

## Riley O' Flynn testimonial

I have experienced a church of love, but I have also experienced a church of pain. As a young lay woman, I have experienced many highs and many lows.

As a young person, I have experienced many people who say they want us involved more. People asking how they can get more youth involved in the church. The problem with this is that people say many things, but when it really comes down to it, it doesn't seem like they really want young people involved that much. One example is that a good majority of young people are still in school during the day. And most meetings happen during the day. See the coincidence here?

There is also the issue of not feeling heard. The amount of times that I have been asked for my opinion on a topic and when I answer, I just get brushed off is honestly too many to count. It hurts because I start to realize in the middle of what I'm saying that no matter what I say or do, it won't be heard. And I bet that I am not the only young person or lay person that has felt this before. Now, I know that I am not the most experienced person or the wisest person. But that shouldn't matter. Everyone's opinion matters and there is room at the table for all voices.

When I was at the 2016 General Conference, I was having a conversation with an older gentleman from another conference. He told me that he had been coming as a delegate for a number of years now. I then explained that this was my first time attending and I was really excited to see how it all worked and to experience it first hand. All of a sudden, out of no where, in a sort of sly way, he offers to help me with my voting device. He says "Oh honey, let me help you. You probably need some help knowing how to vote on different pieces of legislation." He then started to reach for my device. This blew my mind. Maybe I was in my own bubble or something but I was honestly just in shock that he would try to do this. Just because I am a young woman. Young people know how to listen to our conscience and vote from our hearts. Needless to say, I politely told him thanks, but no thanks, I can decide how to vote on my own.

My point in all of this is that we celebrate and talk about all of the great things that are happening within our conference and our denomination. As we should! It's great! However, we need to start recognizing the not so great things happening as well. We need to try to make a conscious effort to improve this.

We are not the future of this church. We are the present church. We are here now. And you need to trust that what you have taught us and the way you have raised us is enough. Be assured that we will take good care of this church for the generations to come.