



THREE A Lesbian, Transgender, and Female Minister STRIKES

By Cindi Knox

I felt hints of a call to ministry when my age was still in single digits. I was active in Sunday School, Vacation Bible School, youth group, and even Christian summer camp. Ordained Christian ministry was certainly a possibility in my very conservative, suburban church for someone who most people identified as a boy.

I say “identified as a boy” because I suspected I was supposed to be a girl, even before we moved to the suburbs and joined this church. I didn't know of anyone else with these feelings, nor did I dare share them with others.

However, I did share them with God. I remember praying I would wake up and live as a girl my whole life. I prayed I would wake up and have the right body, regardless of the past.

Eventually, I started praying I would wake up as a girl or not wake up at all.

IF I WERE NOT FEMALE, I would not hear people teaching me that only men may be pastors and teachers.

IF I WERE NOT LESBIAN, I would not hear people preaching to me that I cannot be a Christian because I'm homosexual.

AND IF I WERE NOT TRANSGENDER, I would not be writing this article.

It wasn't until I was in my twenties that transitioning to my true self seemed a possibility. This was the beginning of sharing the truth about who I knew I was.

My conservative Christian background told me same-sex attraction was a sin, so I began dating men. It took a while for me to discover and accept that I was attracted to other women. It took longer for me to reconcile this with my faith.

Years later, my partner and I joined a Metropolitan Community Church (MCC), and it was during this time that the sense of call to ministry came back. But now I was female, transgender, and lesbian: three different reasons — according to the church of my youth — I was ineligible to be a pastor. The person I had pretended to be was acceptable; my true self was not.

While with that MCC, I started working on my undergraduate degree so I could enroll in seminary. By 2004, I found my way to the United Church of Christ, a denomination that has long ordained women and non-heterosexual people. That very year the UCC also ordained a transgender man. I graduated from Chicago Theological Seminary with a Masters in Divinity. The next month, I was approved for ordination pending a call.

Generally, my seminary, home church, association, conference, and the UCC are very supportive of me. Yet, I still carry the sense of being an outsider. There are churches that are not ready to call a woman, a lesbian, or a transgender person — and I'm all three.



**BECAUSE I AM A WOMAN,
I teach people they can be a pastor or
teacher regardless of their gender.**

**BECAUSE I AM LESBIAN,
I preach that people can be a Christian
regardless of their sexuality.**

**BECAUSE I AM TRANSGENDER,
I wrote this article to give hope to
others.**

And there is no shortage of Christians willing to call me out as being unqualified for ministry because of who I am.

Yet, I am qualified because of whose I am. I am a follower of Jesus, and I believe God calls people regardless of what humans may deem appropriate. Can God use who I am to help me to accept others as they are? Can God use my journey to help me to meet others where they are? Can God use my struggle to help me to strengthen others as they become who God dreamed them to be?