



Forgiven, Healed and Made Whole by Larry and Betty Baker

(Betty and Larry are former members of the Board of Directors of Transforming Congregations)



In 1970 we were a happy, young married couple with two beautiful blonde little girls. Larry's years of military service were behind him and we were excited about the career he had begun as a commercial airline pilot. We were also excited about the Lord and our growing faith, and were actively serving Him in a Bible-believing church.

We wanted another child but knew it would be difficult for me, and so we began to look into adoption. Although we first considered Vietnam, the Lord led us through a series of events to adopt a precious baby boy from Korea.

Larry was able to fly to Seoul to get him, and the girls and I had our first glimpse of two brown eyes peering over the top of his daddy's shoulder at Kennedy Airport on a rainy day in April of 1972.

From the very beginning, he was ours – no question! On his first Sunday at church, a little friend came up to our older daughter and asked, "What is he, Chinese?" And she replied with eight-year-old indignation, "No, he's my brother!" And so he was.

He has been such a joy and blessing in our family over the years – a thoughtful, intelligent, caring son and brother who was never in trouble and graduated with honors from a top university. There were times he struggled with prejudice, and we talked and prayed about it. He loved going to Korean culture camp, where even the counselors were adoptees; and during his college years he made a trip back to Korea with a large group of adoptees. On his return home, he helped care for a little boy who was coming to his adopted family. It made our son all the more appreciative and loving.

A few years later, we began to suspect he was involved in homosexuality. When we asked him outright about it, we assured him that nothing could stop us from loving him or claiming him as our son. It has been a long and difficult road since then, made more difficult by his rejection of a loving God. He is still involved in homosexuality, but he is still our son. We hold him and his partner up in prayer every day and ask the Lord to mold them into the men He wants them to be.

Ours is a close, loving family; both our daughters are married and we have four beautiful grandchildren. But there is division among us on the acceptance of homosexuality as a normal lifestyle. There is still a lot of love and joy in our family, but there is a shadow over every holiday and family event.

I cannot tell you how much the Lord has blessed and helped us to grow in Him through this. He has led us to the Transforming Congregations ministry and given us a burden to help other families who struggle with this problem and other problems of sexual brokenness.

You see, we're not alone, and it's not just homosexuality. The first thing the Lord told us was that we must deal with our own sexual sin before pointing a finger elsewhere. That involved a lot of painful confession: of early sexual activity, abortion and adultery. But today we are forgiven, healed and made whole by the cleansing blood of Jesus Christ.

Many of you may know of similar situations in your own church and community. If you don't, it's not because it's not there; it's because individuals and families are ashamed to tell you. It's because we as a church have not educated ourselves and reached out to these people with the unconditional, compassionate love of Jesus.

(Continued on back page)

Every community has people who struggle with unwanted same-sex attractions, struggle with sexual promiscuity, the lure of adultery, and rampant pornography. A recent *Newsweek* article cited a *Christianity Today* study that discovered 40% of responding clergy had visited sexually explicit websites.

It may be that some of you are among those strugglers. Jesus Christ can heal and free you; you can be a great help to others. Will you join us and help lead our church to stand firm on Scripture and the *Discipline*, and open its arms to those who need our help?

Still on the Journey by Pat Beadle

(Pat is a former member of the Board of Directors of Transforming Congregations)



Our son came home 13 years ago from an Air Force leave stating he had something to tell me. He also told me he feared that when he did we would no longer want him for our son anymore. My thoughts as a Mother were "What could be so terrible that he would think such a thing?" also "When would a parent's love become conditional?"

When he did tell me that he was gay, my first response was a worldly one – "Well, he is eighteen now. There's nothing I can do about it." I reacted by going to him, hugging him, and assuring him we loved him no matter what! After thinking about it, I became well aware that there was a lot I could do about it! Pray! Pray first of

all for me, my husband, John, our other children and our extended family. And pray for our son – his life, his safety, his future.

John's response to our son's announcement was, "He needs us more now than ever before in his life. We must continue to communicate, assure him of our love." I could write a book about where it goes from then till now. Because we are still on the journey. We have a very open communication relationship. We have always been that way with one another.

Our son knows we don't agree with him, but he also knows we love him. And we have learned to disagree agreeably. There are other things we don't agree on either. But we live with the disagreements, just as we do with our other children. He is also well aware of our intentions, our desires to offer ministries such as Transforming Congregations. I have a vision that each District in the East Ohio Annual Conference will have such a ministry in at least one local church. It's important, though, that each congregation needs to be called to it, otherwise they could do more harm than help.

My son feels the same – he believes if someone desires to be out of homosexuality and is in need of assistance, then the local church should have ministries in place for that individual to receive help. We have discussed the fact that the church offers other such programs concerning life issues such as divorce, alcohol, drugs, emotions, etc. All of these are very real parts of people's lives. Why not a ministry for those struggling with unwanted same-sex attractions? Our hearts as parents are proud of his stand on desiring a ministry to help those individuals, even though it's an issue that's so controversial.

Our hearts are also much encouraged by his plans to attend the Exodus Conference 2004. He desires to see what their ministry is about. Our plane tickets are bought. Though he is still living as a gay man, he has told me personally, "I am going with an open mind. I am going to do my homework. I am going to see what this organization that my Mother is involved in is all about." (*Pat's son did attend the 2004 Exodus Conference with his Mom. At this date, he is involved in a support group and well on the way to healing.*)

Our son is a very caring, compassionate, hard working, good citizen of the United States. We are thankful he is our son. We are thankful that God made NO mistake in giving him to us.