



Transgender Handbook

2018-2019



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The Mission of the Cathedral of Hope is to reclaim Christianity as a faith of extravagant grace, radical inclusion and relentless compassion.

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This name is the culmination of a long and difficult journey, including being told to leave another church, but as well, this is a time of beginning.

People of God: Will you support NAME on this journey?

All: We promise our love, support, and care

Let us pray: Dynamic and holy God, we remember how you changed the names of Abraham and Sarah as they set out to follow you into the unknown.

We remember how you changed the name of Jacob, after a long night of wrestling with you.

And how Saul, the persecutor, became Paul, the founder of dozens of Christian communities.

We now publicly declare and affirm the name you have bestowed upon Aimee Melissa.

May NAME walk in the spirit this day and always, knowing that God made an everlasting covenant with PRONOUN from PRONOUN birth, regardless of name or identity. And that covenant shall never be cut off. Amen.

PASTOR:

We rejoice that your name is written in heaven.

Everyone repeat after me: Your name is NAME

[1] Adapted from liturgies of the UUA and Memorial Congregational Church, Sudbury, Mass. Prayer from www.manyvoices.org

Introduction

This handbook is intended as a guide to help faith leaders and staff who may be unfamiliar with transgender people and their issues minister to their needs. It is by no means meant to be an exhaustive resource on the subject as there are too many different aspects and considerations to cover briefly. In addition, open discussion of the transgender experience has only recently (in the social sense) become acceptable and because of its “landscape” is still being examined, much of the terminology and knowledge remains new and evolving. Rather, this is an attempt to give an overview of transgender matters and to suggest ways that the church might attend to the needs of this marginalized community.

Although most of the authors are not clergy, most are church people and the content is written with a church context as its focus. The content attempts to address:

- a.) Who are transgender people?
- b.) How/why did they [suddenly] come into existence?
- c.) What do they need from the church?
- d.) How can the church care for them?
- e.) What resources are available?
- f.) What are some possible outcomes of their presence in the church community?

It is widely understood in the medical and psychological communities that gender is not binary: male and female. Rather, it exists on a spectrum with people who are “non-binary” existing in neither (or, perhaps, both) male or female genders. Because non-binary people are a small percentage of the transgender community, most of the content here is considered with regard to transgender men and transgender women. If you should need to know more about non-binary transgender people, we suggest that a quick internet search will reveal information that augments the more binary content related here.

Today’s world has a great deal of information about transgender people available via the Internet. The rapidly changing nature of that information makes it impractical to attempt to keep it current in this type of guide. Instead, we have tried to provide enough information here to facilitate further research in that environment. Hopefully, this guide will support other information provided via forum and conversation sufficiently to enable efficient and further research.

Thank you for caring.

1. How does one "Become" Transgender?

Let's start with the understanding that a person's sex is not the same thing as their gender, though the two are used interchangeably in society. For most people, their sex and gender align and there is no sense of difference: a boy is a male and his gender (his internal sense of his own being) is male, as well. Similarly, a girl is a female (often based upon the visual observation that she is NOT a male and, therefore, must be a female) and her gender is female, as well. When one's sex and gender do not align, that is what we know today as 'transgender'.

Our sex/gender gets decided for us long before we can express it ourselves or object to it. A baby's sex/gender is visually decided at the time of birth based upon the appearance of its genitals. Often, an ultrasonic image allows a doctor to visually see a baby's anatomy during the mother's pregnancy and many parents are anxious to know the results, expecting either the pronouncement of "it's a boy" or "it's a girl". Whether by pre-birth ultrasonic image or examination at time of birth, the doctor usually considers this to be the baby's gender and assigns it to the baby by filling in birth records with the data. Whether it is correct or incorrect, a gender has been assigned at that time.

Sometimes the baby's sex is vague or not obvious because the genitals on which the medical staff is basing their gender decision do not conform to commonly seen configurations. Because medical records, parents, and social requirements expect that a binary determination of male or female be made, pressure on the medical establishment turns them to "nonconsensual medically unnecessary surgeries" (Intersex Campaign for Equality, Feb. 2018) to "correct the problem." The result is another opportunity for an incorrect gender assignment.

Consequently, one doesn't "become" transgender. **Rather, the person realizes, at some point in their life, that the gender that was assigned to him/her/ them at birth is incorrect. How early do they know? Some have expressed it as early as 18 months to 2 years (University of Washington psychology professor Christina Olson, Transyouth Project).** However, *"the truth is that we don't really know whether that child who is gender non-conforming in childhood is going to go on to have a trans identity in adolescence or adulthood. What we do know is that by the time kids reach adolescence, if they have a gender identity that is different from their sex assigned at birth, that it is very likely that they will continue on to have that gender identity."* (Human Rights Campaign)

Abram became Abraham

Sarai became Sarah

Saul became Paul

Jacob became Israel

Abram went from Exalted Father to Father of Many – after God promised 99 year old Abram that his name, his descendants, will become as numerous as the sands on the beach.

Likewise, 90 year old Sarai went from My Princess to Mother of Nations.

Saul, famously known as a particularly nasty persecutor of Christians, saw a vision Jesus, who asked "Why do you persecute me." Saul of Tarsus was blinded and fell from his horse. He was blind for three days, after which he became Paul, meaning, small or humble.

Jacob wrestled with an angel at night, one of my favorite biblical passages, and refused to let go until he received a blessing. The angel even put out his hip. In his mother's womb, he grabbed the heel of his twin Esau so Jacob could come out first. Jacob means to supplant, circumvent, overreach – or heel.

After wrestling for the night, he was given the name Israel, which means God Perseveres. Or, in our wrestling, May God Prevail.

[Can insert discussion of the particular name being changed here and any story that relates to it]

Name changing ceremony [1]

From (FORMER OR DEAD) NAME to NAME

We affirm that this new name symbolizes who you are becoming through the grace of God.

We honor the names given by your parents.

We release them into your history and acknowledge that the time has come to declare a new name.

Name Changing Ceremony (similar to baptism and can include elements of baptism)

Written by Rev. Dr. David Bahr: "Changing Identities: Transgender Re-naming Ceremony"

Mark 4: 35-41

On that day, when evening had come, Jesus said to them, "Let us go across to the other side." 36 And leaving the crowd behind, they took him with them in the boat, just as he was. Other boats were with him. 37 A great windstorm arose, and the waves beat into the boat, so that the boat was already being swamped. 38 But he was in the stern, asleep on the cushion; and they woke him up and said to him, "Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing?" 39 He woke up and rebuked the wind, and said to the sea, "Peace! Be still!" Then the wind ceased, and there was a dead calm. 40 He said to them, "Why are you afraid? Have you still no faith?" 41 And they were filled with great awe and said to one another, "Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?", because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.

In Mark chapter 4, Jesus stilled the storm, to which the stunned disciples ask, "who is this?" They will keep asking for a long time. Jesus even asks them later in chapter 8, "Who do people say I am?" Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, one of the prophets. Who is this?

Today we are going to celebrate a name change. A rite of passage for someone who is transitioning from the identity of one gender to another. Some religious communities have begun to recognize this as an important rite of passage for which it is appropriate that we ask God's blessing.

Changing names and identities, though perhaps not gender, happened in both Jewish Scriptures and the and Christian Scriptures among some of our most important ancestors, like these four:

Because transgender education is a recent development (even though transgender people have existed throughout the ages), many of today's adults (and even seniors) are just now able to identify the feeling they have been experiencing for most of their lives. Consequently, it's not only adolescent children who are struggling with an awareness of their incorrect gender, but, adults, too.

The Gender Unicorn

Graphic by: **TSER**
Trans Student Educational Resources

Gender Identity

- Female/Woman/Girl
- Male/Man/Boy
- Other Gender(s)

Gender Expression/Presentation

- Feminine
- Masculine
- Other

Sex Assigned at Birth

- Female
- Male
- Other/Intersex

Sexually Attracted To

- Women
- Men
- Other Gender(s)

Romantically/Emotionally Attracted To

- Women
- Men
- Other Gender(s)

To learn more, go to: www.transstudent.org/gender

Design by Landyn Pan

2. To Transition or Not to Transition

As the word implies, transition is the term used to identify a time of change. In this context, it is the time of change from identifying as the gender that was assigned at the time of birth to the gender that the person feels themselves to truly be. A caterpillar becomes a butterfly. A tadpole becomes a frog. A person assigned female at birth *begins* expressing and presenting themselves as the male they have always understood themselves to be. A person assigned male at birth begins expressing and presenting themselves as the female they have always understood themselves to be. Or a person assigned female or male at birth begins expressing and presenting themselves as the nonbinary person they have always understood themselves to be.

The caterpillar and tadpole receive cues from nature telling them when to undergo their metamorphosis. Transgender people usually refer to a feeling called Gender Dysphoria that is a stressor in their lives and that is often their motivation to transition. Gender dysphoria is a general uncomfortableness in and with one's own body. Ideally, they might undergo counseling and psychoanalysis attempting to identify the source of distress, ultimately concluding that Gender Dysphoria is the cause. But, for many, these resources aren't available because of finances, lack of knowledgeable doctors and therapists, lack of a support system, etc. Not having access to these things is a big contributing factor to high depression, anxiety, and suicide rate amongst transgender people.

Because seeing physical changes, such as the caterpillar or tadpole, makes it easy for people to accept the changes as a real part of life, people tend to associate transition with some sort of physical change. However, for transgender people, transition may start with few or no visible changes; often clothing and/or body appearance (hair cut/style, for example) is the only visible change. It's easy for others to discount the initial phases of transition because it doesn't provide the visible clues that they expect. Yet, the person who is undergoing change is psychologically working through what is, for them, a new world: one where they may no longer have the need to hide their true feelings; one that may be unfamiliar for them, too. It's understandable that some may proceed with caution and, the longer they had been hidden in their prior world, the more cautious they are likely to be.

Now a huge group of factors begin influencing where this transition journey can go. It's easy to imagine that everyone who is transgender takes the necessary steps and actions to convert their lives and bodies from who they have been to whom they know themselves to be, then there should be little to no issues. Theoretically, that could result in clothing changes, legal changes, lifestyle changes, surgical procedures, and personal appearance changes.

Congregational sings refrain:

(Choir sings next song as transgender participants, clergy or leaders come forward to candle lighting or communion table)

Will read names and then light a candle (6 sections of @4 names – still working on the official USA list)

Pastor: closes with a prayer inspired by MCC Pastor, Rev. Vickey Gibbs

God who is over all the vast varieties of humankind,
Help us to move beyond the exclusiveness of an either / or / mentality
to the inclusiveness of an all and every way of thinking.
Move us beyond binary definitions to the mystery and complexity of Your
infinite creativity and beautiful creation.
As we pause to remember those senselessly murdered because of
their all-encompassing humanity open hearts to see and hear more
clearly your inclusive love and remind us that there are no limits to You
nor Your creation. Amen.



<https://www.glaad.org/tdor>
Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation

TDOR LITURGY

This can be used the Sunday before or after TDOR

Pastor/Leader – Intro

We set aside this Sunday before the Transgender Day of Remembrance to celebrate the beautifully diverse gifts of our transgender and non-gendering conforming siblings at [faith community/church]. We observe with grace and mercy those who were lost this year due to hatred and violence. We lift up their names and honor their memories. We continue to stand for equality, justice and peace for all. As we remember we also pray.

Choir Introduces appropriate choral refrain:

ALL: God full of grace, bless the souls of all who are in our hearts on this year's Transgender Day of Remembrance. As people of faith, many have struggled to understand the lives of our transgender family— and it is our duty to fight alongside our siblings who are children of God. We have much work to do. We pray for the strength to carry on their legacy of hope, bravery, love, and authenticity. God in your mercy

Congregation Sings refrain: Receive our prayer, God hear us.

ALL: God full of love, be with us as we seek the courage to root out the injustice, ignorance, and cruelty that lead to despair and self-hatred. We pray for the resolve to defeat the forces of bigotry that make these losses acceptable to anyone of faith. We pray for the strength to dismantle systems of oppression that further threaten the vulnerable lives of our transgender family members of color. God in your mercy

Congregational sings refrain

ALL: God full of hope, we pray that all those who perpetuate hate and violence will come to understand that Your creation has many faces, many genders, many holy expressions. All of our siblings bear your divine image in our world. We speak the names we know and hold sacred space for those we do not know because we are called to remember our lost loved ones, grieve with each other and to speak out against all injustice. God in your mercy.

But, while we might imagine each and every transgender person will go through this significant metamorphosis (a caterpillar to a butterfly, if you will), many these things aren't possible and, for others, it isn't desired. Some can and do make all those changes; others encounter obstacles that determine what changes they can make and which they can't. Financial and legal barriers are often determining factors. Here are a few examples:

- Clothing is costly when converting an entire wardrobe and sizes are not consistent between genders. To simply try on clothing of the other gender in a retail store can be socially daunting, but, necessary to determine appropriate sizing. Clothing can be purchased on-line, but, sizing is still a gamble. And, for those without discretionary funds, this may not be possible.
- Name changes require application to legal authorities along with required fees. Background checks are often required to ensure that a name change isn't being requested for nefarious purposes. If a background check shows no objection, a court appearance is typically necessary to confirm the requested name change and the court can permit or deny the name change. (Denials are common in locations where elected judges are not understanding of the transgender experience and/or if they are under the scrutiny of critical social/political groups.) The process of legal name changes usually takes months. Legal gender marker changes are not available everywhere and require more documentation to prove there has been a gender transition. The rules that apply to legal gender marker changes can vary from county to county and some states will not allow for amendments to birth certificates.
- Surgical procedures vary, but, are typically quite expensive and somewhat risky. For most people, these procedures aren't covered by any form of insurance (insurers deem them to be "cosmetic") and the costs must be borne by the patient. A popular method of reducing the costs is to travel abroad to places where the procedures are commonly performed and much less costly. But travel has its own costs and medical risks can increase in unfamiliar environments and with post-surgical travel. Once again, for those without the discretionary finances, these can be unavailable.

- Changes to lifestyle and personal appearance are usually the easiest actions to take. Consequently, these are the aspects most commonly detected by others. Yet, they carry with them the social impacts that can be most difficult to bear. When family members, friends, and fellow workers voice their opinions, they are usually attempting to maintain the relationship with which they have become familiar. People typically don't like change and the change in their relationship with the transgender person may be a change of large proportions. Their attempts to "dissuade" the person from transition can take on significant pressures and may lead to the end of the relationship. Transgender people have been shunned, disowned, thrown out of their living situation, threatened, assaulted, or, at worst, killed because they have declared their desire to transition. For some, the "easiest" action may also be the most



Photo credit: West Anderson, Copyright © 2018 · [The Body Is Not An Apology](#)

There are other changes that transgender people may elect to pursue (for example, hormone replacement therapy; electrolysis; voice modification lessons; etc.) in their journey to living their authentic life. The above are listed simply to show the types of obstacles that may prevent a transgender person from transitioning in the way that they would prefer. For this reason, the decision whether to transition or not to transition and to what degree is always a personal one.

At some time, faced with these and other obstacles, each transgender person assesses how much they can do and what changes they can accomplish. If they can come to terms with that assessment and accept what they believe will result, they will usually transition as far as they can and, if still unsatisfied, resign themselves to continue trying for more. However, if the available results are so unsatisfactory and living their "unauthentic" life is too much for them to bear, they may seek other ways to deal with it.

41% of transgender people will attempt suicide in an attempt to resolve their situation when no other way seems available. (National Center for Transgender Equality; National Transgender Discrimination Survey, 2016)

In a season of division and hatred, we are reminded that we all need each other. We are all in this together. We covenant together in God's love and we hold fast to God's promise of a redeemed and transformed world.

Do you all the members of [name of faith community/church] promise to support the transgender and gender non-conforming people of this church in all areas of ministry and leadership as well as stand firm against transphobia wherever it may be in this community and the world? WE DO

PASTOR:

BENEDICTION (adapted from Rev. Jay Wilson)

May we all be moved by your non-gender conforming Spirit, O God, to be bolder in our love of those who transgender and non-gender conforming amongst us. Move us to challenge the fear, hatred and oppression in our homes, schools, churches, societies, and governments. Move us to let go of the ways we confuse human gender rules with your law of love for us, toward being our authentic selves and helping others to be themselves. Move us to new life in community with all transgender and gender-nonconforming people across the world. Move us to new relationships with the people around us, freed to cast aside the ties of stereotypes and hierarchies.

And as the transgender council goes back to their seats, we join together in the prayer that Jesus taught the disciples... "Our Mother/Father/Parent..."

We commit to loving difference, and becoming more gracious with ourselves and others.

We commit to learning the new language(s) that enable our beloveds to exist, and thrive.

God of Love, make us bold, to live our own lives fully and abundantly.
God of Love, give us passion, to work for everyone's full abundance.
God of We commit to standing against this headwind of hate, a bulwark to end the battering. We commit to seeing the diverse beauty, all around us, every gendered and gender-free expression, every form of love.

Love, gather us together, that no one you have created
is not seen
is not allowed to live
is ever lost to the hurricane of hate again. Amen.

PASTOR: As I ask you these questions please respond with "WE DO"

Do you promise to be bold and brave as you begin leadership as a part of the transgender council at [name of faith community/church]? WE DO

Do you promise to devote yourselves to the service of God through the transgender council at Cathedral of Hope? WE DO

Do you promise to challenge this church, particularly in issues we may not be aware of in the intersection between our faith in Christ and becoming a more loving and affirming community towards all transgender and gender non-conforming people? WE DO

Do you promise to encourage the active participation, gifted leadership and spiritual growth of all transgender and gender non-conforming people in this church? WE DO

Everyone RISE as you are able in body and spirit:

3. The Transgender Experience

Understanding what it is like to be transgender may be difficult, especially if you aren't acquainted with any transgender people. A report by the Williams Institute of the University of California at Los Angeles Law School in 2016 shows that about 1.4 million transgender people in the United States identify as transgender; about one transgender person in every 235 people. Yet, because they often don't try to call attention to themselves, you may not be aware that you already know them.

You don't need to know that a person is transgender to treat them with respect. To do so, treat them according to their gender identity. Someone who lives as a transgender woman will prefer to be treated as you would any other woman and will prefer to be referred to as "she" or "her." Someone who lives as a transgender man will prefer to be treated as a man and be referred to as "he" or "him." Someone who lives as a nonbinary person will have varying preferences and you can ask them what those may be, they may also have the pronouns "they" or "them", but again, you should always ask a person what their pronouns are so you can refer to them correctly when you're speaking about them.

"Many transgender people risk social stigma, discrimination, and harassment when they tell other people who they really are. Despite those risks, being open about one's gender identity can be life-affirming and even life-saving." (National Center for Transgender Equality; Understanding Transgender People: The Basics)

Imagine what it would be like to have everyone around you (doctors; family; etc.) insist that you are a woman when you know that you are a man. Conversely, what it would be like to have everyone insist that you're a man when you know that you're a woman. Insistence on your part would be met with increasing determination by others that you are mistaken; possibly, psychologically impaired. Continued insistence and push-back can escalate and go down many different avenues. Some examples are:

- Conversion or Reparative Therapy – While widely discredited today, but still on the radar of some religious groups, this is an attempt by the Mental Health community to “correct” the transgender person’s idea that they are another gender than others believe. Past measures used have included shock therapy, castration, and institutionalization. Today, these have been mitigated to more traditional measures such as hypnosis, behavior therapy, sex therapy, and medications. Yet, all are based upon the mistaken idea that sexual or gender orientation is a mental disorder.

The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Fifth Edition (DSM-5) confirms that being transgender is NOT a mental disorder. Further, there is no scientific evidence that Reparative Therapy provides a “cure” and the result can provoke guilt and anxiety in the patient. As a result, laws in many states (although not ALL states) prohibit applying conversion therapy to people 18 years of age or older.

- Family Disruption – Like most people in our society, parents are uncomfortable with mix gendered behavior, especially in their children. It can be distressing for parents to hear that their child believes that their gender is at odds with their bodies. *“Children coming out as [transgender] can be wounded by parental reactions and are at great risk for being thrown out of their homes”* (Psychology Today, Transgender Youth and Their Parents, Feb 7, 2011). Children living with a homophobic or transphobic guardian can be enduring child abuse.
- Health Care Access – Quality healthcare should be available to all people, including transgender people. The Affordable Care Act (and other legal provisions) prohibits anti-transgender discrimination by most insurers and healthcare providers. However, because most states do not provide protection for transgender people against discriminatory employment practices, they are at high risk of losing their employment and, consequently, their health insurance. In highly conservative regions, insensitive health care providers can discriminate with their services without much concern for the ramifications. Legal recourse is, of course, available to the patient. But, it’s small compensation for the difficulties that can result from withheld care.
- Internal Frustration and Doubt – When so many are telling you that you’re wrong for so long, it’s difficult to hold to the belief that you are right.

iii. Appendix

TRANSGENDER COUNCIL COMMISSIONING

One: Intro for them to stand/come forward to the chancel area.

One: We set aside this Sunday to celebrate the beautifully diverse gifts that God has given to each person within our community. Let us together, women and men, young and old, give thanks for the call of Christ to work towards healing and wholeness in a broken world and to commit to lead this faith community into making all things new for everyone within and without the church. We come together as one body of Christ to lift up and embrace the amazing gifts of the transgender and non-gender forming people of [name of faith community/church]. Each of them have been uniquely equipped for service, advocacy and leadership. Gifts of prophetic wisdom, exhortation, leadership, mercy, faith and love are evident in their lives and much needed in our church. May we celebrate all those in our transgender and non-gender conforming community both on this chancel, in our congregation, and all those watching online at [name of faith community/church] on this day and every day. We stand for equality here and stand together united in Christ.

PASTOR: (PRAYER)

A Prayer of Cisgender Confession and Commitment by Tammerie Day

O GOD, We rise each day into a world that fits our natures, our understandings, our assumptions. The clay of our bodies and faces appears to conform to our spirits: male, female.

We are learning it is not so for all of us. Some of us are born of a wilder imagination. We are learning new language and new images for those Spirit is coloring outside our lines: transgender, intersex, gender-variant.

We confess that we have slumbered while members of our family are slaughtered. The headwind of hatred batters bodies and minds and spirits: the diverse beauties that continue to arise.

ii. Resources

The Human Rights Campaign, www.hrc.org

National Center for Transgender Equality, www.transequality.org

Equality Federation/Equality Texas, www.equalitytexas.org

Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation (GLAAD), www.glaad.org

Trans Student Educational Resources, www.transstudent.org

American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), www.aclu.org

Lambda Legal, www.lambdalegal.org

The Transgender Law Center, transgenderlawcenter.org

The Transgender Legal Defense and Education Fund (TLDEF),
www.transgenderlegal.org

Trans Life Line (suicide prevention; etc.), [510-771-1417](tel:510-771-1417)

The Trevor Project (suicide prevention hot line), www.thetrevorproject.org

GLSEN, www.glsen.org

PFLAG, www.pflag.org

National LGBTQ Task Force, www.thetaskforce.org

<http://www.transfaithonline.org/tdor>

<https://www.reconcilingworks.org/tdor-prayer/>

http://www.ucc.org/lgbt_prayer-for-transgender-day-of

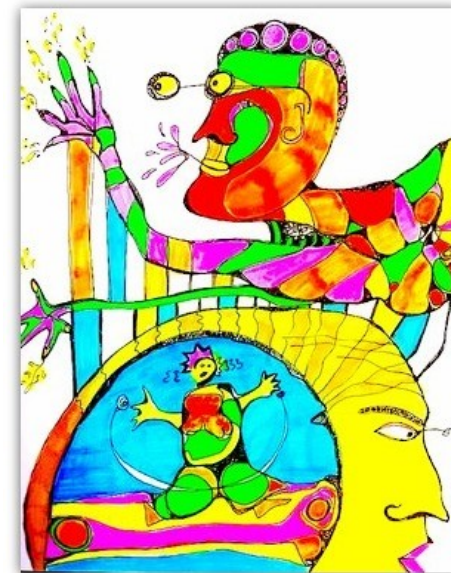
<https://sidewithlove.org/tdor/>

<https://www.christiancentury.org/article/interview/being-pastor-trans-people>

- Voice transitioning—One of the most difficult and stressful experiences a transgender female and, in some cases, transgender males can have is not successfully transitioning the voice to the desired gender. It creates major dysphoria for transgender people. (Hormones usually don't change transgender voices to the gender to which they are transitioning.) Many transgender people withdraw from socializing in public in fear of being outed. Telephones and drive-thru speakers are painful and stressful for many transgender people because they will likely be misgendered due to their voices.

**There are really only two options for transgender females and transgender males. The first option is voice feminization or masculinization through voice modification with a voice teacher. A voice teacher helps the transgender student modify their voices through exercise and practice. The second option is very risky voice feminization surgery or, in a few cases, voice masculinization surgery. Regardless the approach, it's another obstacle along the path of transition.*

The result of the lack of understanding of the transgender experience in society is that many transgender people find themselves homeless and unemployed.



Visual credit: www.intuitivecreativity.typepad.com/expressiveartinspirations/2014

4. Being a Welcoming Faith Community

"Is your church welcoming of transgender people? And if it is, does anyone know?"

Lots of churches declare their *'open and affirming'* status on their websites. Or they will put a rainbow flag on their church sign or website homepage. But those symbols often don't tell the whole story. Many churches that have done a lot of work on gay and lesbian issues haven't bothered to study anything about transgender people. They have outdated language on their websites or don't mention transgender issues at all." - (How to tell if your church is welcoming for transgender people. - Queertheology.com)

Does it matter? Isn't it enough that we've declared ourselves to be Open and Affirming? Yes, it matters. And, no, that isn't enough. Because most churches are NOT welcoming to transgender people, the default view by the transgender community is that yours is not, either. Open and Affirming and rainbow flags only say you're aware of the Gay and Lesbian community; nothing about transgender people. So, if you don't declare it to be so, they'll assume it isn't.

(Aside: did you know that the transgender flag is different from the Gay and Lesbian rainbow flag? I can assure you that transgender people know it and look for it.)

So, how do we show that we are welcoming to transgender people? One way is to help celebrate the unique milestones of their journey.

Significant milestones in a transgender person's life are:

- Coming out
- Beginning hormone replacement therapy
- Undergoing body affirming surgeries
- Completing legal name change
- Personal document updates

In "Transgender Welcome", Bishop Gene Robinson said *"One of the strongest, most recurring notions in Scripture is the power of names and naming."* Accordingly, one of the most significant moments in most transgender people's transitions is having their name formally changed to correspond to their new identity.

Pansexual - Describes a sexual or romantic attraction that is not based on the other person's gender, but rather on the individual person in question.

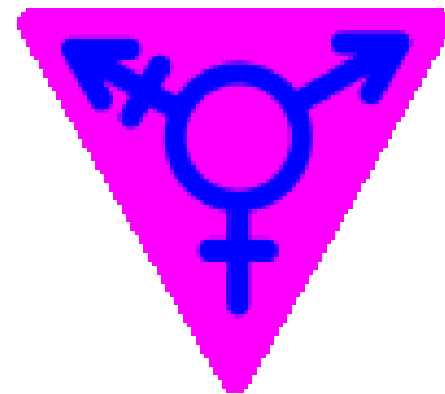
Primary Sex Characteristics - Physical characteristics of one's body that are typically used to identify their sex, usually at the time of their birth. Primary sex characteristics are the penis, testicles, vagina, and uterus and are used by the birth doctor to identify the baby's sex.

Queer - An all-inclusive umbrella term used to refer to the entire community of people who are sexual and/or gender minorities. Can also be used as a specific identity for those who do not wish to limit their sexuality and/or gender.

Secondary Sex Characteristics - Physical characteristics of one's body that develop over time, usually at puberty. Examples are breast development, physical body size, facial hair, and voice range.

Sexual Minority - For the purposes of this glossary, anyone whose sexuality is not heterosexual. Can include gay, lesbian, bisexual, pansexual, etc.

Socialization - The act of interpreting, internalizing, and learning the expectations of someone while growing up. This involves both the message sent by society based on assigned sex, as well as the way that message is interpreted by the individual based on their gender identity.



Art work credit: www.gendertalk.com

Gender Minority – For the purposes of this glossary, anyone whose gender is not cis and/or straight. Can include transgender men, transgender women, intersex people, non-binary people, and others.

Intersex – Refers to people whose genitalia at birth present outside of the typical penis/vagina binary. Many Intersex infants have their genitalia altered without their consent in order to align with socially constructed sex binaries.

Lesbian – Describes female sexual or romantic attraction to other women, often exclusively. It is generally accepted as a term exclusive to those who identify as women and are attracted to other women.

LGBT – Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender

LGBTQIA+ – Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex, Ally/ Androgynous/Asexual

Male/Boy/Man – Someone who identifies as male, regardless of their assigned gender or primary or secondary sex characteristics.

Misgender – When someone’s gender attribution of another person is not the same as that person’s gender identity. This can come in the form of using incorrect pronouns, making assumptions about them based on an incorrect gender identity, and so on.

Microaggression – A type of discrimination that is frequently experienced by minorities such that the sum of many instances become another type of oppression over time.

Non-Binary – An adjective used to describe someone who does not identify as male or female. For some, this can mean they do not experience a gender identity at all. For others, they may have a gender identity somewhere outside of the gender binary.

Outing – Disclosing someone’s sexuality or gender minority status to others without their consent. This should not be tolerated, as being outed can be incredibly dangerous for transgender people and other LGBT people.

A suggested method of celebrating this is to conduct a *“Renaming Ceremony”*(a rebirth, of sorts) allowing others to share that occasion. The possibility of a “re-baptism” in the new identity has even been proposed for debate by the Church of England.

Here are a few other suggested ways to let the transgender community know that they are not only welcome, but, appreciated. (This list is neither mandatory nor exhaustive.)

- Transgender flag – display the transgender flag (its colors are pale blue/pink/white) where it will be seen early in the person’s visit. Possibly a window decal or, if appropriate, the actual flag. You can be confident that, if you display it, they WILL see it.
- Gender Inclusive Activities – Women’s or Men’s clubs or councils should affirm that they welcome ALL genders at their functions. It can be very welcoming for the transgender person to know that the clubs/ councils welcome their participation as the gender that they know themselves to be.
- Recognize Transgender-related Events – respectfully observe current and recurring events that impact the transgender community. Assure the transgender members that they are in a safe place and that the pain of current events is shared by the other members of the church community. For example, the annual *Transgender Day of Remembrance* (TDOR is currently held on November 20 of each year) is a day to remember transgender people who have been killed simply for being transgender during the prior year. *Transgender Day of Visibility* is March 31 of each year and is a day to celebrate being a visible transgender person – and because they are visible, they are removing the stigma society tries to place on transgender people.



Transgender flag – display the transgender flag (its colors are pale blue/pink/white)

- Examine your church curricula for sex-related content – even in the most progressive of churches, it's easy to overlook content that discounts or ignores transgender people. The LGBT- communities have made great social progress and many churches have made provision for them in their literature. But, it is less intuitive to realize that the literature and/or forms may have content that inadvertently impacts or offends the transgender community. To reduce that possibility, involve your transgender members as advocates in any review you undertake. If your documents use the term “he or she”, considering replacing that phrasing with gender-neutral pronouns like “they”, “them”, or “theirs”.
- The difficulty and cost of accomplishing a legal name change may place that option out of reach for many transgender people. Even for those whose means make it possible, it can be time consuming. The result can be a transgender person whose name doesn't match with the name shown on his or her credit card/debit card/driver's license/bank account/etc. Church treasurers and accountants should be aware that this doesn't necessarily mean that the person is trying to do anything nefarious. It may simply mean that the formal name changing documents have not, yet, been processed. If there is a serious concern, simply discuss this with the person in a private setting. Please use discretion if you know the birth name of a transgender person. It is never acceptable to use their birth name if they have told you what their name is.

Gender Pronouns

Please note that these are not the only pronouns. There are an infinite number of pronouns as new ones emerge in our language. Always ask someone for their pronouns.

Subjective	Objective	Possessive	Reflexive	Example
She	Her	Hers	Herself	She is speaking. I listened to her. The backpack is hers.
He	Him	His	Himself	He is speaking. I listened to him. The backpack is his.
They	Them	Theirs	Themselves	They are speaking. I listened to them. The backpack is theirs.
Ze	Hir/Zir	Hirs/Zirs	Hirself/ Zirself	Ze is speaking. I listened to hir. The backpack is zirs.

transstudent.tumblr.com
facebook.com/transstudent
twitter.com/transstudent

For more information,
 go to transstudent.org/graphics

Trans Student Engagement Resources

Circumstances and influences cause each transgender person's transition to be somewhat unique to that individual. So, working with that individual to determine how they would like to be celebrated within the church's community is the best way to show them that they are appreciated for who they are and for what they have experienced.

Discrimination – The act of treating someone differently or as inferior based on genuine or perceived characteristics.

Drag Artist – Similar to crossdressers, but generally done as a performance, especially within the LGBT Community. Drag Queens are traditionally men or AMAB people who perform as a female persona. Drag Kings are traditionally women or AFAB people who perform as a male persona.

Dysphoria – Psychological distress (similar to depression) experienced when one's gender identity is not properly attributed by either themselves or others, for whatever reason. Although Dysphoria is a common experience among transgender people, it is not a requirement in order to be considered transgender.

Female/Girl/Woman – Someone who identifies as female, regardless of Assigned Gender or Primary or Secondary Sex Characteristics. Has absolutely nothing to do with being born with a vagina or uterus.

Femme – A style of gender presentation that is traditionally feminine. Can be used by people of any gender identity to describe themselves.

Gay - Describes sexual or romantic attraction to members of one's own gender, often exclusively. Is most commonly used among gay men, but many other sexual minorities also use “Gay” to describe themselves.

Gender Binary – The socially constructed idea that only cis-men and cis-women naturally exist, rather than the wide spectrum of variability that naturally occurs in humans and nearly all other species.

Gender Expression/Gender Presentation – The way someone presents their gender (and sometimes sexuality) to the outside world through clothing, hair style, and other forms of nonverbal communication. Androgynous, Butch, and Femme are three common examples of different types of Gender Expressions.

Gender Identity – The gender to which someone experiences themselves most closely aligned, regardless of their assigned gender or primary or secondary sex characteristics. The most common gender identities are male and female.

9. Transgender Glossary

Note: This glossary is a brief listing of terms that are likely encountered within this handbook. It is intended to support that content. It is not exhaustive because to do so in this document would be tedious, unnecessary, and confusing. Instead, an assumption is made that the reader has the ability and means to further pursue any definitions desired, but, not found here.

AFAB/AMAB – Assigned Female at Birth or Assigned Male at Birth. Rather than using cissexist terms such as “biologically X” or “physically Y”, we acknowledge sex is a socially constructed binary based upon the genitalia an infant presents at birth.

Androgynous – A style of gender presentation that is a blend of traditionally masculine and feminine presentations, or something completely unique outside of the typical gender binary. Can be used to by people of any gender identity to describe themselves.

Asexuality - A sexual minority identity based on having very little or no sexual attraction to others, when compared to what is seen as typical by the majority of people.

Assigned Gender – The gender identity an infant is presumed to have, based on the shape of their genitalia at birth.

Bisexual - A person with sexual or romantic attraction to one’s own gender as well as other genders. This is not limited to “men and women,” as there are more than two genders.

Butch – A style of gender presentation that is traditionally masculine. Can be used by people of any gender identity to describe themselves.

Cis/Cisgender/Cissexual – The opposite of Trans/Transgender/Transsexual. The prefix cis- means “same” and, in this context, indicates someone whose sexual and gender identifies align. For example, most males are cis-males because their sex and gender align as male. Similarly for cis-females whose sex and gender align.

Coming Out – The act of disclosing one’s sexual and/or gender status to others. Most LGBT people are perceived to be straight and cisgender unless they go out of their way to make others aware that they are not.

5. Helping those who are affected by “coming out”

It’s not always possible to tell if someone is transgender by looking at them. For some, their outward presentation or appearance provides no indication that they are transgender. And, because statistics indicate that there is at least one transgender person for every 235 people, it’s likely that you have encountered a transgender person, whether you knew it or not.

When a person “comes out” (transgender; gay; lesbian; etc.), their decision impacts many others: family members, work peers, and church community members to name only a few. Those who are gay, lesbian, or bisexual can choose to whom they will announce themselves and, thus, have some level of self-determination in how widespread that impact will be. For many transgender people, proceeding in “stealth mode” may not be an option and the process of coming out can go on for as long as the remainder of their life. Doctors will need to know in order to properly prescribe medicines. Creditors, insurers, state and federal agencies will need to know if a name change is undertaken. Health insurers will need to know because procedures that typically apply to one sex may be requested for what they believe is the incorrect sex. (For example, prostate tests may need to be performed on the person, despite having transitioned to a woman. This confuses insurers and doctors.)

It’s also important to remember that someone’s transgender identity is their private information and is theirs to share or not. Even if they choose to disclose that they are transgender, there may be aspects that they don’t want to share: for example, their medical situation, how their family has handled their transition, etc.. However the person decides to do it, there will be members of their surrounding community who will have questions, concerns, and opinions.

The transgender person has been thinking about this (coming out) for a long while, maybe for many years, before acting on it. Those who are receiving the announcement have likely had little or no time to absorb the new information.

Family members are probably confused. They’ve known this child/person for some time and may not have been aware that they felt this way. In the confusion of the moment, they may not even understand what they heard him or her say. And, they’re wondering how their friends and relatives will react to this same news. In a realm of social unrest, they may be concerned for the welfare of their son/daughter/sibling/parent/spouse.

Or, they may be upset and angry because this strains their previously held beliefs. Those hearing it may wonder whether there are other things they haven't been told. Can they continue to trust? Regardless, for most transgender people and their families, this is a difficult discussion to have.

Employers may or may not be accepting of the news that their employee is transgender. If a company policy has been developed for this eventuality, adhering to it will be helpful. But, for many companies, such a policy doesn't exist or, worse, is effectively prohibitive. Of course, there are also companies that have a policy, but, don't adhere to it.

Educators and school systems are frequently ill equipped to support a transgender student. The intersection of school policies and concerned parents often puts administrators in a decision between supporting the student's needs and the upset feelings of uninformed citizens.

In such circumstances, the transgender person may turn to the church for support, whether it is for spiritual reasons or otherwise. A person who is supportive of a transgender person's situation and wants to help is referred to as an "ally." Because each person's transition is unique, learning to be an ally is an ongoing process. Some ways are simple while others require some effort. But, at the core of it all is the instruction to "be respectful and do your best." No one will fault you if you err while you're sincerely trying to help.

One of the best ways to be an ally is to educate yourself on transgender matters. The fact that you are reading this guide indicates that you are trying to do that. And, if you have a question or aren't sure of something, try asking the transgender person, directly.

When you are familiar with transgender issues and topics, you are also better equipped to help and counsel those who have been impacted by the transgender person's declaration.



- As we pass through our modern life, most of us use doctors and medicine(s) to help us along the way. Aches and pains, psychological difficulties, and diseases are a fact of life for everyone. Unless there is good reason, we usually don't poke our noses into the medical history of someone we've just met or who we only know casually. In the same way, it's inappropriate to ask transgender people about hormones they may be taking, voice modification lessons they may be practicing, surgical changes they may be considering, their life prior to transitioning, sexual activity, etc. Until we know a person better (regardless whether the person is transgender or not), we just wouldn't ask about such things.
- Someone's transgender identity is their private information. Just because they confided in you with that information doesn't mean that they have told everyone else that they know. Guard that confidence carefully and let the transgender person decide with whom to share it; not you. If someone discloses this information without the consent of the transgender person, it is referred to as "outing". Outing someone can be a very dangerous thing depending on if the person finding out is accepting/affirming of transgender people or not.
- ALL people are interesting. Transgender people are, too. People live their lives in the best way they can, overcoming whatever obstacles they face, feeling sad about their defeats and, hopefully, reveling in their personal victories. When you're having a conversation with a transgender person, simply enjoy it as you would with a cisgender person or lesbian/gay/bisexual person. There are so many things to discuss that have nothing to do with being transgender (or gay or lesbian) that there is no need to pry into areas of personal information.

Undoubtedly, we could go on with this for much longer. But, the point is already made for those who have been thinking while they read: if you wouldn't ask it of someone else, don't ask it of a transgender person. Would you be uncomfortable if the same question were asked of you? More positively, treat the transgender person with the same respect you would give anyone else.

8. Precautions

The suggestion is often made to consider DOs and DON'Ts regarding how we act or address or treat transgender people. Mostly, they concern themselves with the DON'Ts. For example,

- Don't ask them whether they have had "the surgery".
- Don't call them by a name or pronoun other than what they use.
- Don't ask them a question you wouldn't feel comfortable being asked yourself.

Certainly, there are a few general topics that might be avoided. But, if we're to welcome and celebrate the transgender people among us, a list of DON'Ts works contrary to our purpose. How can we welcome and celebrate a person if we're first cautioned to not "out them"? By its nature, celebration brings them out. How can we be inclusive for them without first introducing them to the congregation or council members? An introduction often provides the person's fundamental personal information and, if missing, prompts questions that might not fit.

So, instead of relying on a formal list of DOs and DON'Ts, let's consider how we would treat ANY of our other friends, whether transgender or not.

- It's unlikely that, upon meeting someone/anyone, we would ask them about their genitals. If that statement weren't so ridiculous, it could be funny. Yet, there is so much misinformation regarding a transgender person's transition that many people think it always involves surgical modification to their body (it doesn't). And, for reasons that seem odd upon reflection, many people feel they have a right to ask about that (they don't). Unless the person volunteers that information, don't ask.
- When we meet someone, we ask or they provide their name. We don't ask if they had a different name in years past. (Why would we?) Nor do we ask if that's their "real" name. (Again, why would we?) Instead, they tell us who they are and we simply believe them. As we should. Do the same with someone who's transgender: just introduce yourself and let them do the same.
- Many (not all) transgender people assume a new name when they transition. It's a personal decision and, if a new name is taken, it's usually a significant psychological milestone for them. While it's great to celebrate the milestone, asking about their previous name can be inappropriate. If they

6. What does the transgender person need from the church?

In general, the transgender person needs the church to be accepting, inclusive, and caring; much like those who are Lesbian, Gay, or Bisexual. For that matter, most of the other church members want the same thing. One would think that providing the same welcoming environment to transgender people would be satisfactory. Unfortunately, there is more to the equation.

It's interesting to note that, while Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual members only need to "come out" to those with whom they choose, transgender people must do so almost every time they meet a new person or a person to whom they haven't previously done so. For transgender people, "coming out" is a continual process. Consequently, the church environment can be simply another opportunity to experience the possibility of rejection or, at the best, another chance to provide tedious explanation.

Our society strongly enforces codes of behavior regarding sexual orientation and gender identity, and most people receive the message that they must be heterosexual and act according to society's definition of their gender. For transgender people, there may be a sense of being different or of not fitting in to the roles expected by family, friends, workplace or greater society. The person may feel ashamed, isolated, and afraid.

When they are searching for a church, it is usually because they need the emotional support of the church to balance out those negative factors and give them the strength to go on. A few of those negative factors are:

- Lack of Acceptance – Religious doctrine acknowledges the need to minister to the marginalized people and communities; to give them the love they need and to "guide them back to the path that God defines for them." The more welcoming path of acceptance by the church needs to be an acknowledgement that they are who they say they are; not who WE, the church, say they are.
- The Arrogance of Certainty (borrowed from Hermann Bondi) what this approach exhibits will quickly show transgender people how unwelcomed they truly are. Absolute certainty used by religious institutions has been used to supersede and negate a transgender person's experience and revealed truth. The transgender person will be wary of a congregations openness to meet their spiritual needs.

7. What about those who don't approve?

- A Safe Place – Domestic and social violence is often attributed to interpersonal discord and the frustrations that it fosters. Yet, because the social debate surrounding transgender people is often polarizing, such violence can be a family and social reality for transgender people. “From 2013 to 2017, in the United States, 102 transgender people were killed.” (Human Rights Campaign Report: *A Time to Act—2017*, p.36) “In 2017, 29 deaths were reported, and as of October 31, 2018, 22 deaths have been reported.” (Human Rights Campaign, www.hrc.org, *Violence Against The Transgender Community in 2018*, November 12, 2018) These numbers will grow as the year progresses.

Transgender people are seeking a place where they can be sure that they are truly safe. Where those who they encounter foster an environment of security.



“The LGBTQ community still faces considerable stigma based on over a century of being characterized as mentally ill, socially deviant and sexually predatory. While these flawed views have faded in recent years for lesbians and gay men, transgender people are still often met with ridicule from a society that does not understand us.” (Human Rights Campaign, www.hrc.org).

They are often the target of stigma, discrimination, and violence. As a consequence, transgender people often come to expect rejection whenever they are out in public or expect to meet new people. Thoughts and feelings brought on by that expectation can be anxiety, depression, anger (about their situation), and physical exhaustion over time. Coping strategies can be avoidance/escape, substance abuse, and cognitive coping strategies. (Extracted from “Expecting Rejection: Understanding the Minority Stress Experiences of Transgender and Gender-Nonconforming Individuals”; Brian A. Rood et al., *Transgender Health*, 2016)

Today's media are filled with examples where transgender are discounted.

There are people who don't believe being transgender is real. “XX is female. XY is male.” (Fun fact: There are more than XX and XY chromosome variations)

There are those who wonder how this reflects on them. “If I let them be part of my church, do my religious beliefs still count?” or “If I am friends with them, what will my other friends think of me?”

There are those who believe it's just wrong. “..made in the image of God... created male and female.” (Something to ponder: ‘and’ in Genesis means a spectrum – night and day (dawn and dusk), heavens and earth (clouds and planets), male and female (transgender people))

There are those who simply want them to go away. “We don't want them here.”

There are those who believe them, but, fear them. “They're pedophiles waiting for the opportunity to assault my children in the restroom.”

There are opportunists who want to use the social anxiety to their advantage.

Or course, these are views that are usually borne of emotion. Given the opportunity to learn more about or to meet transgender people, most of the views will soften into more reasonable stances. Most transgender people are simply conducting their lives as anyone else would: working at their jobs; getting the mail; purchasing groceries; taking out the trash. The stuff of everyday life.

How will your church respond to these questions?