God's call for my life I would say this, "I love you more than you know, I haven't abandoned my calling or changed it – I'm simply obeying God's call that has always been there. I'm finally saying yes God, I'll be who you created me to be and follow the calling that the church and society don't quite understand. I'm going to be an advocate for God's people and the LGBT community. I serve a big God who does big things far beyond our understanding.

It Gets Better – and thank you to all of you who have surrounded me, supported me and lifted me up in my time of need and healing.

Praise be to God!

A Big Spoonful of GRITS **By Tedi R. Parsons, GIFT Volunteer**

Note: GIFT sponsors the group GRITS (God Rocks In the Stream). All are welcome! The group meets the last Wednesday of each month at 7:00pm on the first floor of the First Place building at 207 East Fulton in downtown Grand Rapids. Call the GIFT office at 616-774-0446 to confirm meeting times.

You're scared, confused, troubled, and happen to be a Gay Christian, yes, I said a Gay Christian, and not sure where to turn. Turn left and head North to the monthly Gods Rocks in the Streams (GRITS) meeting. Here you will find other spiritual LGBTQ folks and allies that come together in a safe, caring and judgment free environment. A

place where you can hang your hat, unload your troubles, and share with friends in the glory of God, all *free* of charge.

How would I describe GRITS in one word, well I can't, as it is many things to many people. For me, it's a place where I can cry, worship, laugh and share openly with others who, like me, are looking for something more. Whether a devout churchgoer, a member of the Christmas and Easter club, a questioning or nonbeliever, or you simply open the Bible from time to time, ALL are welcomed at GRITS. Here you will find Gods love in many forms, through the laughter and smiles on the faces, from the heartwarming stories shared, to the tears shed as we lift-someone up in prayer. No matter where you are on your spiritual journey, there's a place for you at GRITS.

The great thing about GRITS is there's no agenda, no membership form or financial obligation, you just come as you are. You can come alone or bring a friend or two, everyone is always welcomed. No need to make reservations or call ahead, we'll be there waiting to welcome you, to a special place we call GRITS!