

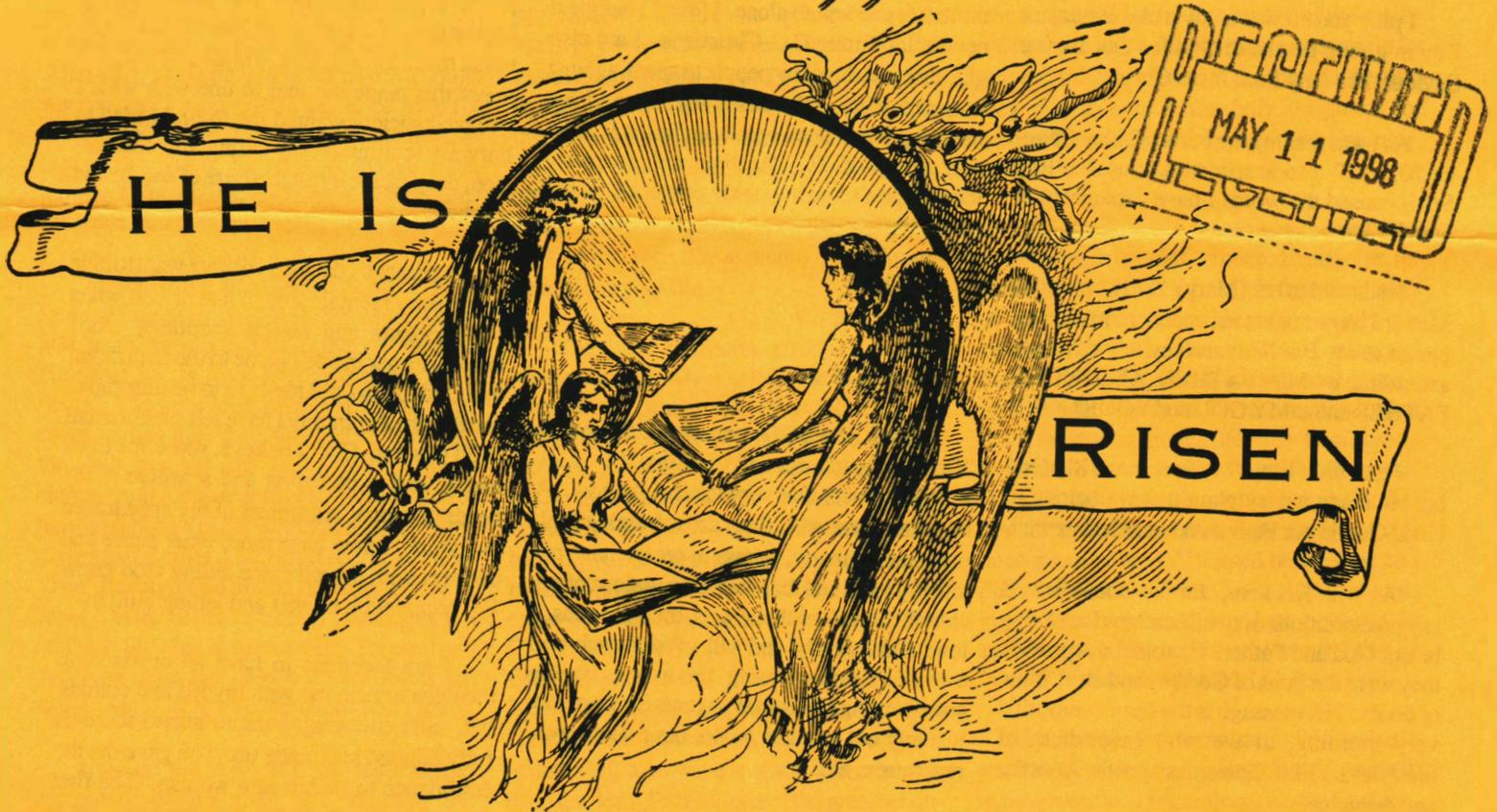
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Grace & Lace Letter

International

Easter 1998

Issue #1 1998



Words of Life from Peter

On the Jewish feast of Pentecost, after the Holy Spirit had come down upon the believers, Peter preached his first sermon:

“Men of Israel, listen to this: Jesus of Nazareth was a man accredited by God to you by miracles, wonders and signs, which God did among you through him, as you yourselves know. This man was handed over to you by God’s set purpose and foreknowledge; and you, with the help of wicked men, put him to death by nailing him to the cross. But God raised him from the dead, freeing him from the agony of death, because it was impossible for death to keep its hold on him.... God has raised this Jesus to life, and we are all witnesses of the fact. Exalted to the right hand of God, he

has received from the Father the promised Holy Spirit and has poured out what you now see and hear.... Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ.”

When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, “Brothers, what shall we do?”

Peter replied, “Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off - for all whom the Lord our God will call.” -Acts 2: 22-24, 32-33, 36-39.

Years later, Peter wrote these words to encourage the early believers:

“Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead....Though you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy, for you are receiving the goal of your faith, the salvation of your souls.” -1 Peter 1:3, 8-9.

May this inexpressible and glorious joy be yours this Eastertime and always!

- Jane Ellen and Mary Frances Fairfax
Spring 1998

Letters from Our Readers

Easter Greetings

from Lee Frances

I pray you all will enjoy a blessed Easter Day in giving thanks to God for Our Living Saviour, His only Son, Jesus Christ.

As I was reading the book of John, Chapter 20, vs 17, I took special note as the Holy Spirit caused the words I have capitalized to literally jump out at me.

Jesus said to her (Mary), "Do not cling to Me for I have not yet ascended to my Father, but go to my Brethren and say to them, I am ascending to MY FATHER AND YOUR FATHER and to MY GOD and YOUR GOD."

Jesus didn't say "My Father and My God" but He made it very plain that we belong to God. God is our Father and our God as well.

As with His love, He has not indicated any preconditions or qualifications for God to be our God and Father. He told the Apostles, they were the Sons of God beyond all shadow of doubt. His message is the same today, this very morning, to we who (regardless of lifestyle) are His followers as were the Apostles and disciples.

This Easter Morning of 1998 is time to accept Jesus' invitation, "Come unto me . . . and I will give you rest. Learn from Me . . . and you will find rest for your souls." Matthew 11:28, 29.

"Believe (cling to, rely on, trust in) the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved . . ." Acts 16:11

Those of you who still have families, enjoy church today with them and we will join you in worship and praise to God for our Living Saviour.

My sincere love to each of you,
In Christ's Name,
Lee

Dear Grace and Lace Editor:

I am a Christian crossdresser that used to think that she was all alone. I found your great newsletter through TG-Christians. I am also glad that you do allow people to speak against homosexuality. (I'm heterosexual and I believe the Bible does speak against it.) Anyway, along with TG-Christians and your newsletter, I don't feel so lonely anymore. It has raised my spirits.

In Christ,
Linda Dupree

Dear G & L,

Thank you SOOO much for the article "Gender Dysphoria and the Bible"!!! I am struggling with that very issue right now. A minister's son with deep crossdressing feelings since puberty, I dress in secret, have not told my wife, and fear the repercussions of my church. I work with the kids, the little ones. I love them dearly and kill myself each and every Christmas writing, producing, staging and directing Christmas pageants for them. Not just any old manger scene, but real dramas, real music, etc.

I want so very much to share my other side with my wife, but she is very straight laced and entrenched in her faith. I get a great deal of strength from her and her knowledge of God. I don't want to hurt her and don't want to lose her. (That has already happened once.) Knowing that your words are there help so very much.

Thanks.
(Name Withheld)

Dear Jane Ellen and Frances Fairfax,

Hi, my name is Michelle and I am a 37 year old transvestite living in West Central Illinois. I read about "Grace and Lace" in "Finesse," a newsletter sent out by the Central Illinois Gender Association. Your organization sounds wonderful so I thought I'd drop you a note.

My whole life I have felt different, perverted by what is considered normal for society. Growing up in farm country made expressing my femininity and crossdressing impossible. So I grew up playing the traditional macho game, loud, vulgar and drunk. I guess this made me feel in line with what I believed society wanted me to be. I tried to bury my femininity, my caring, my compassion, deep inside through a haze of smoke and alcohol.

A year ago I decided I did not want to hide my sensitive female side. I like myself when I am looking and feeling feminine. As I looked deeper inside I came to the realization that God did not put me here to be miserable, and that the femininity I have felt since a small child was me. God, I believe, wants me to be happy, and to be caring and sensitive to the needs of others, regardless of my appearance and attire. I now have more inner peace and comfort with myself since letting God know I'm happy with myself and letting Him in.

I am fortunate to have an outstanding therapist to help me with myself and coming out. She encouraged me to attend sessions fully dressed and made up. She gave me the confidence to go out as a woman. The first time she saw me in the waiting room for a session, fully dressed, she told me, "Michelle, you look great!" My feelings soared, and I thanked the Lord for guiding me to this caring person. I have met wonderful sisters in C.I.G.A. here. I just wish I had accepted the Lord and myself for who I am sooner, for I would have saved myself much pain and loneliness.

I hope this letter hasn't been too long. Please let other sisters out there know they have friends here in Central Illinois. We must stick together, for togetherness is our strength and God is our salvation.

My love and thoughts to you all.
Michelle

Resurrection

by Danielle Meadows

Words of eternal truth to all of my transgendered sisters and brothers; that is what I wish to share. Lee Frances asked me to write, so, I will write. And I do so, in great humility and in the spirit of love. With that prayer I ponder, momentarily, what to write; something, hopefully, that others would find meaning in; that could be applied, in a personal way, to each one's life. Eternal truth comes to mind. After all, if I am going to speak to you through my writing, I want what I say to be true; for there already seems to be enough misinformation in the world. So what is eternal truth, anyway? The philosophers have debated this for years, but the prophets have not!

Eternal truth, what does it mean? For me "eternal" speaks to how life is truly everlasting and "truth" speaks to the fact that it is through Him that life is truly everlasting, for He is "truth". The holy scriptures express this quite clearly when they state that He is: "the way, the truth, and the life" (John 14:6). How is eternal truth made real for us; in other words, how is it applied to our individual lives? What comes to my mind is the resurrection, or rather "The" Resurrection that is, the resurrection of Jesus Christ. His resurrection guarantees everlasting life, that is, immortality, for each and everyone of us. But has the reality of this gift really "sunk" deep into our hearts and minds?

How do we know that the resurrection guarantees us this great gift? Because the sacred writings of the Bible (which have been preserved by God, down through the centuries, for our spiritual education) clearly teach us that we will each be resurrected. The reality is that even as each of us must one day die, that is, our mortal bodies, each of us must and will one day be resurrected. Let me give you some brief scriptural examples, recognizing that there is a wide spectrum of readers; some with greater and lesser knowledge of what the Bible teaches. Therefore, because of this, I will first (and briefly) scripturally define what is meant in the scriptures by the "resurrection" and then, scripturally illustrate how we each--everyone of us--will receive this great gift.

But wait, why do this? Why speak of the resurrection? Such a basic concept. But is it really? My answer to that question is yes, it is basic! You see the Gospel of Jesus Christ is

not complicated at all. It is very, very simple; it was meant to be! We mortals complicate it; we cloud its beauty and its pure and eternal simplicity. But why write about it now, in GL&L? I speak of the resurrection to my transgendered community through GL&L because our knowledge of this (or rather, the application of this knowledge in our lives) can and will prove to be a great source of comfort, assurance, support, joy and peace, as we each, in our own way, struggle with the challenges, the anxieties, and the sorrows often experienced by the transgendered. Wherefore, I offer you my perspective on this; hoping that it may be of benefit to you, in a very individual way, as you, one day at a time, walk through your journey of life.

The holy scriptures teach us that the resurrection is when, after our bodies die, wherein our spirits are separated from our bodies, that our bodies and spirits become reunited once again. The scriptures further teach us that all of this is made possible because of Jesus Christ's victory over death; for Jesus Christ was the first one to be resurrected. Scriptural evidence of this is vast. For example, in the Book of Acts we are told: "that Christ should suffer and that he should be the first that should rise from the dead" (Acts 26:23). We are further instructed that because Christ rose from the dead, we too, (everyone of us) shall also have a resurrection or rise from the dead. Ezekiel, one of the great prophets of the Old Testament, testified of this when he said: "Thus saith the Lord God, Behold, oh

my people, I will open your graves and cause you to come up out of your graves." (Ezekiel 37:12) Hosea, another prophet of the Old Testament, echoed this same message when he, speaking for God said: "I will ransom them from the power of the grave; I will redeem them from death." (Hosea 13:14). To cite all of the scriptural verses that testify of the reality of how we will each be resurrected would far exceed the boundaries of this present paper. I beg you to search the holy scriptures for yourself, even if you only read one verse a day, and, in time, you too will see!

So where from here? Again, why do I emphasize to the transgendered reader (or, for that matter, anyone who reads this) the reality of the resurrection or, in other words, the reality of life after this life? As I intimated earlier, I do so because of the hope and encouragement the reality of the resurrection offers to all those who, in this life, may be suffering emotionally, who may be suffering physically, or who may be suffering spiritually. Recall how the Apostle Peter spoke of this hope when he said: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead." (1 Peter 1:3)

So here is my message, here is what I want to say; focus on this hope, allow yourself to be drawn to it regardless of who you are, regardless of the problems that you face, no matter whether you are, as the world defines

Grace & Lace Letter International

A Christian publication serving spiritual needs of all crossdressers, transgendereds, transsexuals, new women, new men, significant others and family members.

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E-Mail: JEFTRIS@aol.com

Web: <http://www.geocities.com/SouthBeach/Sands/7777/>

and <http://members.aol.com/GnLNews/index1.html>

Other sites for Transgendered Christians:

<http://www.geocities.com/~terrmain/inspire.htm>

http://pw1.netcom.com/~q-r-i/robyn_shanor/index.html

<http://www.engr.ucdavis.edu/~jsdevlin/jadecath.html>

and for all GLBT Christians: 'Whosoever' Christian Magazine

<http://www.mindspring.com/~sagecomm/whosoever/>

Grace and Lace Letter International

us, a transgendered person, a transsexual, a transvestite, a cross dresser, a drag queen, etc. Know, with increasing confidence, that the scriptures I have cited, as well as all others, clearly apply to you as they do to all of God's children. And, most importantly, they apply to you exactly where you are right now; not to where you may be in the future, not to where you were in the past. In other words, God, your Eternal and Heavenly Father, loves you exactly how you are right now. He wants you to be happy! He is aware of your struggles, He is aware of your challenges, He is aware of your efforts. You need only desire to believe, and He will guide you to Him through the power of the Holy Spirit!

Being a licensed psychotherapist and having studied and learned a vast array of healing techniques for emotional distress, I can yet think of no greater information that I could offer to any of you who read these words that would prove to be of greater value to you in your individual healing that my personal witness to you of the reality of the resurrection or, in other words, my personal witness to you that there is life after this life and this, through the "abundant mercy" and grace of our Lord, Jesus Christ.

Wherefore, as you struggle to understand and come to terms with your precious and beautiful transgendered natures; as you, in the process of learning, try or experiment with different ways to cope, remember, I pray that your belief in the reality of life after this life can and will be a powerful source of comfort and peace for you, my transgendered friends, right now in this life! Allow this truth to grow within you; feed it through prayer and reading the holy Bible. If you begin to do just these two simple things, the reality of this great truth (life after this life) will, as time goes on, grow, most assuredly, in its capacity to provide you with even greater hope, even greater peace and even greater joy; for this, my friends, is the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Do You Know an Empathetic Clergy Person, Church, or Religious Organization?

Ms. Jane Ellen Fairfax, Publisher
Grace & Lace Letter

Dear Ms. Fairfax,

My name is Diane Zahn, and I'm hoping our contact today may be of service to our community. I am familiar with Grace and Lace, but I inadvertently overlooked your organization's electronic mail address during my initial survey of transgender organizations in February. You may also hear of this survey via surface mail I recently sent to Peggy Rudd at Spice, but I wanted to contact you directly to let you know I am most interested in your help.

I am working to assemble a list of empathetic churches/pastors/religious organizations by geographic areas and religious affiliations (OF ALL FAITHS) willing to talk with the TG community. This list is to be provided to the International Foundation for Gender Education (IFGE). It is intended to support the IFGE service of providing referral lists of organizations and health care providers around the world to assist individuals in making contact with others in their own area, and as a support resource for the IFGE telephone hotline.

Nancy Nangeroni, the IFGE director, has requested that I act as a single focal point of contact as this information is gathered. Nancy notes that she is already struggling with an abundance of other IFGE correspondence, and would really prefer to have this added mail route through me as the referral list is

compiled. I would therefore appreciate it if you can forward any contact information directly to me.

I would appreciate it if you could help me compile this list. I'd like to have something preliminary together by the end of March. If you know people or organizations at least willing to keep an open mind in their spiritual counsel, and can verify they are willing to participate in such a network of support, can you forward contact information to me so that I might include them on the list or write to them and contact them myself? You can contact me by e-mail at:

damz@sprynet.com

or surface mail at

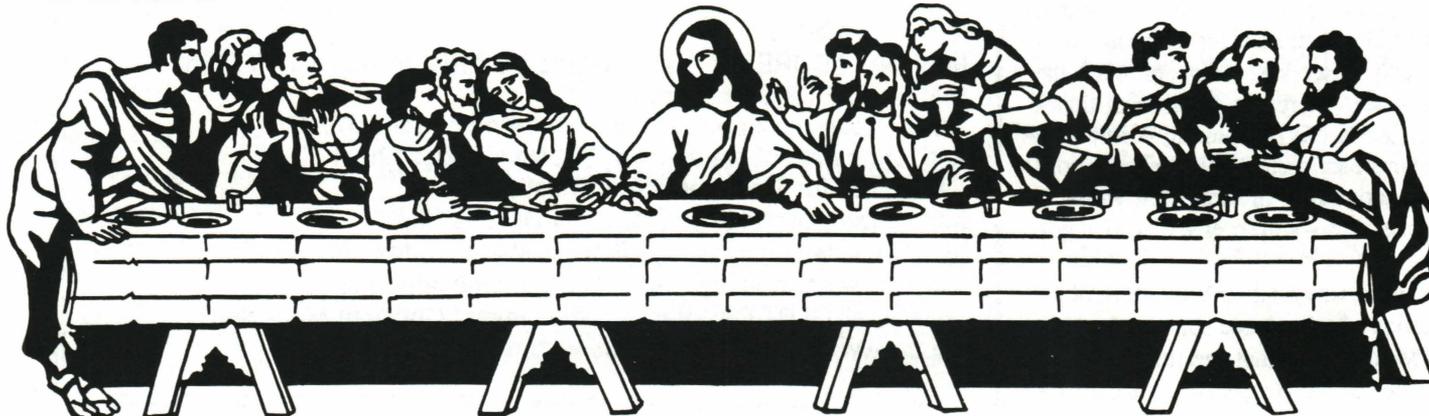
D.A. Zahn
P.O. Box 2176
Monroe, MI 48161

If you have any questions or concerns about the IFGE's usage of this information, you can contact them at their mailing address:

IFGE
PO Box 229
Waltham MA 02254-0229

Thank you for your support. If you feel so led, I would appreciate your prayers that this effort give glory to our Lord.

Love in Christ,
Diane A. Zahn



Just Who Are You?

by Dr. Jaye Reviere

There is a scene reported in the Gospels (Read it in: Matthew 16: 13-16) in which Jesus asked the Disciples: "Who do men say that I am?" Various answers were given to him. Finally, he is reported to have asked: "Who do you say that I am?"

Let's consider this issue of Jesus' identity for a moment.

First in this Bible story, let's update the language a bit. The update is simple. Change the word: "men" to read: "people" and leave the rest of it intact.

Next, consider this: Do you think Jesus was concerned about what other people said about him? Do you think Jesus was concerned to the degree he wanted to know so, perhaps, he could project an identity that would comply with what others were saying about him? Do you think Jesus wanted to know so he could assume the role in life other people were trying to define for him?

If you think any of these things, I challenge you to think again. I challenge you possibly to revise you thinking to just the opposite.

I believe Jesus knew exactly who he was. I believe Jesus knew exactly what other people thought or tried to "name" him. I believe Jesus knew the role in life other people were trying to define for him. I believe what other people thought or said about him meant nothing to Jesus.

So, why was he asking these questions? Do you suppose he asked them to instruct his followers? Do you suppose this scene is recorded in the Gospel for our instruction?

I think Jesus knew exactly who he was, exactly what he was, and exactly how God had made him to be. He had no questions. He had no doubts. He knew, and he accepted the who, the how, and the what God had made him to be.

Indeed, Jesus asked these questions to instruct his followers as to who he really was.

Further, this scene is recorded in the Gospels to instruct US as to who HE really IS.

If we, as individuals, are to know and then to BE who, to be how, and to be what God has made us to be, it is essential for us to understand some things. It is essential for us to understand, to acknowledge and to put into action in our lives is the unwavering belief that we, as believers we are IN THE CHRIST, and therefore, we are among children of God. If we are to know the assurance of being free to be as God has created us, we must also know and rejoice in the fact of our being among the Children of God! There can be no room for doubt.

Being a child of God does not mean having our thinking, our attitudes, or our actions controlled by what other humans think. Being a child of God means having our thinking, our attitudes, and our actions controlled by the Will of God, as God personally reveals the Divine Will to us. Being a child of God involves knowing, accepting, and living as God has designed us to be to the degree God has revealed the Divine Will to us individually in terms of our need to be the who, the how, and the what we are made to be.

Now, in the case of Jesus, his knowing, accepting, and living out what God had designed in his being brought into this world involved his being the Anointed of God, the Agnus Dei...the "lamb of God", that is the one God had ordained to be the perfect one, the one who knew no sin, the one who was thus able and qualified to redeem humanity so we could once again be accepted as the children of God. Jesus knew this. Jesus accepted this. Jesus set his face resolutely in the face of opposition even from his closest friends, to fulfill the will of God. Jesus was determined to walk the path God had laid out before him. For this resoluteness, for this determination, God, at the time of his Baptism, proclaimed Jesus, before all the world, to be, as the words we are given say: "... my Beloved Son in whom I am well pleased."

Do you think God would have said these words if Jesus had wavered? Would God have made this proclamation had Jesus not resolutely accepted and submitted himself to the Will of God, with full knowledge of all the facts and implications about who, what and how God intended him to be?

I don't think so.

For the same reason, I think we humans have a real problem facing us in our relationship with God when we waver, when we quibble, when we hold back, when we often outright refuse to live the life God reveals plainly to us.

Why do we do this?

We fear. We fear what other humans will say about us. We fear what other humans will do about us. We fear what will happen to us, at the hands of humanity. We fear truly to LET GO and LET GOD. And in our fear we fail to trust God totally.

Does our failure to trust God totally mean God loves us any the less?

No. There is no shrinking of God's Infinite Love for us. Rather, God's unconditional love for us shows us a strong contrast reveals to us even more of the Infinite nature of God's Love. God loves us IN SPITE of our fear, in spite of our failures to trust totally. God just simply LOVES us!

Here's what we really need to hear in all these words. God IS! Just as the little children's song says: God is LOVE. God loves us even when we give in to the social pressures to hide who, to hide how, and to hide what we are. God loves us anyway. God forgives us. God offers us the grace to come out of hiding to experience and express the uniqueness of being with which God has blessed us.



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There are those reading this or hearing these words, who are still very afraid of knowing, still afraid of acknowledging, and still afraid of accepting the Infinite Wisdom of God, as expressed in their having been made "DIFFERENT" from most people. Please rest assured you don't have to hide. You don't have to deny who, deny how, and deny what God has made you to be. Saying this I speak the absolute conviction of one who has so feared, one who has deeply hidden, one who has strongly denied, and one who as finally in submission to God, accepted and acknowledged the wisdom of God in making me "DIFFERENT." I adjure you, take courage. Be who, be how, be what God has created you to be!

As you go on about your daily life, walk in JOY, walk in the absolute assurance of being a Child of God. Be thus assured you are one upon whom and in whom dwells the INFINITE LOVE of God. Be assured, even though you have difficulty openly expressing and openly living the life God has ordained for you, God LOVES you. Know full well God will grant you the grace to grow in the Power and Wisdom of God and to come to the place where you ultimately will be able to hide no more, to fear no more. Surely in the Infinite GRACE God is constantly and continually making available to you, there is freedom to live as God has created you to live to the PRAISE, HONOR, and GLORY of God.

Amen

Note: This was written as a sermon to be delivered to the congregation of the Metropolitan Community Church, Albuquerque.



Easter Hymn

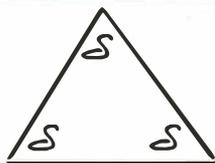
Jesus Christ is ris'n today, Alleluia!
Our triumphant holy day, Alleluia!
Who did once upon the cross, Alleluia!
Suffer to redeem our loss. Alleluia!

Hymns of praise then let us sing, Alleluia!
Unto Christ, our heav'nly King, Alleluia!
Who endured the cross and grave, Alleluia!
Sinners to redeem and save. Alleluia!

But the pains which he endured, Alleluia!
Our salvation have procured; Alleluia!
Now above the sky he's King, Alleluia!
Where the angels ever sing. Alleluia!

Sing we to our God above, Alleluia!
Praise eternal as his love; Alleluia!
Praise him, all ye heav'nly host, Alleluia!
Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Alleluia! Amen.

CROSSDRESSERS... You are not alone!



the Society for the Second Self, inc.

- *An educational and social support organization for heterosexual crossdressers, spouses and families
- *Quarterly journal
- *Local chapters with monthly newsletters
- *Mail forwarding service and Membership Directory
- *Quarterly newsletter for spouses and partners
- *Big Sister Program for individual support
- *Online forums for crossdressers and spouses

For information write:

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Telephone: 713-349-8969

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Editorial Statement

The Grace and Lace Letter is a Christian publication for transgendered persons. Our motto is "Where Charity and Love Prevail..." In keeping with our motto, we will not publish material bashing any transgendered or Christian person or group, nor will we publish any ad hominem argument. We hope to bring the message of God's unconditional love and forgiveness, as shown to us once and for all by the saving life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, to our transgendered brothers and sisters. We welcome personal testimonies, teachings from God's Holy Scriptures, prayers and poems and hymns, cartoons and humorous stories, accounts of events affecting Christian transgendered persons, and messages of hope and inspiration. Our goal is to praise and worship God and bring His healing love to His children.

WHAT HAVE WE TO FEAR?

by Becky Allison

Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate.

Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure.

It is our light, not our darkness, that most frightens us.

We ask ourselves,

Who am I to be brilliant, gorgeous, talented, and fabulous?

Actually, who are you not to be?

You are a child of God.

Your playing small doesn't serve the world.

There is nothing enlightened about shrinking so that other people will not feel insecure around you.

We were born to make manifest the glory of God that is within us.

It is not in just some of us;

It is in everyone.

And as we let our own light shine,

We unconsciously give people permission to do the same.

As we are liberated from our own fear,

Our presence automatically liberates others.

Nelson Mandela

Inaugural speech, 1994

In my life I have been afraid of many things. A great number of my fears centered around my knowledge that I was not like the other boys in my town. I lived in fear of social ridicule and physical violence. I feared rejection by my parents if they knew my feelings. The fear produced in me a sense of shame, so that no matter what I achieved in my education, I felt unworthy of praise - even unworthy of love.

If they only knew...they would not love me. I tried to structure my life so no one would ever know how unhappy I was.

But God knew. God had to know the contents of my heart. God was aware that I believed I should have been female, not male.

Sometimes I wondered if God cared. My prayers to be made "normal" went unanswered - and my fear grew.

As an adult I feared the disruption of my marriage. I feared professional and economic

losses, ostracism by friends and colleagues, loss of my position in a conservative church.

The knowledge in my heart grew stronger. It had a name - transsexualism. The day came when the need to be true to my heart overcame my fears.

In that day I discovered the love of my God is greater than any fear. I gave my fears to God and experienced his love in a greater measure than ever before.

The things I feared were not resolved favorably. In fact, most of them happened just as I had feared. But God's love sustained me through my losses and created love in me to reach out to others who shared this experience.

All through God's Word we see it: "Fear not. Do not be afraid." God knows our tendency to let circumstances terrify us. And yes, God definitely does care.

"...The waves broke over the boat, so that it was nearly swamped. Jesus was in the stern, sleeping on a cushion. The disciples woke him and said to him, 'Teacher, don't you care if we drown?'"

"He got up, rebuked the wind and said to the waves, 'Quiet! Be still!' Then the wind died down and it was completely calm.

He said to his disciples, 'Why are you so afraid? Do you still have no faith?'"

Mark 4:37-40

Christ calms my inner storms, even though outside the waters may still be rough. I am not promised an easy journey; I am promised God's presence all along the way.

"When you pass through the waters, I will be with you...when you walk through the fire, you will not be burned."

Isaiah 43:2

I still have to walk through the fire. But I have the love and protection of my God to sustain me.

You see, the antidote to fear is love. We

could even say that fear is the opposite of love. When we fear, we are saying to God, "I am not trusting in your love."

What have we to fear? In the Old Testament, the "fear of the Lord" referred to the reverence in which we hold God - holy, separate, almost inaccessible. Such a reverential awe helped the ancient Israelite mind understand the majesty and greatness of God.

But in Jesus Christ we have God the accessible. "Love the Lord your God," he said. He is our guide for this love. His selfless love bought my freedom from sin and fear.

What have we to fear? Persons who claim to speak for God may reject us. That which they have not experienced, they do not understand, so they condemn us. But our God does not condemn us. Our God loves us with an infinite love which he places into our hearts to love others as he loves us.

"Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us."

Romans 8: 35, 37

This love enables us to have the courage to live our lives in truth and without fear. Nothing can happen to us that will separate us from God's love. Given this ultimate assurance, we can live day by day on a higher plane of existence.

What have we to fear? If we have given our lives to God through Jesus Christ, we have no need to fear. He will always be with us. He will never leave or forsake us.

"There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love."

1 John 4: 18

What have we to fear?

GENDER DYSPHORIA and the Bible

by Terri Main

Luanna came into her office carrying a cup of tea and a piece of paper. "Terri," she said, "I have another client - transsexual - who attends a fundamentalist church. She's facing some turmoil over her role in the church. I said that I had another client who was also involved in the church and she was interested in talking with you. Here's her number. Maybe you could give her a call."

Well, of course, Terri gave her a call. Now, we call back and forth a few times a week. But recently, I've had several questions about the place of the transsexual in the church. Maybe this means that it is in God's timing to discuss this difficult issue in a formal essay.

Talking about THE CHURCH is sort of like talking about THE COMPUTER or THE TREE or THE BIRD. Each church denomination is different. In fact, each local congregation is different. Even such designations as Fundamental, Pentecostal, Charismatic or Evangelical have variations. So, maybe I should clarify the perspective from which this essay is written. I am writing from the point of view of orthodox, fundamental Christianity. I am writing as one who believes the Bible to be the revealed Word of God, who believes that Christ was the Son of God in substance as well as spirit, who believes that Christ's death on the cross acted as an atonement for the sins of the world, who believes in a personal god, a personal salvation and a personal relationship with God through Christ. Much of what is said in this piece would apply to any mainstream Christian denomination including both Protestant and Catholic. I will try to keep denominational doctrine to a minimum. But so you will know, I regularly attend an Assembly of God church which is a full-gospel, evangelical church. (Okay, so we've had some personal problems in recent years. But those televangelists are no longer with the denomination.)

I remember growing up in the church. I was born on Sunday and was in church Wednesday evening. I've gone ever since. My parents and grandparents were active in the church, but mine was no second hand Spring 1998

experience. I personally prayed and read my Bible. I personally experienced the presence of God in my life. Around our house, God was no philosophical construct; He was an objective reality like another member of the family. As a child and teenager, I had one major prayer, "Lord, please either make me a girl or make me like other boys." The Lord in his wisdom did neither. I didn't see any conflict between being a transsexual and being a Christian. I still don't, but now I know that there are others who do.

What is the source of this feeling? The answer is simple: Ignorance. Ignorance of the nature of transsexualism and ignorance of scripture combine to cause many well-meaning Christian people to brand transsexualism as a sin.

Now, before condemning the actions of Christians who vociferously oppose transsexualism, remember that their motives are noble, even if their actions are not. If I believe that you are doing something that will cause eternal harm to you, I have a moral obligation to try to save you from that harm. The best analogy is that of a person wandering out into a street and not seeing a car racing toward them. A bystander would have a moral obligation to warn that person that a car was coming. Such is the motivation of the Christian warning a person away from sin.

I might add we are not exempted from the obligation to love our brothers and sisters in the Lord simply because they do not understand us or they condemn us. We still must love them and worry less about winning them by fighting, and more about winning them with our love.

So the problem is not usually motivation, but rather understanding. So, then how do people often misunderstand transsexualism. First, they confuse it with homosexuality. Homosexual liaisons are definitely proscribed by scripture. I know that may offend some readers, but that's the way it is. However, I might add that the same passage that condemns homosexuality also condemns jeal-

ousy, pride, envy, hatred and wrath, qualities too often found (and excused) in many church people including ministers. But like my folks always told me "two wrongs don't make a right." It does put the question in it's proper perspective.

Transsexualism, though, is not homosexuality. It is a gender identity problem. At some point in my future life I may decide to marry and have sex with a man. But I would be a woman at that time. I have no desire to have male to male sex. Some transsexuals will have other experiences before and after Sexual Reassignment Surgery, but only in the appropriate proportions found in the non-transsexual population. All transsexualism is is having the identity of one sex and the anatomy of the other. The only act that transsexuals wish to perform is the surgical and social transformation into the gender of their mental identity.

Other people view this as erotic fetishism. While fetishism is not specifically proscribed, it is nontraditional sexual behavior and as such is usually considered undesirable or even sinful. A gain, though, the transsexual is not necessarily a fetishist. He or she wears the clothing of the opposite sex because he or she feels most natural in those clothes, not because of erotic stimulation caused by the clothing.

I think the name transsexualism is what throws a lot of people off. They seem to take the "sex" part as referring to the sex act (an act many of us on hormones would find difficult to perform anyway) rather than to gender. I prefer to talk about gender dysphoria. It sounds more clinical, and it is more accurate. It usually won't lead people to misunderstand the sexual connotations of the condition.

People who condemn transsexualism as a sin, not only are ignorant of gender issues, they are also ignorant of the Bible on this subject. This area simply is not covered in scripture one way or another. It falls into the category of "working out your own salvation with fear and trembling."

Grace and Lace in the U.K.

An Apology from David

My last year has been extremely difficult due to ill-health on my part and my daughter having been near death. Under the circumstances, all my energies have had to go to my family and to my parish. Since I hold the confidential records, this has meant that the UK end has been out of touch. While there are still problems here, I am beginning to cope better. The good news is that our membership is now well over fifty, much of which is down to the work of Jay and the Sibyls. For those not in that grouping I am attaching details of some of the recent activities. There are now two chapters in the UK, and the recent residential weekend at the Royal Institute of St. Katherine's had 24 in attendance, I believe. I also continue to meet new transgendered ministers, and to have the support of my diocesan leadership in supporting the community. So with my prayers for your blessing in 1998, over to Suzanne.

Suzanne Says:

Hi! It is good to be writing for the G&L Letter again. As David says, there is a lot happening at the moment. A new government appears more sympathetic to our needs, and the legal system seems to be taking on board some of the issues that we have been raising over the past few years. But ultimately our hope lies in the Lord. (In God we trust - sound familiar?) If God doesn't build the house, the other labourers are just wasting their time. Legal and Civil rights matter greatly, but salvation is final!

I was looking at the story of Mary in John 13 the other day. If some of the legends are correct, she had been a prostitute. If the Luke 8 story is an echo of the same situation then the ointment might have been part of her stock in trade. Perhaps \$400 worth of illusion and sensory joy. Yes, it could have been sold to help the poor, or perhaps used for some immoral purpose. But instead it was poured out at the feet of Jesus. In fact poured over him. It was the offering that she contributed to his death. Her love made that sacrifice of Calvary
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complete, just as the offering of our lives, our love, our suffering all goes to complete the perfection of Christ's sacrifice.

St. Paul wanted his life poured out as an offering. (Had he perhaps heard this story?) It is the sane response to that passionate outpouring of love: "Love so amazing, so divine, demands my life my soul, my all." All that I am, and all that I have, in response to all that God is, and all that Christ did on the Cross. Because God sure wasn't half-hearted in his approach to us. First he emptied himself out of all that glory, and left the place of joy and harmony to be born a refugee baby. Then he gave up his human family, his home and security. Then he gave up his life in daily service, hungry and homeless, dependent on women for his sustenance. Then he gave up his bodily integrity in front of Pilate. He was stripped - shameful and humiliating for a Jewish man - and then that body was torn with thirty-nine stripes of casual cruelty. After all that to hang on an agonising cross, separated from loved ones watching him die, and not understanding, and far more, separated from his Holy Father by the agony of a world's pain, and hate and evil.

But just as he gave up everything for us who had caused the gaping wound in a universe of love, so we must not hold anything back from him. True love always gives anything and everything. And that includes our differences, as well as our common humanity. For most who read this our difference (among the many that make us unique) is to be transgendered. Our experience of being lost and outcast matters to God, just as do the experiences of the racially oppressed, or the disabled, or the sexually abused, or the imprisoned.

No one is beyond the orbit of his love. But we, due to social conditioning, and our perception of failure, do not always find it easy to offer that forbidden part of us to God. And yet it is part of the unique gift we can bring to God. It is what makes us whole, and keeps us sane, and releases the love and care for others, and which forces us to grow.

I wonder what it cost Mary to offer Jesus her most precious gift. I doubt it was an

impulsive thing. Rather, she must have thought, "How can I show my love for this so special person who saw past the disapproval and gave me love that makes all else seem empty?" Well, not so stuffy, maybe. But it cost her to do it, to weep at his feet, to wipe his feet with her hair, and to do it before others, too!

Well, I am persuaded that we need to offer our cross-dressing or our cross-gender consciousness to God. Why? Whatever does not proceed from faith is sin, so we dare not keep any part of us from God. He demands truth in our inmost being. And for most of us that is the truth which lies at the centre of our lives. What do we think about in our idle moments? Being our true selves, or expressing something of our inwardness by our changed appearance. But our true self is Christ within us.

One of the marvelous things about the Sibyls for me is to receive Holy Communion as Suzanne. It allows me to be open in front of others about who I really am, and offers me wholeness and healing. The blood of Christ that poured from his side washes my guilt, and failure, and social unacceptability away, just as Mary's ointment marked a healing flow of love. His body was wronged so that my body with its biological wrongness would not confine my life.

And in the Resurrection we have the final assurance. In it the necessities of sex and gender are swallowed up in wholeness. The Resurrection Body includes all that is good about man and woman. For now, feebly and in part, I work to bring in to my life what is good about my male side and my feminine aspect. Wholeness, health and holiness are rolled into one. While I was still a sinner Christ died for me. All of me. And all of me is his. Those parts of me I know, those I am starting to know, and those I may never come to terms with in this life. But I am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed to him against that Day. And that he can change my mortal body to be like his glorious one.

Easter peace and joy be to you all.



"The Gift"

by Janice Van Cleve

Wouldn't it be refreshing to see transvestism viewed as a positive good instead of a negative, or at best neutral, phenomenon? Fundamentalists demonstrated in "The Bible and Transvestism", (Tapestry#49); psychologists characterize it as a sexually motivated disorder; psychiatrists treat it as an aberration imprinted by upbringing. Crossdressers themselves argue that it is a harmless hobby, a vehicle for appreciating softness and tenderness, or an expression of a feminine side of their nature.

But what if they're all wrong? What if these characterizations fail to describe what transvestism really is? What if instead we try to look at transvestism as a gift; and not just any gift, but a gift created by Almighty God Himself and deliberately bestowed by Him on certain chosen individuals to fulfill His divine plan. Zounds! Awesome! Radical! Yes, and frightening, too.

Of course nowhere in the Bible does Christ say: "Hitch up your hose, girls, I've got plans for you". However, He does reveal a vision of His gifts to us in all their wonderful diversity through Paul: "There are different gifts but the same Spirit; there are different ministries but the same Lord; their are different works but the same God who accomplishes all of them in everyone. To each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good...preaching, teaching, faith, healing, miracles, prophesy, recognizing spirits, tongues and the interpretation of tongues. All these are the manifestation of one and the same Spirit, who distributes different gifts to different people just as he chooses" (1 Cor. 12:4-11).

What's that? You didn't see transvestism in the list? Paul does not pretend that this short list includes all of God's gifts to us. He itemizes more in Romans 12:6-8 and Jesus names others in the Beatitudes such as meekness, thirst for justice, peacemaking and the rest. Indeed there are many gifts - named and unnamed - given to us "for the common good".

So why not transvestism? There is not one shred of evidence that this is not a divine gift. Of course when most people think of divine gifts they think of musical ability, artistic talent, intelligence, charisma, good health, etc., but that is obviously too narrow a view. In a very touching story Jesus showed even blindness could be a gift: "He saw a man who had been blind from birth. His disciples asked him, 'Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, for him to have been born blind?' 'Neither he nor his parents sinned, Jesus answered, 'he was born blind so that the works of God might be displayed in him'." (John 9:2-3) Then He gave the man sight.

Christians have always had difficulty comprehending how a loving, good, and merciful God could permit conditions that are contrary to their concept of good. Birth defects, arthritis, an untimely death, even AIDS - all the frailties of human existence - seem cruel. Some ascribe these to sin while others become callous or turn against their God. Their faith is lacking and Jesus calls them blind: "If you were blind, you would not be guilty, but since you say, 'We see,' your guilt remains." (John 9:41)

Is it not possible that even these so called evils are also gifts of God? And perhaps not just gifts to those stricken, but to all of us - to give us an opportunity to show care and love for all our brothers and sisters. Consider the story of the Good Samaritan: Was not the victim an opportunity for the Levite, the priest, and the Samaritan to show love for another human being? But only the Samaritan saw the "gift" in the situation and helped the victim.

In the same way Christians and others often fail to comprehend how transvestism (or transsexuality or homosexuality for that matter) could be God's blessing to certain chosen persons - for their benefit and the benefit of us all. Instead, some set themselves up as judges and condemn what their pride cannot accept. "You must love your neighbor as yourself; but as soon as you make distinctions between classes of people, you are committing sin", James warns them. Besides, "who are you to

give a verdict on your neighbor?" (Jam 2:9, 4:12) Jesus Himself told Peter: "What God has made clean, you have no right to call profane." (Acts 11:9)

However, any gift may be used for good or evil. Everything God has created is good but its ultimate value depends on what we do with it. If we accept instantly realize that it can no longer remain a self-gratifying hobby or a mere aberration to be tolerated. Rather, it becomes a positive good - a calling or vocation. It is right and morally good to express it and morally wrong to suppress it. Chew on that, Jerry Falwell! See what power, what confidence, what affirmation we gain from accepting this as a gift! "If God is with us, who can stand against us?" (Rom. 8:31) But wait! Before we charge off to conquer the world, take note: God's gifts do not come without strings. Remember the parable of the talents (Matt. 25:14-30)?

Three servants were given gifts. Two dared to risk their gifts in investments and won a profit. The third suppressed his gift - and it was ripped from him and he was thrown out. If the two had risked and failed, would they have been punished? I think not. God does not allow us to be tested beyond our strength (1 Cor. 10:16). The point is, the two acknowledged their gifts and accepted them. With faith in their master they tried and succeeded.

God's gifts are His investments in us and He expects a return on the investment. Paul's advice to Timothy applies equally to us: "You have in you a spiritual gift... do not let it lie unused" (1 Tim. 4:14). The third servant did not use his gift and it was taken from him. The fig tree that did not bear fruit was ordered to be cut down (Luke 13:7-8). The Spirit who distributes these gifts "just as he chooses" gives some more gifts than others. Do not envy them; for the more they have been given, the more will be demanded of them (Luke 12:48)

And what return can we transvestites make on the investment our God has made in us? Certainly we do not propose to convert the world to transvestism. That's absurd! We

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(and transsexuals and homosexuals) are born with our gift. We can no more teach someone without our gift to become one of us than a therapist can take the gift from one who is born with it. Like it or not the gift is given - it is ours - in us as an integral part of our unique being.

So what do we do with it? Certainly we have to acknowledge it and accept it. Then what? For starters we can learn from it. We can learn a deeper appreciation and respect for all people. As a minority we can see more clearly the stupidity of prejudice. We can embrace this gift, treasure it, enjoy it, explore and develop it to its full potential, and share it with others. We can help those similarly gifted: removing their fears and roadblocks so they can become all they were meant to be. "Each one of you has received a special grace, so, like good stewards responsible for all these different graces of God, put yourself at the service of others" (1 Pet 4:10).

And when we've learned to appreciate ourselves and others, and when we've given help to our sisters, then we can reach out to the public who do not share our gift. We can step out with pride in the full light of day as ornaments to our society. After all, "We are God's work of art, created in Christ Jesus to live the good life as from the beginning he had meant us to live it" (Eph. 2:10).

We are needed in society - precisely because we cross a gender boundary which is taken for granted so complacently by the majority. Just by being who we are, we challenge false assumptions about gender and genuinely help the public reassess their attitudes. We demonstrate in our being the diversity of God's creative genius, and we help deflate the arrogance that leads to discrimination - against us and against other minorities.

We are all members of the same crew on spaceship Earth and we will all grow or die based on the contributions of each individual member. No one could contribute much if we were all the same, could we? "If your whole body was just one eye, how would you hear anything? If it was just one ear, how would you smell anything? Instead of that, God put all the separate parts into the body on purpose. If all the parts were the same, how could it be a body? As it is, the parts are many but the body is one. The eye cannot say to the hand, 'I do not need you,' nor can the head say to the feet, 'I do not need you.'... God has arranged the body so that... each part may be equally concerned for all the others. If one part is hurt, all parts are hurt with it. If one part is given special honor, all parts enjoy it" (1 Cor. 12:17-21, 24-26).

We all have a place and a purpose in this world whether we understand it yet or not. Rednecks, Jews, men, women, whites & blacks, Baptists, bankers, gays, crossdressers and transsexuals - even Democrats - all are here at His command. Is this difficult to swallow? Even Paul had trouble with it but he understood: "I should like everyone to be like me, but everybody has his own particular gifts from God, one with a gift for one thing and another with a gift for the opposite."

(1 Cor. 7:7)

Accepting transvestism as a divine gift means accepting also the purpose for which it was given. That may be too uncomfortable for most. But those that do accept, acquire also the power and confidence that comes from being right - not just correct according to human logic - but morally right. Slander and abuse, criticism and laughter cannot defeat them. Their self assurance and open friendliness to all people win them friendliness in return. They take their place in society as a contributing member and the world is better for them.

It's a gift that truly keeps on giving.

From FEMINET, Felton CA

