

Logan Crew

When I first joined Emmanuel's community as an infant, everyone knew me as Laura Belle. I'm 22 now, and my name is Logan. Logan Bailey, for those who were attached to the first *and* middle name thing.

In addition to my name, the fact that I'm an Earth Systems Science and French double major, a student journalist, and a Dolly Parton fan, I also want to introduce myself as one of the lucky ones.

I'm one of the lucky ones because when I came out as a lesbian to the senior high youth group when I was 15, it was uneventful. When I came out as transgender 2 years later, all that changed was the name that my friends called me.

I'm one of the lucky ones because I can still walk in this church. Not only that, but I can walk in this church knowing that no one will ask me to leave a piece of myself at the door. No one here thinks it's even possible for me to separate my transness from the rest of me; or at least if they do, they don't tell me that.

I'm one of the lucky ones because my family didn't kick me to the curb when I came out. They helped me access gender affirming healthcare, testosterone hormone replacement therapy which made my life so much easier to live. They're there for me on my best days and my worst days — there for *me*, Logan.

I'm one of the lucky ones because I'm alive. I'm no different than many trans youth who have a much higher likelihood of suffering with depression, an eating disorder, anxiety, and of attempting suicide.

But I'm really one of the lucky ones because my full embrace of my transness, of my queerness, has brought me closer to God. If I had hours, I could tell you about how many trans people have told me they were forced away from God. About the Christian college student a year younger than myself who told me I was the cancer of the earth, and that he would dedicate his life to eradicating said trans cancer. About my experience going to school in Texas and attending churches whose congregations lack love and compassion for people who are different.

Despite the stereotypes about young queer people, I find my greatest strength within my faith. If it wasn't for my relationship with a God that is unambiguously pro-queer (and queer themselves, if I may go there), I'm not sure that I would've made it to 22. It is hard to live as a young trans person, even being one of the lucky ones. The world is cruel, and much of the cruelty directed at trans youth comes from Christians.

I've debated my personhood with many such Christians, and I'm always one to initiate a conversation with someone I disagree with. However, I tire of talking about Leviticus and translation errors and whether or not someone *else* thinks I'm doing this Christianity thing right. I know Jesus, and Jesus knows me.

Jesus met me in the mental hospital when He sparked something within me that made me ask my family for a Bible. Jesus met me in the shower, a very vulnerable place for anyone let alone a teenager confused about how their body is supposed to make any sense given their brain, and in the shower He embraced me and reminded me that my body is good. Jesus has walked through every moment with me, when I was spit on on my college campus wearing a Pride t-shirt, when I gave myself my first testosterone injection, and when I chose my name.

I'm one of the lucky ones because I know that I'm a perfectly and divinely created, transgender, queer child of God. God is with all queer people everyday but especially this month as we celebrate Pride in the face of systemic oppression and violence.

As June continues, may we channel God's love and share it with those who don't feel as lucky. May we remember that despite the large-scale battles being fought for trans rights, the smaller, everyday battles are just as important. May we strive to understand one another, learn each others' stories, and trust that God is at work in every one of them—even within the situations where we're quick to judge and assume that God is nowhere to be found.

May we believe that queerness is a gift from the Creator, and that it's our duty as Christians to protect and uplift this belief and the people who experience it firsthand.