



The writer snapped this picture of her yard after a North Dakota storm.

Accepting Change

BY NIKKI TYRRELL

It was so quiet on the convention floor in the huge convention center just prior to the time for the election of officers.

I'd heard the mission speaker talk earlier about how she felt guilty being at the convention — her place was with the women and children she served. She called them “her people.” My heart ached for “my people,” my home, and I just wanted to be there, but I was awaiting the results of an election. The tears filled my eyes as I prayed, “Lord, if this is not the job for me, if I am not the one to do this or it will affect one person’s faith in a detrimental way, help me to accept your results” ... and with that, my ten years of serving seemed to come down to one moment ... but this one moment fundamentally changed my life and my heart.

I love the LWML and my “purple peeps.” I remember being a Young Woman Representative in 2003 at the Oklahoma City LWML Convention — how beautiful it was to watch the choir sing with their hands and to take communion with thousands of other Lutheran women at the opening night’s worship service. I still have my first purple nametag. Looking back, I’ve ridden in elevators with a couple of the LCMS presidents, attended LWML Board of Directors meetings, and worked with some of the most intelligent and truly Christian women one will ever meet. It was a great pleasure to serve behind the scenes.

For many years I jumped at every opportunity to serve in any position and learn and share everything I could about the LWML. I am so thankful for all of the mentoring and time in the Word of God that I have had the opportunity to experience over the years. Serving in the LWML gave me a purpose



A joyful celebration at the wedding of one of four Tyrrell daughters.

when I needed a place to belong. It gave me a high that was indescribable, and it was a great run ... until it wasn't. In the struggle to balance it all, I essentially started to set myself on fire to keep others warm. No job was too big. I liked being important to people and became addicted to the feeling I got when I opened my email and saw all the people who needed me. As a result, I stopped spending time in the Word. In order to be always available to serve, I became unavailable for my girls, my husband, and my friends. I never went anywhere without my phone so I could always answer my email right away. Then, I kept quiet when I should have spoken up. I didn't want to make waves. I took on too much. I was drowning and exhausted. I needed my heavenly Father ... and He missed me ...

And then came the vote. I lost.

On the outside I was fine. On the inside I was stewing. (When I got home, I felt guilty and relieved all at once. I mean, wasn't I sinning not to want to give up all my free time to "Serve the Lord with gladness"?)

But at the convention center, it was difficult to avoid the sudden rush of concerned people who came up to console and to encourage me, so I thanked them politely and then pushed them away. It was also hard to ignore the really weird advice and platitudes people shared with me when I wasn't chosen. Sometimes people with good intentions say the most misguided things ... and as I chewed on these words, they pierced my heart, causing me to doubt my years of service and question every decision I had made.

I ended up walking with Jesus beside me into all kinds of uncomfortable places. Embarrassment, fear, disappointment, even betrayal. It was so hard. I felt so weak. I cried a lot. For a long time I was really lonely. I actually missed getting dozens of urgent emails a day. I mourned the loss of the busyness that had engulfed my life for years. It was so quiet.

My Savior did not leave my side.

Be still and know that I am God (Psalm 46:10) took on a whole new meaning. I had to take a break and let God heal me with His mercy and the Means of Grace.

What the Holy Spirit knew, and I didn't, was that this was just the beginning of a difficult time. He knew how much I needed to trust Him, so He pulled me closer through His Word and the support of my fellow Christians at my church. My husband had a serious injury and had surgery with a long recovery. There were financial uncertainties and hard decisions. My girls all graduated and dared to move away for college, for marriage, for life — and I was no longer defined by being a mom.

The vote at the convention was only the beginning of what felt as though someone had just taken a hammer to this fragile life that my husband and I had worked so hard to create, and crushed it into a million pieces. I needed to find rest and I didn't have the self-control to do it alone, so my heavenly Father came to me and helped me to stop.

This sabbatical started with small choices. I said no to a nominating committee who wanted me to jump right back in and run for a different office. I learned to sleep with my phone in another room and not to check my email all the time. I started spending time with my brothers with whom I'd lost touch over the years. I dated my husband and helped him do chores.

I didn't run out and join another Bible study or women's group, but instead I started reading the Bible, studying it, journaling, and praying. This new walk with God requires that I have a relationship with Him, too, and not just people and my email. Now I garden and pray, teach and study, listen and learn.

Many years later, there is calm again. Not because I found my true purpose or my life stopped changing, but because God has reclaimed His place in my heart. I've accepted the peace and forgiveness that only He can give. He gives balance. There is time for prayer. There is time for the Word. There is time for worship. There is time for relationships and coffee and joy.

I don't know what kind of work God has for me in the future. I just know He is faithful. God has given me these gifts that He knew I needed. With God's help, I will *grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and forever! Amen* (2 Peter 3:18).



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