

## Why We Chose A Reconciling Church by Abby Cole

I grew up believing that loving someone of the same gender was something to be overcome. "Same sex attraction", "so called gays & lesbians", "gay lifestyle", "gay agenda" "temptation" – call it what you will, it means the same thing. What I feel is not real. How I love is not equal to how the other 90% ish loves. I was lucky enough to find my one true love and come out in a family that loved me and accepted me no matter what. Even then, I thought that a part of my life would have to be ignored. I thought that I could not be a Christian and gay. I thought Gay Christian was an oxymoron.

In 2006, Katie & I had a beautiful baby boy. We have always tended towards being loners. Most weekends are just us and our family. There came a time when we wanted our son to attend Sunday school. We wanted to find a community. However, it gets really old trying to Google churches and their viewpoints on homosexuality. Most people that are trying to find a church, don't even think about that. They find one that is convenient to their house and the people are friendly. Maybe they consider if they like the way the pastor speaks or if the coffee and cookies after services are home made. They don't think about how they will be silently judged (or not so silently), they don't consider whether or not they would be able to attend a relationship seminar at their church, they don't think about communion and if they would be refused at the altar. These are things we had to think about. We wanted to be accepted, not just tolerated. We wanted to be fully participating members of a church family, not relegated to sit in the back row in the hopes that we wouldn't speak up.

So, in this modern age, we Google.

"we aren't anti-gay, we're pro family" – nope, not that one.

"Homosexuality is not a "valid alternative lifestyle." – uh huh

"love the sinner, hate the sin." – ugh

"not a normal condition, the acts being against nature are objectively wrong." – yikes

"we invite and welcome all persons of every age, gender identity, racial or ethnic background, sexual orientation, marital or socioeconomic status, nationality, physical or mental ability into full participation in the life of this faith community." – ah, that sounds better.

From the moment, we walked into the doors at Light of Hill, we found a place that welcomed us and didn't just tolerate us. No one asked us, "so, who is the mom?" No one questioned if we were sisters or roommates. Love is love and ours was recognized as such. Our family is treated as simply that, another family. That's why we're here. That's why we drive from Olympia to attend church.

It's also why, it's important that you tell your story. It isn't easy to find someplace like this. Some of you may wonder why it matters that you have the Reconciling Ministries sign on the church sign, or why the pins matter or why you have to "advertise it." We are why. There are people out there that are searching. People that want to embrace a faith community, people that want to attend church on Sundays and give of their time, money and talents. Share their God given gifts with someone else. There are children that need to hear that God loves them, there are families and couples who want to attend church on Easter and Christmas Eve.

There is still a great divide in the Methodist church and you must advertise that you are a loving, welcoming, accepting congregation. Otherwise, so many of those searchers will just stop searching. They won't ever know that you exist. Trust me, I know it can be difficult to say, "yea, you're welcome here." You don't want to be any different than anyone else. This is hard for me. To stand here and talk to you about our journey. We want to be like everyone else. That is the ultimate goal. That you won't notice that we happen to be a 2-mom family. That you may find yourself wondering why our beautiful children look like both of us. That you won't even question their genetics. However, until the rest of the world accepts our differences as just something like I'm right handed and you're left handed, we have to stand up. We have to yell and scream that *all are welcome*.

Macklemore has a song that says,

"Whatever god you believe in  
We come from the same one  
Strip away the fear  
Underneath it's all the same love  
About time that we raised up"

(Macklemore & Ryan Lewis. "Same Love")