

Thoughts on TDOR – November 20, 2024

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6:30pm Service at Christ the King Lutheran Church, Cary NC

My name is Paige Julianne Sullivan. For transgender people, acceptance is a battle we face on multiple fronts. We struggle to embrace ourselves in a world that often pushes us to the margins. The courage to live openly as transgender frequently invites misunderstanding, discrimination, and even violence. Yet, the most arduous struggle for many of us is accepting ourselves amidst these pressures. I know this struggle well. For much of my life, I questioned God's existence and felt anger toward Him for making me transgender and for the difficulties that came with it. I struggled deeply with depression and, at times, nearly lost myself to despair. But over time, I realized that the problem wasn't me — it was society. God made me exactly as I was meant to be, and when I finally reached body congruence after 30 years of questioning my gender every single minute of every single day, I felt a peace I'd never known. In that moment, I understood God had given me perseverance, patience, and resilience to be who I am.

For those who have lost their lives to anti-transgender violence, particularly transgender women of color, and for those who took their own lives under the weight of society's poor treatment and the lack of adequate mental health resources, today we remember you. For those of us who survive and carry forward, we are living

testaments to the resilience of our community. I could have chosen to hide, but I remain visible to those who cannot be, showing that our lives are worthy and our voices valuable.

Tonight, we remember, grieve, and stand together, showing the world that we are here and worthy. We will continue to fight for a world where everyone can live freely.

Let us pray.

Loving God, You have created us with care, intention, and uniqueness, calling us to be ourselves in the fullness of Your love. Remind us that only You know what is written in our hearts and souls; it is not our place to judge others. Instead, help us to embrace one another as You have embraced us. On this day of remembrance, we lift to You all who have suffered for being true to themselves. We remember those taken by violence and those who felt they had no choice but to leave this world too soon. Surround them in Your peace. Strengthen us to be a voice for justice, a light of hope, and an extension of Your love for all who face rejection and pain. Guide us as we work toward a world where every person is safe to be fully themselves, resting in the assurance of Your grace. In Jesus' name, we pray. **Amen.**