

Heleen de Boer (EN)

My name is Heleen de Boer and I was born and live in the Netherlands, since 1964.

I lived in the beginning of my feelings of becoming a lesbian, 1988, in the west of the Netherlands, a place below The Hague, where LGBTQia-people were not visible at all. The ones I knew, moved right away to the big city The Hague. During that time, my father was a minister in the local Protestant church in a place called Honselersdijk. My parents were very positive on my coming out. In 1990 when my parents moved and he became minister in Zwijndrecht it became more easy for me to come really out of the closet in the protestant church in the place Honselersdijk.

Therefore, I am fully aware that I am very privileged in the Netherlands, and that's why I am an activist since decades to support those who are in need of solidarity or who are much more discriminated in their context.

Nevertheless, at that time, the nineties of the last century, even in the Netherlands it was very difficult to talk about 'homosexuality and being a 'Christian' in a lot of churches. That was also the case in my earlier church in Honselersdijk.

So, the moment I left for Alkmaar in 1996, the place I live nowadays, I decided to offer that local church in public 'If there ever comes a time when you want to talk about this issue, I am willing to join you in this meeting'.

25 years later, in 2021 that occasion and invitation for such a meeting came. And I was very surprised. It was a wonderful evening in which they really wanted know how to become a more open church for everybody. The church was willing to reflect the painful situation what to do if people want to leave the church because the church wants to accept LGBTIQ persons. Quite different from the the situation 25 years ago. when I was told by some people 'homosexuality is against the word of the Bible. So, you are not really welcome.'

Even today there are churches in the Netherlands where the talk about this topic is still too difficult. I really do hope that the latest publication of the WCC 'The conversations on the Pilgrim way; invitation to the Journey Together on matters of Human Sexuality' are able to be helpful in this.

In my youth, my first book 'Homosexuality for beginners', I bought at a bookshop in Naaldwijk, the same area where I told you about that LGBTQia people were not visible at all. It was really an act of empowerment to buy this book in the bookshop where I lived; not in the big city nearby. And at a time where internet was not a source of information.

Nowadays I am very happy that there are so much more books for everyone to find, in the bookshop and on the internet; like the book, wellknown in the European Forum

"Let our voices be heard" with stories from Christian women all over Europe

and

a book with stories from people out of the Roman Catholic church

'God saw it all was very good'.

In this last book, Leny Halvemaan, my wife who I loved for more than 29 years and who died in December 2021. told her story.

Besides of her story around and thoughts about her believe in God, she talked about our daily live with her/our daughters and granddaughters, a daily live full of warmth and love.

And from her story I just want to mention at the end of my testimony words who are from the both of us to you:

"God is walking with me, a lesbian woman, every day and everywhere and with everyone; in church and outside the church. I am and I feel connected with people and through people I am and I feel connected to God."

And she told me, when she was living her last years in a nursing home, that God felt never nearer to her than in that part of her live.

So thank you for listening, and I wish you all this connection to each other and to God!

I have.