

A woman with blonde hair styled in an updo, wearing a white lace-trimmed dress and large earrings, stands in a doorway. She is looking down with a thoughtful or somber expression. The background shows a window with a grid pattern, possibly a stained glass window, and a dark interior.

Unchanging Identities

by Allison Eckardt

We place a lot of value on our identity, the distinguishing character or personality of an individual. While many things contribute to it, the value of each attribute can easily be overlooked until it is stripped away.

Six months after meeting my beloved Peter, he proposed to me on March 13, 2015. I relished the upgrade from girlfriend to fiancée. In April, Peter received his call to serve as pastor, and I grew anxious to start married life with the man of my dreams. In May, I resigned from my job to plan our June wedding. In July, I moved 10 hours away from

family and dear friends. In August, I went from “Allison” to “the pastor’s wife.” Each month, I felt my identity being left behind, sacrificed for my husband in this new life. My rose-colored glasses must have gotten smashed in the moving van.

In September, on cue to maintain our monthly list of milestones, I discovered

I was pregnant, but after ten weeks and six days, I suffered a miscarriage in the middle of the night.

I sincerely wish the events that happened Oct. 15, 2015, were a blur, but I remember them with piercing clarity: the blood that leaked from my womb as we rushed to the emergency room indicated that the nursery Peter and I were preparing would remain empty, and the paralyzing cramps in my abdomen signaled the family Peter and I wanted would have to wait. We held a funeral service for our precious child, Jordan, following the rite of Burial for a Stillborn Child or Unbaptized Child in the *Lutheran Service Book*. Jordan was buried in Richmond, Va., in November with several other unborn children at Mount Calvary Cemetery. I have made the 90-minute drive alone several times to visit.

Finding my identity

Pains of my miscarriage followed me at church. The very week my name was removed from the prayers for women with child, another “Allison” with impeccable conception timing was added, a dagger to my heart each time I had to explain this bittersweet confusion. My own name

could not identify me!

However, sitting alone week after week, as a pastor’s wife does, allowed for reflection. Comfort abounded as I pondered what Scripture tells me about my identity: I am a precious child of God (**GAL. 3:26**), created in His image (**GEN. 1:27**), bought and redeemed by Christ’s blood (**EPH. 1:7**) and loved beyond measure (**EPH. 3:19**). My child, though unborn and unbaptized, has the promise I have of salvation (**2 SAM. 12:15–23**). Jordan’s life is hidden with Christ in God (**COL. 3:1–3**).

Just as marriage shadows Jesus’ relationship with His bride, the Church, parenthood conjures images of how our Father cares for us, His children. Through trials of fertility, loss of life and mourning, He cares for each one of us, born or unborn, by speaking His Word, sending the Holy Spirit and being a gracious God. While I once focused on what made me unique, my miscarriage taught me to grasp the unchanging identity I have in Christ Jesus, which I cling to in any vocation the Lord, in His mercy, deigns to grant me. **LW**

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Allison Eckardt (alynneverett@gmail.com) is a member of Immanuel Lutheran Church, Alexandria, Va.



FINDING COMFORT IN THE PAIN OF MISCARRIAGE

- Private confession and absolution
- Hymns of Comfort (“Children of the Heavenly Father” was sung at Jordan’s funeral)
- Girlfriends’ care package (candles, bath salts, tea or thoughtful notes)
- Scripture that declares unborn babies are indeed cared for by Christ
- Hugs. No stories of similar experiences, no words at all. Just silent, powerful hugs.
- Care and concern for the father’s well-being (He often gets forgotten!)

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