

June 21, 2014

Vienna Ward  
Oakton Stake  
2961 Hunter Mill Road  
Oakton, VA 22124

Mark Harrison, Steve Moffitt & Kent Stevenson:

Brethren, I want you to know from the outset that I do not take this process lightly. I beg of you not to impose any form of discipline during the trial you will hold on Sunday. I also request that you do the right thing and revoke the "informal probation" that was placed upon me and remove the "move restriction" placed on my records so that I can participate in the ward where I currently reside. Please reconsider this punitive process and allow me to continue to worship in peace.

I was in your ward for over three years and faithfully served in callings for that entire period. While we interacted frequently in passing, none of you know me well. I am saddened by the fact that you never took the time to ask me questions or get to know my heart while I was living in your ward. Despite the fact that I emailed you in March 2013, August 2013, October 2013 & again in April 2014 regarding my Ordain Women activities, you never bothered to respond or follow-up on my repeated invitation to engage in an open dialogue in person.

As you sit in council regarding my eternal fate tomorrow, I think it is important for me to give you a wider picture of my life.



My parents both converted to Mormonism when they were young. I was born in the covenant. I was raised in a home with parents who loved the gospel and also taught me that men and women are equal.

I have always had a believing heart, but my mind was also constantly filled with questions. When I was three years old I asked my mother, "If God created everything, who created God?" I have been asking tough, sincere questions and speaking my mind since I was knee-high. Asking questions is one of my most core parts. I couldn't stop asking them then, and I can't stop asking them now.

When I turned eight years old I was so excited for my baptism that I made my own invitations and sent them to everyone I knew. I was baptized by my dad. While I loved that day and felt so special to become a member of the Church, one of the things I remember most vividly is that the only thing to wear in my ward building was a white jumpsuit for an adult man. Even as a small girl I was very particular about what I wore. I was very upset that no one had thought that a little girl might be getting baptized and prepared something for her to wear. As I look back I realize that is just a small reflection in my memory of the way in which adult men are treated as the standard mold in the church and everyone else is an "other."

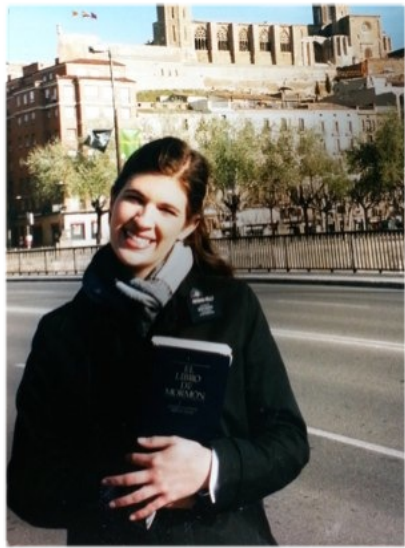


Growing up in Oregon I always thought that being Mormon was the most special thing about me. I always wore BYU paraphernalia to school, and even had BYU school supplies. I often told other kids about how I was a Mormon. It has always been a beloved identity for me.

I loved being in the Young Women program and the things I learned there. My favorite value colors were yellow and purple: Good Works & Integrity. I learned that integrity means telling the truth, even when you may suffer as a result and to "do what is right, let the consequence follow." I learned that you have to act on the thoughts and feelings you have in order to live with true integrity.

As a girl I loved learning lessons about brave pioneers who committed their bodies, lives and whole selves to the gospel. They moved, they acted, they put their proverbial shoulders to the wheel. I went on Trek in the mountains of Oregon as a Mia Maid. It was difficult and grueling to carry those modern handcarts up those steep hills. I learned what it is like to put your faith into action and to walk difficult paths in order to support the truth.

When I turned 21, I chose to serve a full-time mission for the Church. I was called to Barcelona, Spain. I absolutely adored my mission experience. I loved reaching out to strangers on the street and saying, "Hi, I'm Sister Kelly, I believe in Jesus Christ, do you?" I loved encouraging the people I met to ask the Lord tough questions and seek sincere answers to their prayers.



One of the quotes I wrote in my scriptures on my mission that I read and re-read often was one by the Prophet Joseph's mother, Lucy Mack Smith, in 1842: "We must cherish one another, watch over one another, comfort one another and gain instruction that we may all sit down in heaven together." I often thought of her words while I was actively out gathering Saints into the fold in Spain. I wanted all of my efforts to be directed at seeing all of the sisters and brothers I met back in heaven someday. I believe, someday, I will.



I was married in the Salt Lake Temple on December 30, 2006 and sealed for all eternity to my best friend. What comfort I feel knowing that I can be with him and my family forever. I have loved my entire association with the Church. I love the feeling I get every Sunday as we worship and reason together. As I did as a child, I still proudly and loudly proclaim that I am Mormon!

Please keep in mind that if you choose to punish me today, you are not only punishing me. You are punishing hundreds of women and men who have questions about female ordination, and have publicly stated them. You are punishing thousands of Mormons who have questions and concerns with gender inequality in the church and want a place to voice those concerns in safety. You are punishing anyone with a question in their heart who wants to ask that question vocally, openly and publicly.

Over 1,000 of my fellow saints have submitted letters to you on my behalf. Some are attached and some were sent directly. Please consider each one of their thoughts with due respect.



I want to communicate with perfect candor, as I have always done. As I made clear to President Wheatley when we met on May 5th, I will continue to lead *Ordain Women*, the group I founded. I will not take down the website [ordainwomen.org](http://ordainwomen.org). I will not stop speaking out publicly on the issue of gender inequality in the church. These things President Wheatley instructed me to do, I cannot do in good conscience. I cannot repent of telling the truth, speaking what is in my heart and asking questions that burn in my soul.

On March 17, 2013 when we launched [ordainwomen.org](http://ordainwomen.org) it was the the anniversary of the founding of the Relief Society and a Sunday. With one click I launched the live version of the site and then I went to church to commune with you. That was the most joyful worship I had felt since my mission. My whole authentic self was out there for all to see, and I was unashamed. I felt peace. I felt joy. And, for the first time in a long time, I felt hope. A burning, lively hope that to me was the evidence of things not yet seen. Please do not extinguish that hope.

It is not too late for you to follow the spirit of kindness, generosity, charity and good will. I urge you to follow the counsel given in Mosiah 18:9, and be willing to, "mourn with those that mourn; yea, and comfort those that stand in need of comfort..."

Again, I ask you to choose "no action," revoke the "informal probation" that was placed upon me and remove the "move restriction" on my records so that I can participate in my current ward.

Yours in the gospel,  
Kate Kelly