

# Time to Chat: Transitions (Transcript)

Fri, Apr 12, 2024 8:34PM • 8:35

## SUMMARY KEYWORDS

congregation, welcoming, church, role, gifts, practice, work, loved, cared, community, continue, step, talk, spirit, tres, find, freedom, responsibilities, leadership, truth

Hi everyone. It's been a long time since I blogged here. I guess I've always had it in the back of my mind that I would return. I waited to blog again when I had some time but more importantly when I had a bit more freedom just to say what comes to mind. It's not that I'm not as transparent as I possibly could be. I'm out as a queer and a gay man. I talked about recovery, and pretty much anything else. But when you have responsibilities in a particular role or a job or working for a congregation, you certainly are genuine and authentic and do your best to be who you are. But also, you know that you have a role and that, well, you have freedom to say what you wish but its important to remember that not everything needs to be said necessarily, when it is using some of the things that we have in terms of work or opportunities in a way that becomes more personal than it is pastoral and so, you know, and that's not really restriction. That's one of the blessings.

However, right now I'm in a situation where I, I don't really have any responsibilities per se, other than to work my way through this transition, continue to unpack the enormous amount of boxes that I have, make sure the cat is fed is somehow, somehow make progress in in settling in which I really have done.

So I just want to say that when I left my call in January, after seven years serving the church that I was at -- it was just such a wonderful, joyous thing. We were prepared for the separation for quite some time. But it was a place where it was hard to leave because everybody cared about one another. We came together in a lot of ways to practice our own version of a very powerful example of unconditional love, which in any case is a very powerful and life changing way to live.

I like to say that we kept our promises to one another for our time together and and set the stage for the next phase, the next call for the next leadership in the life of the congregation.

When you walked into that church -- people would tell you that you immediately felt warm and welcome. And a lot of people found their way to us from the online live streaming that we have done for a very long period of time. And even there, they would watch to check us out as I'm sure they did other congregations to figure out if this is a place where they might find a spiritual home.

We are so blessed with new members and people that find their way into the life of the congregation and the many people have been there for a long time.

Now, I am no longer involved. So even though I talk about sometimes it's natural for me to talk about a way that sounds like I'm still there, I'm not, and they're doing a great job. And it's my role now to step back and let the congregation move forward.

What we learned together through so much of this practice unconditional love and welcome. People will tell you they feel warm and welcome – wanted.

There's someone there at the door saying, "Hi!. How are you? Com in."

And, if you have a child kid with you, you could be sure that you instantly had a whole dozen or even more of grandmas and grandpas and aunts and uncles who were cooling and ahhing as much as the child would. You encounter a congregation that community of faith that lovingly welcomes all, especially the queer community and it's incredible to see what happens when a congregation steps forward and welcomes others who are actually marginalized or not tolerated elsewhere (you tolerate mosquitoes, not people), you welcome people.

It's a place that loves and cared about the people who come in and share their lives with us, and if they wish people become members of the worshipping community, the leadership of the church, in the fullest and most involved ways.

What we learn when we welcome the other so to speak, when we practice opening the doors "come on in," when we LISTEN to the Spirit, we step back and trust.

It's natural to think that we're bringing our gifts to the to the new people in the congregation. What is true also, and I have found this time and again, is that we are the ones that benefit the most from the gifts that the people bring to us. We think we're welcoming somebody with their gifts. The truth is, we're sharing a whole new blend of the gifts that others bring to us. And in many ways we find ourselves to be as blessed as those who suddenly say, "Home! I've found my spiritual home!"

That's not easy to get there. You know, it takes a while. And most of all, what it takes is deciding that you're going to get the things that are in your way out of the way so that there's no obstacles to welcoming people into the life of the congregation.

So it's very interesting to go around to different churches today and to find places where they quite haven't figured out how to do that and are worried about "Are we going to survive or are we going to make it through?" And the truth is you can. There's no rocket science to any of this given a fair chance.

The road to a robust and vibrant and welcoming church is simple. Open the doors. "You're welcome here." We step away from judging one another. We embrace one another and what we don't understand we talk about; we address all people with respect. "We invite you to be part of who we are. And we're interested in being part of who you are in your lives together and learning more as we go forward, knowing that it's God that brings us together—in all the different ways that we may know God -- but nonetheless, that same Spirit brings us together.

It's that kind of a mindset. Primarily not to judge primarily and to live on that, that "edge" of taking the risk.

When we embrace somebody that maybe we don't know so well or have been taught we shouldn't embrace or you know, all those things. But we do. And then when that happens, the Spirit takes care of the rest.

So there's a lot that congregations can do to continue to grow and that's not the main reason to be there. The main reason to be there is to make sure when somebody is looking for a way to find a God in their lives. on a spiritual journey and they've been rejected elsewhere or haven't been welcomed. Whatever the case may be. We say come on in. Come on in. God brought you here. We're not going to tell you what you have to do to be here. We're not going to tell you what dogma or rigid practices we have that you have to check off before you can sit in that pew come in. Teach us who you are. We'll teach you who we are. And then from there, we'll see what happens.

It's just such a rich, rich time to reflect on these things. And I want to get back into just talking like this a little bit.

Right now. The Trans community is bearing an enormous weight in all sorts of ways and I want to talk about that so that we can better understand who we are by coming to know better who others are.

So thanks again for joining us, whoever you are, wherever you are, from whatever point you found yourself today. Here you are welcome and loved. And thanks again for taking the time.

(Transcript generated by Otter.ai – pretty much as it!)