

2003, they came to Maranatha and everyone found their church home.

Something that frustrates Kelly is the fact that people are intimidated by her, especially men. They don't know how to act around her, nor what to say. Many people think Steve is just humoring her by asking her what or how to do something, but in reality Steve is just her arms and legs. As Steve puts it, "Kelly isn't a hopeless, helpless little girl sitting in a wheelchair who can't think for herself. She actually thinks for me, thank God for that." Kelly uses a recipe analogy to help explain how she is treated. People are intimidated by recipes. Many will read a complex title of a recipe and won't even attempt it, but in reality the recipe is very simple. It's the same with Kelly. She doesn't want the complexity of her outward appearance to affect people's perception of her because inside she is just like everyone else.



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She doesn't want people to feel sorry for her; she just wants to be treated like a person without a wheelchair. One time, when they were at the State Fair, a lady came running up to Kelly, put her arms around her and started crying. Kelly and Steve asked her "What's wrong?" and she says, "You are just so beautiful." Kelly thought to herself "So, if I was ugly it would be ok?" They had a good laugh afterwards. Even at Maranatha, Kelly jokes, sometimes people will look at her and you can see on their face what they are thinking, "Looks kind of complicated, I might walk over and get a doughnut." When people first meet Kelly, all they see is the wheelchair, but for those that aren't in-

timidated and take the time to get to know her, soon they never see the wheelchair. Kelly is very intelligent and uses her talents to run her catering business, "Bountiful Blessings."

Most times we tend to avoid uncomfortable situations. We display our ignorance. But as Steve explains, "If we would see the complexities of what God has created, we would see real beauty. Our eyes are deceiving because too many times we just look at the outward appearance. The more we take time to get to know someone, the more beautiful they become. To look at them through the Lord's eyes using our heart and our soul will bring out the beauty of God's creation."

Steve and Kelly are all about serving and honoring God in every situation. They live to fulfill God's purpose for their lives and are the most generous people. Today Kelly is thankful that she is in a wheelchair, because if she wasn't she may not have

found the Lord. Together they feel blessed beyond their wildest dreams. God is taking them on this journey, with Maranatha as City Hall, where everyone comes together as family. This church is the center of their life, and they thank each of you for playing a part.

The next time you see Kelly zipping around the lobby...skip the doughnut and give her a hug...then help her find Steve.

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i am maranatha!

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Where's Steve?

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Have you ever been asked "Have you seen Steve?" If so, then you've met Kelly and have seen her scooting around the lobby in her wheelchair.



Kelly was born with a disease called SMA (Spinal Muscular Atrophy), which is in the muscular dystrophy family. Her mother noticed early on, when Kelly began to crawl, she would drag her legs around instead of using them. After some testing, SMA was the diagnosis. It is a debilitating disease where a loss of motor neurons in the spinal cord leads to the atrophy of the muscles. Kelly has the most severe type of SMA (Werdnig-Hoffman). It is an infantile disease where the child normally does not live past the age of two. Once Kelly made it past two, the doctors told her parents she wouldn't live past the age of ten. Now at the age of 47, living through two heart attacks and other health related issues, Kelly says "God just keeps bringing me back to serve and love Him with all that I got." Through all of this she is not on any medications and she is the oldest person living with this disease in the state of Minnesota.



Kelly grew up on a farm in Medford, Minnesota with two other siblings. She has a younger sister with the same condition and a brother that

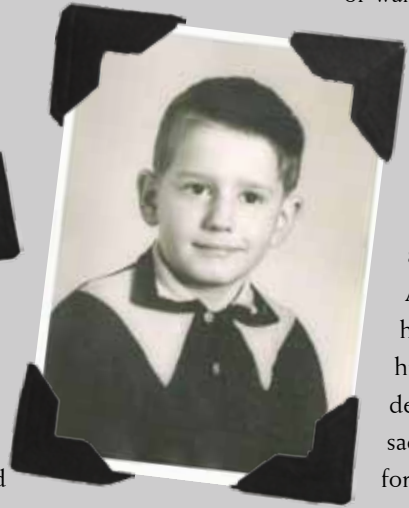
was adopted before he was one year old. As young children Kelly's parents would take them to Catholic mass every Sunday, but once the girls were old enough to stay home alone, their parents went by themselves. They would bring Kelly and her sister only on the special occasions. It was a lot of work for her parents to load up Kelly and her wheelchair every time they left the house. They made up for it by never missing an opportunity to gather their large family and friends together for birthdays, holidays, or just for fun. Kelly was home schooled until she entered the sixth grade in public school. Her parents always kept her and her sister involved in many activities such as any child without a disability would experience. Kelly wasted no time in taking an active role in school. She was elected treasurer of FFA (Future Farmers of America), and class president in 1980. She attended every prom. One of Kelly's talents is singing. She went on to win a state title by singing "Daddy's Hands" by Winona Judd. Among all these achievements she also was at the top of her class and made honor roll throughout high school.

Kelly has never considered herself disabled and decided at age nineteen to move out on her own. Although her parents were very concerned at the thought of Kelly being alone without a care giver to support her, Kelly was determined to experience life, took the risk, and became independent. She has never let the fact that she is in a wheelchair stop her from fulfilling her dreams.

Soon after moving into her own place a man by the name of Steve showed up to fix her wheelchair. Steve was smitten at the first sight of Kelly. He thought she was the most beautiful woman in the world, though too shy to let her know how he felt. After a couple of visits, Kelly knew what was going on, and took matters into her own hands. She called the company he was working

for and asked him out. Steve didn't hesitate and accepted the invitation. He decided that if she likes me, then she'll definitely like my eight-year-old son. So Josh joined them on their first date. Steve was in heaven, while Kelly and Josh were thinking "what the heck?" Josh wasn't looking for another mom; he had his grandma. And Kelly just thought it was odd, but later learned that's just Steve.

Back in 1977, Steve was fulfilling his dream of becoming an Air Force Flight Engineer with his then current wife, and Josh, who was just one. Steve was walking to their home on base, when he came upon his wife on the back of a motorcycle with his Sergeant and more importantly, best friend. After 18 months of waiting for her, Steve moved on and won custody of Josh. He was given a choice; either give up his son for adoption and stay in the Air Force, or keep him, and not serve his country. Easy decision, but he did sacrifice his dreams for Josh.



Steve is the sixth child out of nine who grew up in a Christian home with Assembly of God roots in Spring Lake Park, Minnesota. His dad would read to them from the Bible and share the wonders of God. However, that wasn't enough for Steve and his brothers who did some rebelling. Their dad was 31 when he married Steve's mom and so the boys felt he was old fashioned and didn't know anything. "If dad said not to do it, then it must have been fun," so they did not listen to him. Steve has always believed, but wasn't always obedient.

Sadly, Steve has lost two brothers. One was seven and died of brain cancer, and the other was 19 and was killed in the war in Vietnam. After the death of his second brother in 1968, Steve's mom turned her heart from God. She carries the bitterness to this day. Steve continues to pray for her to find forgiveness. His mom was one to give advice when he was falling in love with Kelly. Even though she loved Kelly, she warned him that you are falling in love with someone that may not live long.

Steve dated a few girls after the divorce of his wife, but none of them made a connection for him. He decided he was done with women when God said, "I'm glad you're done looking Steve because I have someone for you." Once he let go, God brought Kelly into his life. But Steve thought, "How could you marry someone like this?" He begins to wonder, who's doing the dishes, who's doing the laundry, or this and that. But God took all those fears away from him, and put it on his heart that Kelly was the one for him. We may look at Kelly and see someone with disabilities, and she does have disabilities. But Steve reminds us that he has disabilities too. We all do. The difference is that for most of us, those disabilities are not obvious to others. God has placed a goal in Steve's heart to show the world that an able bodied person can marry a disabled person and make it work wonderfully. He has succeeded in his goal. Their marriage is going on 26 years and is a beautiful representation of God's love for one another.

Coming from different church backgrounds, Steve and Kelly knew they had to find some common ground. Kelly's background was with the Catholic Church and they started out there. Then they switched to Steve's roots and started attending Emmanuel Christian Center in Fridley. Kelly felt overwhelmed with the freedom in worship, but she continued to attend. She still hadn't come to know Jesus on a personal level.

It wasn't until they found out that Kelly was pregnant that she would come to know the Lord. Because of her SMA, the doctors told her that it wasn't physically possible for her to carry the baby to full term. They gave her a choice, either the baby lives or you die, or you have an abortion. Kelly's heart was broken. Not knowing God, she still prayed, "I don't want to go to hell for this." After facing this enormous, emo-

tional decision she turned to God and asked Jesus to come into her life. She couldn't live with the guilt and shame, but by surrendering, she was asking God to help her through the darkest time of her life. And He did. God was with her

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and gave her peace through the guilt she felt in choosing to end the life of their baby. When she felt Steve would hate her for what she did, God provided peace again. The night after the procedure God wrapped His arms around Kelly and let her know her baby was with Him. She dreamt about the procedure and then a bright light, a very white light drowned out all her surroundings. Through the light appeared her baby's beautiful face. To this day whenever Kelly is feeling down, she pictures her baby and knows what is waiting for her in Heaven.

After surviving that experience, they decided they both wanted to raise a little



girl. Steve and Kelly love kids. One of their favorite times was when they recently used their catering business to provide lunches to MAG Christian School. So they looked into adoption, but because of the cost they decided it wouldn't work. Next Steve and Kelly began taking classes

to become foster parents. When they were nearing the end of the classes, one of the workers sat them down and asked who would be the primary care giver in helping a little girl take a bath. Obviously it would be Steve. The worker went on to explain that due to child abuse cases today, Steve wouldn't be allowed to help give a little girl a bath, nor could she even sit with him while he read her a story. Again, they faced disappointment. So Steve and Kelly bought a dog and named it Baby.

One day while looking through the paper for a new lawn mower, Kelly noticed a house. They had just spent the last six years remodeling their existing house making it their home. But in 1994 they bought the house they saw in the paper and moved to Stacy. It turns out it was made for people in wheelchairs. They began attending Chisago Lakes Baptist after an invite from their neighbor. Steve and Kelly spent eight years there, building relationships and a foundation for their faith. Around the year 2001, Steve quit his job and began taking care of Dave, a wheelchair bound person that you've probably seen scooting around church. Shortly after Dave moved in, Kelly's sister and her two kids also needed a place to stay. Displaying their generosity, Steve and Kelly gave up their bedroom and turned their dining room into a make shift bedroom by hanging blankets for walls. There were now six people and three wheelchairs living in their cozy two bedroom house. This went on for five years! When they would load up the van and go out, Steve jokes that upon

arriving, it looked like they just came from a group home. With all these different people now sharing one roof, they needed to agree on a new church. Steve decided right away he wasn't about to be the bus driver for everyone, dropping each of them off at a different church. In