

## **You have no idea how hard it is to be alone**

In all the talk about LGBTQ persons, I never hear anyone talk about their parents. It can be very lonely and isolating for parents of LGBTQ children. People can be very mean and make derogatory jokes about LGBTQ people. Parents have no one to talk to, even friends or church members can say nasty things behind their backs.

For me personally it was much easier when our son Tom told us he was gay. It wasn't a shock but it was hard on me what he had to go through. He was a student at a United Methodist seminary.

While he was in seminary the United Methodist church voted to not ordain gay or lesbian people called to serve the church. He has his Masters of Divinity, but it is not part of his present life.



While I was going through my concern for Tom, I confided in my close friend Lin. I feel I was directed by God to do so. It gave her the freedom to confide in me that her son Tim, in his 30's, was transitioning to her daughter Trace. I can tell you for a fact that the tongue wagging and mean gossip is much worse when your child is trans. Lin and her husband could no longer feel comfortable and loved in their UCC church. Trace is a very accomplished person and the jealousy of other parents, some of whom attended the church, transformed into elation over the "fall" of their child's rival.

Lin and I were able to comfort each other and share experiences and feelings with each other. For Lin it was much, much harder. In essence, their son Tim died, and now they have a daughter Trace. They love Trace, and do all they can to support her, but they grieved for the loss of Tim. On top of all this, Trace, in her mid-30's and transitioning, is taking female hormones. So Lin was also the mother of an "adolescent woman". She handled everything valiantly with love and care. Trace knew on the first day of kindergarten that she wanted to be one of the cute little girls with pigtails. She always felt she was a girl, but had to act as a boy, and could not discuss the subject. She could perceive (at her young age) it was a societal taboo.

Trace is now one of the most illustrious poets and an editor in trans poetry. She has her PhD in poetry, and for the past two years has been a professor at the University of Connecticut. One of those shock jocks out of Florida a year ago noticed she was on the faculty of UConn. He spewed out all sorts of venom to his followers about Trace teaching students at UConn how to become trans. Because of this, Trace received hate mail and threats. On top of everything, the shock jock published Trace's address (her long-time former address), which is her parents' home address. Trace was terrified that some "trans hater" would attack her parents' home.

This is the reality LGBTQ persons have, "to live in fear in the United States." Parents and family of LGBTQ persons need the love and affirmation of Open and Affirming churches. With our current status, which is not Open and Affirming, family members of LGBTQ persons would find it too hard to risk being alone in a church that is not wholly and truly welcoming. They won't even walk through our doors without knowing they are truly welcome.

Edith Gerber