

Nicole McRight

When Michael asked me to speak today I was really excited because I have never been asked to do something like this before. As today approached, that excitement turned to nervousness and to be quite honest a little bit of fear. I was telling my friend Julie that I wanted to make sure it was meaningful and that I didn't put anyone to sleep and she reminded me that I just needed to tell my story and speak from the heart. Michael wanted me to speak about the changes in my life over the past few months and in particular the in-between time when I was graduating and interviewing when we were not exactly sure what we were doing and where we were going. Since I have a tendency to over think things in general I thought "yeah- I could reflect on that". As I started to think about the past few months I started to think about other "in-between" times that have led me here.

About 14 years ago I started undergrad at Winthrop University where I got a bachelors in speech. Just as I was about to graduate and should have been applying to grad schools, I did the responsible thing and decided that I didn't want to be a speech pathologist and I just kept working at the independent music store I had come to love. I had no idea what I wanted to do.. I knew I loved music, I knew I enjoyed marketing...so began one of those "in-between" times. I actually ended up working for the MS Society as a fundraiser and then when that proved a little too much like sales I began an on again off again affair with Muzak as a marketing assistant. In that 7 years with Muzak I took a break and worked with Teach for America and returned to Muzak's DC office to try my hand at working with angry clients. I look at those 8 years after graduating as this series of starts and stops where I constantly was

looking to the next thing. I got to the point in 2008 that I really needed to figure out what it was that I was doing with myself and I think Donna too was ready for me to figure it out...I had an incredible relationship (thank you Donna) but I struggled with this constant need for the next thing...every moment was feeling like it was its own “in-between” and one day a vendor for Muzak looked around my office – I took a lot of pride in my office décor- and told me that he could see how my job paid my bills but he couldn’t figure out how it fed my soul. Ouch. It caught me off guard that someone that I had known for such a short time could sum up what I had been trying to define for so long. That’s when I started looking into what could feed my soul and after volunteering with crisis counseling, checking into art therapy, I found myself back in the speech therapy game and here in Western NC.

A few months ago as Donna and I started to make decisions about whether to move or whether to stay, whether I should work at a school or a clinic, with adults or with children and so on, I found myself begin to get worked up at the number of decisions that needed to be made in a short time that would make such an impact on our direction. I realized how different this time felt from the other changes I had made before...it felt different from all the other in-betweens. I came to realize that in-between isn’t really in-between- it is still the present, you are still living-making day to day decisions and the fact that transition may be on the horizon does not mean that the living stops. All of those times, and I had a pretty significant gap between when I started in speech and when I could actually be a speech therapist- served to make me who I am. The only thing I regret about those times is that I treated them as in-between times; I didn’t value them and at times I very easily wasted them. I’ll be honest, I can’t remember 2001-mid 2003. I know where I worked...and

I'm pretty sure I watched a lot of "Law and Order" but I don't remember what I was like, I just know I was looking for the next thing.

Just as I started to get worked up about the decisions that were to be made a few months ago, I began to feel this sense of peace. I had one of those "be still and know that I am God" moments. I realized that I wasn't so much in an in-between place as I was the right place. I looked around St. Davids and I saw the community we longed for, I could hear Newt singing, I could see Jody and Joanne's arms open for hugs, Michael's calm demeanor...and even the possibility of Betsy delivering our baby. All from just paying attention for once!