

I have always been a long winded person. For whatever reason, I feel the need to completely explaining what I am thinking and why and what got me to that point. It's a curse I have, I suppose. I will try to keep to the subject at hand today! ☺

Dear CRossroads Church,

I want to start by saying thank you to everyone for your warmth and hospitality. You all have made Hailee and I feel like we have finally found a "home" again. Granted, Hailee was ready for this to be home about 2 years ago but her mom is a little more Shall we say ... ummmm stubborn, hard headed, set in her ways? From the first time we ever visited I felt such a presence of love in all of you. I can honestly say I don't think that I've ever sensed such an overwhelming feeling of genuine love one for another in any other church I've attended. Yes, and even with all of that I was still not convinced to call CR our home. As a matter of fact, I wasn't ready to call any church our "home".

The reason for this letter today is because I simply want to thank you all for being the epitome of what a person of Christ is supposed to be. No judgment, no condemnation, no cliques, nothing that I have seen has been negative in any way. This doesn't surprise me simply because if Pam loves ya'll as much as she does then I know none of those things could be a part of you. She has always been one of the most "Christian" people I've known. You are all so wonderful and I personally can't wait to be an active part of your family.

No one probably knows this, but I have seriously been going through a battle (nothing serious I'm going be alive and kick'n for a while) for the past 8 months and here in the last 3 months it all came to be too much for me to handle. I simply just said, "forget it I don't even care about anything anymore and I'll just live through the motions of life." That is exactly what I started doing....just going through the motions of life. Hating every minute of it. Hating myself for not wanting to stand back up. Shara of course was there for me (like always because I complete her and had her at Hello even...ugh or mostly b/c of Hailee...ugh) and would come and keep me company and just be my friend. She wouldn't leave me alone (like my own little fungus that has no medicine ... a GOOD FUNgus!!). She never pressured me into coming to church. She asked every Sunday and I'd either go or not and mostly it was not. However, she's a tricky one this Shara...she started coming to pick Hailee up for Thursday nights because she knows no matter how much I may not have wanted any part of "religion" or "church" that I'd never deny my daughter of having it. She knows my history and knows that I have always wanted Hailee to have a strong youth group and church family to fall on when times are tough. So yes, she used her sneaky ways to wake me up. So like I've said I wasn't in the mood at all for "church" or "church people" and I knew I'd get over it eventually but 'eh just didn't really want to at the time.

Fast forward to now ... Hailee has been coming to Thursday nights and she went to camp and I've been able to interact with the youth and see them with each other, and I want to say this ..., every single one of you whom have a child in HTH should be very proud of the children that you are raising. I've never seen a group of young people genuinely care for one another without hesitation. Of course I know they are teenagers (scariest word in the English language in my opinion...) so it's not always daffodils and dandelions but for the most part they are exceptional human beings. They radiate love when you look at them. They are compassionate (well not to hideous glasses...but hey ...) and loving to no end. So as I spent more and more time at Shara's & Jimi's I spent more and more time with your amazing children. To say that your children haven't won my heart would be a lie. They have without a doubt touched my heart and soul in a way that I can not

explain. For the first time in a very long time I am excited to just do something. To get up and go and just have fun. Last night a group of them met at the church for a “spontaneous night of fun” no money was spent nothing was planned before hand and they just met to do something fun. While I watched them and all of their shenanigans I couldn’t help but smile and laugh so hard. I haven’t laughed that much in I can’t even say how long. They have all in their own unique ways awakened something inside of me that I’ve been missing for a long time. I thank you for sharing your wonderful teenagers with me and for welcoming Hailee into their group. All I can say is “WOW!” I say this only because, you may ask Shara, I have not ever really been a “Teen” kind of gal. I love them and all want the best for them but my patience with this particular age group has not always been shall we say ... ummmm tolerable. I love children and working with them and for the most part I’ve always volunteered with younger children. I just have always had more patience with children that don’t completely know how to behave than I have for teens that know but sometimes choose not to. That all being said, I emailed Shara one day and asked her about this group of young people. I said, “These kids are amazing aren’t they, I love them all and see no faults with any of them, maybe I’m just getting old with more patience, you think?” Her response, “NO! They are amazing” ... ha-ha she knows me well.

I don’t exactly know where I will be used to serve at CR but I do thoroughly enjoy this group of young people. I thank you for raising such respectful and caring teenagers. You can tell how a child behaves by how they were raised, again my opinion. I see nothing but love and compassion in these youth and you should all be so very proud.

So, yes I am almost done...now every one knows what Kent meant on Sunday about my short novel...and again I apologize...

I just wanted to say thank you to every person at CR for their welcoming of Hailee and I and I wanted to let you all know how wonderful you all are but mostly I wanted to let you know how wonderful your children are. I think we tend to only get negative feedback about our children sometimes. For whatever reason people don’t feel the need to tell us of all of the good that our kids do, but rather just tell us when they do something not so good. I wanted to tell you of the good that your wonderful children do. They are so amazing. I know I keep saying that but I can’t help it. They seriously have my heart.

I guess you could say that for the first time I have chosen a church family based on the children that come with the family. I can only imagine how wonderful each one of their parents is. So again, **THANK YOU ALL SO VERY MUCH!!!** I can’t wait to see what I may help with at CR.

Filled With Much Love,
Nicole Gregory