

## Alex's June 10th Speech

Most of you know me, but in case some of you don't, my name is Alexander McGuffey and I go by Alex. That wasn't always my name, though. Let me tell you a little bit about myself.

I was born as a biological girl in Thailand. My name was Watchariporn, but my nickname was Da, and I lived near Bangkok. Here are some cute pictures of me from when I was little. I knew that there was something different about me from when I was about seven years old. I liked to wear boys clothes. I liked to be treated like a boy. I felt like a boy inside.

The people who took care of me didn't understand me or accept me as a boy. They put me in a dress and makeup without asking me if that's what I really wanted. I had a secret boy's name for myself (it was Jeremy, which is funny because that's my dad's name now) but no one would call me that. I felt sad and angry inside about it, but I didn't know there was another way for things to be.

When I was almost fifteen years old, I came to America and was adopted by the McGuffey family. At first I was their daughter, and things were really bad and hard for me. I didn't want to tell them that I was a boy inside because I was afraid that they would not accept me and they would continue to treat me like a girl, or that they wouldn't let me be part of the family anymore. They let me pick a new name, and I chose the name Eden, because it was a name for a boy or a girl, but it didn't feel right because I wanted a boy's name. I was still hiding myself.

After about a year and a half, I decided that I was going to tell my family that I was transgender. I told my mom first. It was really scary. We were walking in the parking lot at the grocery store, and I asked her, "What would you do if your daughter turned out to be a son?", and then I got scared and said, "but I'm not talking about me!". My mom said, "That would be fine. They would be the same person, and I would love them anyway." After that, we had a long conversation, and I came out to her as trans.

My mom told my dad about the whole thing. He was away because he's in the military. I was very worried that he would not accept me or be angry at me. The next evening I called him on the phone. When he answered, he said, "Hello son" and I started to cry. It was like a new world for me.

After that, the next place I came out to was this church. I didn't know how people would react, so I was very nervous about it. When I came out, I was surprised and happy that people accepted me as a transgender man. They even threw me a party with a cake with my new name, Alexander, on it. I chose my name because it's my dad's middle name, and I wanted to name myself after my dad.

Since then, I have legally changed my name and gender, and I now live as a man in all parts of my life.

Having the support from my family and community has made me feel not alone, like everyone around me supports me and sees who I really am. I have some transgender friends who don't have that kind of love and support, and I see how it's really rough for them. It makes me feel very blessed to have the kind of environment where I feel comfortable being who I am.

It's not always easy. Let me give you an example. Not everyone knows that I am trans, because I pass really well, which means that I look like a biological man, so it makes people think that they can say things about trans people around me that are hurtful, and they think I will agree with them. I usually leave and don't tell them that I am trans because I am worried about my safety if they found out that I am transgender. But I have a support system and people that I can talk to about those issues who can help me feel better. I have also seen other people come forward and say, "Hey, what you just said is not okay, and you need to be careful about the words you choose." That makes me feel better about myself.

I think it's really important that our church stays a safe environment for people like me who may not always feel safe about speaking out for themselves. Because I know that even if I am having a difficult time in my life, I can always come here and be who I am without having to worry about what will happen. Thank you for supporting me and being the kind of people in my life who make me feel loved. I hope that someday the rest of the world will feel the same way about me and people like me.

Thank you.