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GRACE & LACE LETTER

AN EVANGELICAL CHRISTIAN PUBLICATION FOR THE TRANSGENDERED
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It's strange, Lord, but I never thought
that I should finish up being thankful for what I am.
I am thankful Lord because I realize
that rather than not being able to serve you
because of what I am;

BECAUSE of what I am I can serve you in a unique way.
<From "Prayers From The Both Of Me" by Jan Goddard. Publisher unknown>

Dear Sisters and Friends,

It's strange, Lord, but I never thought
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The above prayer is on the title page of "Changing Channels", a booklet by David Horton about whom you will be reading much in the pages of G&LL. He is a Rector in The Church of England.

What a conforting thought and fact. BECAUSE of what I am I can serve the Lord in a unique way. The Holy Spirit is not disqualifying you from Christian ministry but you are.The Holy Spirit has not shut the Church door to you because of what you are. You have disqualified yourself and slammed the Church door on yourself. There are no gender police stationed at the Church door to run you off. Mere man has scared you away with his condemnation . How much negative activity goes on in our minds that fosters utter condemnation of ourselves. Give your self a Christmas gift that God will bless and use, Accept yourself exactly as God has made you and then let Him use you in the unique way He has made you. "God designed you to live in your situation to give you an opportunity to be His witness EXACTLY where you are." (Borrowed). One of God's transgendered servants is starting a Transgender Bible Study in her home the first of the year and there is a TG group in Florida which has been doing the same for almost a year now. They are using their God-given uniqueness to serve Him.

Serve Him who took upon Himself the form of a man (sorry N.O.W. but facts are facts) and lived for 33 years among and in His Creation and then died for our sins and rose again on the third day and 40 days later ascended into heaven and 50 days after that He came back in the person of the Holy Spirit to indwell all who would put their faith and trust in Him.. I will never stop admonishing you to take Jesus Christ into your heart and life realizing you are like all humanity; born in sin and in need of a Saviour. We are no different, in that sense, than anyone else. We have the same Spiritual need all humans have. Give yourself the Christmas gift of Christ in you and the hope of Glory.

I have used up the space I wanted to use to thank EACH ONE who has had a hand in the publishing of G&LL this year. Some have typed for us, many have sent stamps and contributions and many are praying for G&LL. I can honestly say that the TG community has made G&LL possible this year and enabled me to add a new publication, "Love Story" (send for a sample copy). I love each of you dearly.

Lee Frances Heller
Publisher and Editorof G&LL

ETHICS AND CROSSDRESSING

by
Jaye Reviere, Ph.D. DD

It was cold. A slight breeze blew from the north, otherwise the Sunday morning was spectacular. I'd not lived in New Mexico long enough to become blaze about the brilliant skies and the towering mountains. I was full of joy as I made my way to Sunday morning worship services.

The heels of my pumps clicked as I suppressed a shudder of delight, a shiver from the cold and kept my pace deliberate. The walk from my Blazer to the front door of the church was short, but if I'd not had on a long skirt, heavy and appropriate for the winter's chill, it would have seemed far longer.

Inside, a young lady met me. After a warm greeting hug, came a question: "Jaye, how can you stand wearing a skirt in such cold weather?" My mind raced a moment. "I don't mind the cold," I replied, "when the wind swirls up the south end of my skirt, it reminds me I'm not wearing hated pants!" She laughed warmly.

Over the past dozen or so years a good deal has been written about the psychological issues involved in being a crossdresser. This involved developing knowledge as to why we are as we are.

With the powerful sweeping rising of religious fundamentalism, we are continually bombarded with a straightlaced stereotype. We don't fit the stereotype of what a heterosexual male is thought properly to be. We are very different. Fundamentalism with all its emphasis on Bible literalism and law, sees us as being something horrible and an abomination.

Just what really is the situation? Are we an abomination in the eyes of our Creator? Are we sinful just because we are as we are? Are we offensive to other Christians? What of life for us?

These are vital questions. They are concerns with which we need to deal and come to a place of peaceful assurance for ourselves. These are issues each of us must resolve individually. No one else can resolve them for us. Each is between the individual and God.

What those of us who have walked long upon the road of faith can do, however, is share our thinking and our experiences with others. In this sharing we can perhaps offer some light, some room for insight, and some reassurance that the constant drumbeat of fundamentalism pounding in our ears has not deafened us to the still small voice of God, who created us as we are.

That's right! It is God's idea for us to be different. We can't know the mind of God. We can only infer it from the revealed word, from the movings of the Holy Spirit within, and from what our pitifully limited human senses can detect. Because we are, it is abundantly evident we are made to be as we are. We are assured of two irrefutable things. God makes no mistakes and we are created for a purpose. It is, I believe, up to us to search and prayerfully seek to find the purpose God has for us, particularly in having created us to be apart from the common herd of humanity.

Toward this end, may I offer some of the things I've discovered in my life journey? We are taught, and rightly so, as Christians, that we are created in the Image of God. I submit this is not as so many humans presume, something physical. Rather this Image of God in which we are created is a purely spiritual image. You see, God is SPIRIT and has no one physical being, so God has no physical image.

Now, God being spirit sees not what is external in our physical sense and in the physical realm which was made merely to support and sustain the spirit beings we are while we are living in the physical. I have come to believe, it is essential for us to be the spirit beings, within the confines of this physical realm in which God has places us, in just the way God made us to be. For those of us who find being different an essential element of our being true to our creation, we must be different in order to be as God intends us to be.

In this way of understanding, we are an abomination in the sight of God when we work so very hard to be anything other than what God made us to be. When we deny, when we hide, when we repress, and when we go overboard or extremes, we are not being what God made us to be. When we are doing these things, we are an abomination before God. When we go simply, quietly, respectably, and reverently about being the human being God made us to be, then we are a joy to our Creator.

This defies the literalism with which fundamentalists impose a mean and angry demanding face on God. This is, I have come to believe, how God sees us: *inside rather than superficially*. If our spirit is in concert with the Holy Spirit dwelling in each of us, the outside is totally immaterial.

Because God made us as we are, our being who, what and how God made us is obviously not sinful. We offend our Creator (sin) when we try so very hard to be what humans say we should be when this is inconsistent with what God made us to be.

We are in some cases, offensive to other Christians. This poses ethical issues for us. I sat in church demurely, with my skirt well down around my ankles, although it was quite warm inside, and offended no one. This church is one in which many gay people come together to worship. I had called and been assured I would offend no one BEFORE I went there in a dress the first time. This was the ethically responsible thing to do. Yes, we are offensive in some cases to some believers and I believe we are responsible to go out of our way to do what we can to avoid giving deliberate or knowing offense. Even if temporarily we have to impose restraint and restriction upon ourselves and our the exercise of our true Christian freedom.

What of life for us? This is the rhetorical question which cries out for an answer for each of us. It is a question only the individual can answer. It is a question with which I have grappled in my personal being for many years. It is a question for which resolution began in prayer.

I hated being different. I hated the desires I had. I hated the scorn with which I was treated if I allowed someone else to see me as I really was. I hated not being like "one of the guys". I hated being feminine. I hated being left out. I hated all these things and more. I hated all this because I hated myself. I hated myself because I was different.

I lay in prayer. The prayer was in profound anguish. I was defiant. I was angry. I was hostile to my God. I was demanding. I was a petulant child demanding to be how I wanted to be, not how God made me to be. I was demanding to be how humans said I had to be, not how Almighty God had chosen for me to be.

My one way conversation with God was angry, demanding, and insistent. Then it was interrupted. I think God finally had enough of my being like a stubborn two year old kid who demands to have his way even when a loving parent knows there is a far better way.

An awesome voice, still, soft, a bit angry sounding, and yet infinitely loving and tender spoke in my spirit. The words are burned in my soul forever: "How dare you not want to be as I have made you to be! How dare you indeed!"

My attention was commanded instantly. A peace settled over me and I began to experience comprehension. My personal theological background had been very fundamentalist and I was more than merely conversant with the literalist interpretations of the Bible which abound in fundamentalist thought. I began to see the impossibility of human comprehension of the Bible in purely intellectual terms. Human intellect cannot grasp the infinite because human intellect itself is finite. With this conclusion, I was astounded and doors to spiritual understanding began to open wide.

Then I began to realize, God had indeed made me as I am. Afterall, my spirit bore witness to the awesome presence of the Holy Spirit who had spoken those awful words: "How dare you..." in my soul. With this realization there came a peacefulness about being different, a peacefulness I cannot describe. Suddenly, I began to understand God had made me different for God's purposes. I didn't know them then and I don't know them now. It is enough for me to know they are.

The "How dare you..." of God kept ringing in my soul as I began more and more to let go of my fundamentalist thinking and began to hear more and more of the far more profound teachings of other groups within the traditional and liturgical church. It all began to make more sense. If my human intellect could not grasp the infinite simply because it is not big enough, and if God had made me different, then I had to be as I am in order to be faithful to my Creator. I had to let go my human ideas and human self direction and simply walk in faith believing the Holy Spirit within was doing what God promised: taking care of all the details of my life.

What of the ethical issues we raised earlier? Like everything else, they are under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. I don't have any hard and fast rules by which to live. I am aware as St. Paul said, I am free in the Lord to be who, what, and how God made me to be, but I will willingly and even gladly deny myself exercise of this freedom so that I not offend a weaker believer.

Parenthetically, I might add, I am convinced in the very core of my being, those who still struggle with their faith by imposing judgements based on human intellectual interpretation of spiritual things are weaker believers. This is not to say I am anything special or am in any way stronger or better than anyone else in the faith. No, it is just that in this one aspect, this thing of imposing human judgements on divine considerations those who continue to walk by the sight of human intelligence and not by faith alone are weaker. I am weak and others are weak. Some are weaker than others. Those who live by human judgements are among those weakest.

In the wisdom of God, some of us are created different. Some of us are made in a way in which we do not fit the common mold. It is God's choice and the exercise of God's divine right for this to be. It is our challenge to be who, what and how God has made us and to do so gently, lovingly, and in consideration for the feelings and weaknesses of those who are ordinary and who are vulnerable to being harmed by our unwise use of the freedom God gives us to be the people we are created to be. The single ethic I propose is this: *give no offense when there is a way you can avoid giving it without compromising and surrendering your faith and your very being as God's created person.*

This ethic applies, I believe in all cases. It applies in our comings and goings and especially in our personal relationships with those with whom we are most involved. It particularly applies to our families and those God has given as our friends. Telling members of our families, sharing crossdressing with our friends, and being open about who, what, and how we are with others is a constant concern. Each case, each relationship is a unique case, and to each unique case the one ethic applies.

My best suggestion is: be who, what, and how God made you to be, but don't rub the noses of others in your freedom. Give no intentional offense and you are living ethically.

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GOD'S TOOL-BOX

By Barbara J. Jasen
1436 Brett Dr.
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Unlike our dear sister Lee Frances, I am not a ~~minister~~* by profession, but rather my work is in electronics. As an electronic technician I have a toolbox containing various tools ranging from simple pliers and screwdrivers, to some rather strange looking tools for special task, to some rather complex and expensive meters and oscilloscopes, all there to facilitate my task of repairing a VCR or a stereo. I also have a wide array of service manuals, a sort of road map of the unit I am repairing. Perhaps of all the tools that I have at my disposal, this is the most important for it shows how the unit is made and helps to find the problem at fault.

Many of us have a sort of toolbox. For a computer programmer it may be some disk with special programs on them to assist him in writing programs, for the person in publishing it may be a drawer or box containing things like paste and scissors and other items for publishing. The doctor, the accountant, the bridge builder; we all have various types of tools to facilitate us in doing our job.

And just as we have a toolbox, so too does God have a toolbox. Of course just as I have service manuals in my toolbox, God has the bible in his toolbox. It is his road map for us to learn of him and his plan for us. He also has ministers,, evangelist, musicians, and various other people all there to facilitate his task of getting his message out to the people.

Often times we may ask "Why me Lord, why do I have this affliction of crossdressing?" The religious right says that this is wrong, that you do not want me because I crossdress, and yet I did not choose this life so I can only assume that you chose it for me. WHY? For what purpose did you make me this way?"

I can only assume that a person who is gay is asking God the very same questions. Why did God not make us like normal people?

I recall the movie "OH God" where God came to an ordinary person and told him that he had a special message that he needed him to deliver to the world. It has been quite awhile since I saw the movie, and I do not recall John Denver's characters name, but I do recall his skepticism when George Burns introduced himself as God. I can imagine the thoughts of this person that God came to *Come on now, I've seen those pictures in my bible, I know what God looks like. WHO ARE YOU?* Like many of us, he was also asking "WHY ME?"

Just as we suffer many afflictions due to our crossdressing so did this person. His wife thought he was crazy, the doctor thought he was crazy, as I recall he even lost his job in attempt to do what God had asked of him. Of course the various biblical people also thought he was crazy. *Come on now, if God has such an important message he won't ask some mr. nobody to deliver it, he have me do it, after all I am a great tele-evangelist, I lead the largest church in the world I am much more important. I'm ....."*

As we look in the bible we notice that when Jesus was on this earth, he went to some rather common people to deliver his message. He took his message to the outcast, and other low life of the time. Of course he tried to bring it to the various religious leaders of the time, but like the religious leaders in the movie, they doubted him, *Your not the Son of God, your just another nutcase.*

I often wonder how many sisters I have who were like me, yearning to be close to

*Lee Frances is a dedicated layman who spent 20 years ministering the Gospel of Christ's salvation as Director of an Evangelical Christian Rescue Mission.

God, and because of the teaching of the religious right felt that God did not want them simply because of our crossdressing. Would you be close to God today if it were not for a sister, a sister reassuring you that God does love you, and that Jesus died just as much for you as for the religious right?

Our being crossdressers is but one of the many tools that God has in his toolbox, sort of like my special purpose tools. We are here for a special job that God has for us. God has a purpose for each and every one of us, and we as transgendered people can rest assured that our transgenderism is but a necessary tool to his accomplishing that purpose he has for us. Would this newsletter even exists if our dear sister was not transgendered?

1 Samual 17:6, reads "The Lord does not see as mortals see, mortals look on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart." In the song "HE LIVES" the choirus reads *"he lives, he lives, Christ Jesus lives today; ..... You ask me how I know He lives, He lives within my heart"*. If Jesus lives within our hearts, then it is not necessary for us to seek out God purpose in life for us, but rather God will show it to us, He will make his purpose known unto us, and when he does, you will understand that being transgendered is but one of his tools to accomplishing that purpose he has for us.

Though the religious right may quarrel with us, rest assured that GOD LOVES YOU! If Jesus lives within your heart, then he died as much for you as he did the religious right.

Dear Dr. Bill: How would you explain Deuteronomy 22:5:

"A woman shall not wear a man's apparel, nor shall a man put on a woman's garment; for whoever does such things is abhorrent to the Lord your God."

Can you provide primary references (e.g., Rabbinical texts or other sources)? I will appreciate any information or further insight on this topic that you can provide.

Sincerely,

Bible Belt, Georgia.

Dear Bible Belt,

What a wonderful question! Since so many religious people are sincerely interested in holding to the basic value system of the Bible, it is important to understand when you seemingly are not in sync with a biblical injunction.

Deuteronomy is the fifth book in the Old Testament. Deuteronomy is supposed to be a farewell address by Moses. In the first three chapters, he recounts the journey from Mt. Sinai to the land East of the Jordan. Starting with Chapter 4, he challenges his followers to be obedient to the "statutes and ordinances". He urges loyalty, gratitude, and obedience in view of the imminent settlement in Canaan and the dangers in this settlement. A real concern was that the Canaanite religions not be incorporated into the Hebrew experience. Beginning with Chapter 12 through 25, Moses gives an endless series of legal regulations, including rules for worship. The essence of the laws are outlined in Deut. 10: 12-22, where according to G. Ernest Wright, a well-known Old Testament scholar, "God's requirement is that his people shall revcrence him, love him, and serve him with heart and soul."

According to *The Interpreter's Bible*, Deuteronomy 22:5 is a law which appears only in this one verse in the Bible and is "directed against the simulated changes of sex in Canaanite religion." It seems to be guarding the Hebrews against the immorality of impersonating members of the opposite sex for vulgar and lewd pagan ritual. In Canaanite religious practice such exchange of garments was generally for immoral purposes. It was a form of idolatry; a major evil for the Hebrews was idolatry.

ON BEING YOURSELF

By Rev. Kim Lee Brown,
Founder of AURORA, Mid-Missippi TransgEnder Group

The saturday night before I was to deliver what I hoped would be an enlightening message at IFGE's Atlanta Action 95, I sat on the front porch of Dallas Dennys home without a clue as to what I should say. I sat in the quiet peacefulness of the night praying and listening for a revelation. But nothing came other than the cool light from the stars and moon.

Early the next morning I returned to the porch for more meditation and hopefully some inspiration. But now the peace of night was gone. The sky was filled with a cool yellow light and the air was filled with the morning sounds of people rushing to work. Unexpectedly, that which I sought came to me. God spoke. Not in an audible voice, but powerful just the same. There is a place for darkness and a place for light, the mere existence of one does not destroy the other. Each complements the other and if you look you can find beauty in both. However, it was the twilight which spoke so powerfully to me. It is this place in time when the birds can be heard singing, and it's the twilight where the resting flowers open their faces to greet the day. Suddenly I realized that we are like the twilight, neither night nor day. We are that perfect mixture of each where the birds can sing and the flowers open.

This revelation is important to me because I have always tried to find my place in the world. I read all the writings about gender people in history and I felt better. But something was still missing. I am more than just a part of the gender community. My life is a part of all life on this planet. I am part of the dawn. Without the dawn there can be no morning. I takes all parts to make the day complete and it takes us, just as we are, to make humanity complete. We are indisputably a part of the greater humanity. And humanity has always sought it's place and purpose in the universe.

I now know that I am no accident. I have a place and a purpose. My problem is that I have always been in conflict with that purpose. I wanted to be the day and when I could not, I wanted to become the night. I was never content until I accepted myself as what God made me, a transsexual, neither night nor day, but a part of the dawn where the birds sing and the flowers open.

I was like an old car I used to have. It was my car. I could do whatever I wanted to do with it. It was mine. When the price of gasoline rose to more than $1.00 per gallon, I decided that I wasn't going to put it in my car anymore. I filled it with water. Do you know what happened? It didn't run. Why not? It was my car! The answer is obvious. The car was not designed to run on water. It was designed to run on gasoline.

I fear that many people in our community are like I was, and like my car they cannot function properly. We can change our appearance and our actions, but we cannot change what we are. To do so prevents us from functioning properly.

I am transsexual, I cannot function at my best as either a male or female. And if I am transsexual I should not be expected

to. It is no surprise to me that the general public is afraid of us. We hide in our male and female roles like we have done something wrong just by being ourselves. Until we are willing to accept ourselves as we are, unique and diverse, we will find no peace. I do not know why I am what I am. Understanding is not always possible, but simple acceptance is. Acceptance of what you and your neighbor are, is the first step to completeness.

I have a good friend here with whom I disagree on many topics, but I accept her for what she is. We agree to disagree. If we cannot accept and embrace the diversity among our own people how can we expect the rest of the world to accept us. We must learn to accept ourselves just as we are created to be. To embrace the dawn and join the rest of the day.

Rev, Kim Lee Brown may be addressed at AURORA, P. O. Box 1306, Florence MS 30073

LETTERS

"I'd like to thank everyone for their work on the G&LL. It's important to know someone else cares TS/Prison Inmate

"Thanks so much for the July G&LL. I'm going through a tough time right now and it came just in time. Vanessa's article, 'The Cross & The Crossdresser' was very informative and I really liked,'Why Me Lord?', A question even I find myself asking many times." FL

'I do so enjoy the G&LL and it makes me reconsider things so very often". NY

"So last month I received G&LL. I told you I did not consider myself a Christian but because I have a profound belief in God, I cannot think my lack of Christian faith is a handicap either in this life or the next.. I have started a train of thought that has me gazing out the window in despair as I realize I do not have the skills to put myself on paper. But I do not want a God who says I must adhere to a certain religion---OR ELSE!! There! Do I stand condemned? Having read G&LL, I don't think so, but I do know certain ministers of religion (not necessarily men of God) who would have me on my way to a certain hot spot." (Because of CDing/ed.) Australia

"I really love reading G&LL and have gotten some good things out of it.

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