



A Guide to LGBTQ+ Inclusion and Safety for Churches and Ministries

The Episcopal Diocese of Southern Ohio

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GROUNDING PRINCIPLES

In the first century, Jesus inspired a movement – a community of people whose lives were centered on Jesus Christ and committed to living the way of God’s unconditional, unselfish, sacrificial, and redemptive love. As Episcopalians, we believe in a loving, liberating, and life-giving God: Creator, Son, and Holy Spirit.

The Episcopal Church and the Episcopal Diocese of Southern Ohio have legacies of inclusion, though not always perfect, aspiring to tell and exemplify God’s love for every human being. In our church, all people have access to every level of belonging and leadership, regardless of gender or sexuality.

We believe that God loves all – no exceptions. And, because of this, we believe we have a role in sharing that unconditional love with the world.

WHY DOES INCLUSION AND AFFIRMATION MATTER?

Our LGBTQ+ siblings are present in every single community. It is essential that every congregation, regardless of size, age demographics, location, or local politics, lives into their baptismal vow to love all and respect the dignity of every human being.

We are called particularly to consider how we approach and engage our LGBTQ+ siblings as they experience discrimination and hostility at a daunting scale. At the time of this document’s development, there is a renewed effort to condemn and vilify those who identify as LGBTQ+, especially our trans siblings. This is an ongoing humanitarian crisis and it’s taking a toll.

According to a 2020 study from the Center for American Progress¹, -

- More than 1 in 3 LGBTQ+ Americans faced discrimination within the last year, including more than 3 in 5 transgender Americans.
- Discrimination adversely affects the mental and economic well-being of many LGBTQ+ Americans, including 50% who report moderate or significant negative psychological impact.
- Around 15% of LGBTQ+ Americans report postponing or avoiding medical treatment due to discrimination, including nearly 30% of transgender respondents.

The severity of discrimination against our trans siblings in particular stands out. In the 2015 US Transgender Survey²

- Respondents reported high levels of mistreatment, harassment, and violence in every aspect of life.
- 10% reported that an immediate family member was violent towards them because of their transgender identity.
- 8% were kicked out of the house for being transgender.

¹ [The State of the LGBTQ+ Community in 2020](#), Center for American Progress, 2020.

² [2015 U.S. Transgender Survey](#), US Trans Survey 2015.

- The majority of respondents who were out or perceived as trans while in school (K-12) experienced mistreatment including verbal harassment (54%), physical attacks (24%), sexual assaults (13%). 17% reported that they had left a school due to severe mistreatment.
- In the year prior to the survey, 30% of respondents who had a job reported they had been fired, denied a promotion, or were experiencing some other form of mistreatment in the workplace due to their gender identity and expression.
- Nearly half, 47%, reported having been sexually assaulted at some point in their lifetime.
- 29% of respondents were living in poverty, compared to 12% of the US population. 15% were unemployed, three times higher than the US unemployment rate at the time, 5%. Only 16% of respondents owned a home, compared to 63% in the US general population. Nearly 1/3 had experienced homelessness at some point in their lifetime.

This culture of discrimination is severely affecting our youth. According to a 2022 Study on LGBTQ+ Youth from The Trevor Project³, -

- 45% of LGBTQ+ youth seriously considered attempting suicide in the last year. Nearly 1 in 5 transgender and nonbinary youth attempted suicide. LGBTQ+ youth of color reported higher rates than their white peers.
- Fewer than 1 in 3 transgender and nonbinary youth found their home to be affirming.
- 93% of transgender and nonbinary youth reported they worried about being denied access to gender-affirming medical care due to state and local laws.
- 91% of transgender and nonbinary youth reported they worried about being denied access to a bathroom due to state or local laws.
- 31% of LGBTQ+ youth and 37% of trans/nonbinary youth reported they have been physically threatened or harmed due to either their sexual orientation or gender identity.
- 73% of LGBTQ+ youth reported they had experienced discrimination based on their sexual orientation or gender identity at least once in their lifetime.

The study also told us this: LGBTQ+ youth who felt high social support from their family and local community reported greater rates of health and happiness, including more than 50% decrease in suicide rates than youth with low or moderate support.

In this barrage of harassment, violence, and discrimination, the church has often been part of the problem. Historically, LGBTQ+ people have been told there is no place for them at church and in relationship to God, deploying select scripture verses to exclude members of God's creation. When parents or caregivers attend churches that teach that being gay or trans is sinful (or remain silent and allow others to teach this for them), the parents are much more likely to reject their child when their child comes out, making that child more likely to suffer from mental health issues and to die by suicide. Too many of those questioning their

³ [2022 National Survey on LGBTQ Youth Mental Health](#), The Trevor Project, 2022.

sexual or gender identity have been made to feel that they must choose between God and an authentic, healthy life.

This discrimination has extended so widely and so deeply that a 2014 study from the Public Religion Research Institute⁴ revealed that 70% of millennials and 58% of Americans overall believe that religious groups are alienating people by being too judgemental about LGBTQ+ issues, like same-sex marriage. One-quarter of the people raised in religious families but have left their religion report that negative treatment and teachings about LGBTQ+ people factored into their decision to leave.

And yet, half of all queer-identified adults claim religious affiliation, nearly 20% considering their faith to be “very important.” What’s more, these percentages appear to be *growing* every year.⁵

When our churches are silent on this issue, perpetuating the idea that LGBTQ+ persons are morally, theologically, or relationally inferior to anyone else, we feed into the hatred that leads to ostracization and even death for an already marginalized group.

In The Episcopal Church, we know that each and every person is made in God’s image. And we are called in our Baptismal Covenant to seek and serve Christ in all persons, respecting the dignity of *every* human being. We must show up, stand up, and proclaim the Good News. This is a conversation that cannot wait.

⁴ [Are Millennials Leaving Religion Over LGBT Issues?](#), Public Religion Research Institute, 2014

⁵ *Transforming: The Bible and the Lives of Transgender Christians*, Austen Hartke, 2018. Page 11.

THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH & LGBTQ+ HISTORY

Faithful Episcopalians have been working toward a greater understanding and radical inclusion of all God's children for half a century. The Episcopal Church is intentionally inclusive, affirming, and welcoming of LGBTQ+ individuals, though the whole church is not in the same place on this journey. Some Episcopal churches have done the work to be actively involved in LGBTQ+ ministry and to cultivate safe and inclusive spaces within their buildings and congregation. Some are in the midst of this work. Some haven't started. As a whole, The Episcopal Church is dedicated to full inclusion and equality in the church and in society.

NOTABLE DATES & MOVEMENTS

- 1974** - IntegrityUSA is founded, a nonprofit organization with the goal of full inclusion of LGBTQ+ persons in the church.
- 1976** - The General Convention of The Episcopal Church adopts resolutions stating that "homosexual persons are children of God who have a full and equal claim with all other persons upon the love, acceptance, and pastoral concern and care of the Church⁶" and that they "are entitled to equal protection of the laws with all other citizens."⁷
- 1988** - The National Episcopal AIDS Coalition was created to provide education and support for HIV and AIDS ministries across The Episcopal Church.
- 1992** - A resolution of the 118th Convention of the Diocese of Southern Ohio establishes a Standing Commission on Human Sexuality, charged with studying "those issues of human sexuality presently confronting the church" and reporting to the 119th convention. A report was not filed.
- 1993** - After his retirement, the former bishop of Utah, the Rt. Rev. Otis Charles, comes out publicly as gay.
- 1994** - The General Convention of The Episcopal Church amended the churchwide canons to prohibit discrimination based on sexual orientation, providing equal access to the rights and worship of The Episcopal Church, including ordination.
- 1998** - The Lambeth Conference (Anglican Communion) passes a resolution against same-sex marriage⁸ while urging bishops to listen to "homosexuals" and condemning irrational fear. In response, 183 bishops in the communion sign a pastoral statement⁹ to lesbian and gay Anglicans apologizing that their voices were not heard at the conference. The bishop serving Southern Ohio at the time did not sign the pastoral statement.

A resolution of the 124th Convention of the Diocese of Southern Ohio established a Human Sexuality Study Task Force, charged with developing a diocesan-wide program to study human sexuality in light of scripture, tradition, and reason, with a "particular pastoral commitment to 'listen to the experience of all persons of differing sexual orientation and histories and any others who

⁶ [1976-A069 Recognize the Equal Claims of Homosexuals](#)

⁷ [1976-A071 Support the Right of Homosexuals to Equal Protection of the Law](#)

⁸ 1998 [Resolution I:10 Human Sexuality](#)

⁹ [A Pastoral Statement to Lesbian and Gay Anglicans from Some Member Bishops of the Lambeth Conference](#), 1998

may be aggrieved by the Lambeth Resolution on Human Sexuality.” The task force was charged with reporting to the 125th Convention; they made their report to the 126th.

- 2000** - The Rt. Rev. Otis Charles is arrested during a protest against the church’s historical mistreatment of LGBTQ+ people during the General Convention of The Episcopal Church.

Southern Ohio’s Human Sexuality Task Force submits a report as “recommendations for a diocesan pastoral response,” noting basic disagreements among members, and unclear church teaching and terminology. They made several recommendations, including that respecting the “dignity” of every human being included on the basis of sexual orientation, that “sexual orientation” be included in non-discrimination statements and practices, that study on this issue would continue, that advocacy groups like Integrity and an AIDS commission be permitted to have presence in the diocese, that the diocese would curate a list of resources for ministries specific to sexual minorities, and more.

- 2003** - The Episcopal Diocese of New Hampshire elects the Rt. Rev. Gene Robinson as bishop, the first openly gay bishop in The Episcopal Church. He is ordained while wearing a bulletproof vest, due to death threats.

Anglican leaders met at Lambeth to attempt to avoid a schism in light of the controversy around inclusion and the consecration of Bishop Robinson, eventually releasing a statement.¹⁰

The 129th Convention of the Diocese of Southern Ohio passed a “Resolution Regarding Theological Differences over Issues of Human Sexuality,” resolving that all persons be treated with respect, that theological differences would be affirmed and remain in communion with one another.

- 2004** - TransEpiscopal, a group dedicated to fostering the full embrace of trans and nonbinary people in The Episcopal Church, begins to form online, eventually progressing to in-person retreats, delegations to General Convention, and strategic networking with other justice groups.

Archbishop of Canterbury (Anglican Communion) Rowan Williams releases a letter condemning comments from bishops from outside the Western world for inciting violence against gay men and women.¹¹

The Lambeth Commission on Communion (Anglican Communion) issued a report on homosexuality in the Anglican Communion, known as the *Windsor Report*.¹² The report recommended a moratorium on further consecrations of openly gay bishops and blessings of same-sex unions and marriages. It did not recommend discipline against The Episcopal Church.

The Rev. Alice Connor is ordained to the diaconate, becoming the first openly LGBTQ+ person to be ordained in the Diocese of Southern Ohio. She was ordained to the priesthood in 2005.

- 2006** - In response to The Episcopal Church’s growing movement toward LGBTQ+ inclusion, several influential congregations from the Diocese of Virginia vote to leave The Episcopal Church and retain

¹⁰ http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/3198992.stm

¹¹ http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/4049013.stm

¹²[The Windsor Report, 2014](#)

their property¹³ in what would become the first of several long legal battles between The Episcopal Church and splinter groups concerning property and name rights. They joined the now defunct “Convocation of Anglicans in North America” organized by splinter groups with the bishop of Nigeria.

- 2007** - The Chicago Consultation, a group of Episcopal and Anglican lay people, clergy, and bishops, is formed to advocate for policy change within The Episcopal Church, focusing on affirming access to all orders of ministry in the Church, eliminating discriminatory canons against transgender people, and to establish liturgies for same-sex blessings and full marriage equality.

A resolution from the Lambeth Primates’ Meeting (Anglican Communion) asserts that The Episcopal Church has departed from standard teaching on human sexuality by allowing rites for same-sex unions.¹⁴

- 2008** - GAFCON (the Global Anglican Future Conference) is created in protest to The Episcopal Church’s inclusion of LGBTQ+ people. Its current members are drawn mainly from Africa and South America, plus rebel groups in western countries.¹⁵

- 2009** - The Rt. Rev. Mary Glasspool is consecrated as bishop suffragan of the Episcopal Diocese of Los Angeles, becoming the first openly lesbian bishop.

The General Convention of The Episcopal Church expresses support for laws that prohibit discrimination based on gender identity¹⁶ and allows consecration of openly lesbian and gay bishops and authorizes the blessing of same-sex unions.

The schismatic Anglican Church of North America (ACNA) is officially incorporated in response to The Episcopal Church’s inclusion of women and LGBTQ+ people. Contrary to its name, ACNA is not a member of the Anglican Communion.

- 2010** - The Chicago Consultation begins work with the Ujamaa Centre at the University of KwaZulu-Natal in Pietermaritzburg, South Africa to build a network of African and North American partners committed to conversation about religion and sexuality.

The Rt. Rev. Tom Briedenthal, ninth bishop of Southern Ohio, allows for same-sex blessings to take place in the diocese, effective Easter Day.

- 2012** - The General Convention of The Episcopal Church calls for the repeal of discriminatory federal laws, increased legal protections for domestic partners, and recommends a liturgy¹⁷ for the blessing of relationships of same-sex couples and approves the ordination of transgender clergy.¹⁸

¹³ [7 Va. Episcopal Parishes Vote to Sever Ties Same-Sex Unions, Choice of Gay Bishop Spark Conservatives' Break From Church](#)

¹⁴ [The Communique of the Primates Meeting in Dar et Salaam, 2007.](#)

¹⁵ [Timeline: Lambeth Conference and the same-sex story](#), Religion Media Centre, 2022.

¹⁶ [2009-D012 Support Laws that Prohibit Discrimination Based on Gender Identity](#)

¹⁷ [2012-A049 Authorize Liturgical Resources for Blessing Same-Sex Relationships](#)

¹⁸ [US Church votes in favour of transgender ordination](#), Church Times, 2012.

- 2012 - The Canons of The Episcopal Church are amended to prohibit discrimination in the ordination process based on gender identity and expression.¹⁹
- 2015 - Five days after the Supreme Court of the United States ruled that same-sex couples had the legal right to marry, General Convention voted to amend the canons of The Episcopal Church that regulate marriage, permitting any couple the rite of Holy Matrimony.²⁰

The General Convention of The Episcopal Church calls for a name-change rite to honor an important moment in the lives of trans people.²¹

The Rev. LindaMay Watkins is ordained to the diaconate in the Diocese of Southern Ohio, the first openly trans cleric in the diocese.

- 2016 - A majority of Anglican primates vote to punish The Episcopal Church for allowing same-sex marriage, requiring a three-year period in which TEC was not allowed to represent the Communion on ecumenical and interfaith bodies and were not allowed a vote in decisionmaking around doctrine and polity. Following this statement, Archbishop of Canterbury Justin Welby apologized to LGBTQ+ members for persecution, especially harm that the church has caused.
- 2018 - IntegrityUSA goes dormant, in part because their goal of granting churchwide access to same-sex marriage rights was achieved.
- 2022 - The 2020 Lambeth Conference (delayed due to COVID) invites bishops in same-sex relationships for the first time, applying to bishops in Canada, England, and the US. Their spouses and partners were not invited. This decision was controversial on all sides. In the US, it was by-and-large criticized with some bishops choosing not to attend.

An LGBTQ+ Caucus is developed in the House of Deputies to organize around LGBTQ+ inclusion and affirming policy at The Episcopal Church's General Convention.²²

To be continued.

¹⁹ [2012-D002 Amend Canon III.1.2 \[Access to Discernment Process for Ministry\]](#)

²⁰ [2015-A036 Amend Canon I.18 \[Of the Solemnization of Holy Matrimony\]](#)

²¹ [2015-D036 Include Name Change Rite in Book of Occasional Services](#)

²² *Episcopal News Service*, March 3, 2022: ["Newly formed House of Deputies caucus takes up the mantle of LGBTQ advocacy"](#)

PROMINENT LGBTQ+ EPISCOPALIANS

THE REV. ELLEN MARIE BARRETT (SHE/HER)

(1946-) In 1977, immediately following the approval of the ordination of women in The Episcopal Church, Ellen Barrett became the first open lesbian ordained to the priesthood. With Louie Clay, she was a founding member of Integrity USA. In the season following her ordination, theological conservatives pushed for action but ultimately failed at attempts to censure her bishop, the Rt. Rev. Paul Moore of the Diocese of New York, and failed to pass a measure to nullify her ordination.

PETE BUTTEGIEG (HE/HIM)

(1982-) Pete Buttegieg is an American politician and former military officer who currently serves as the U.S. Secretary of Transportation. He was mayor of South Bend, Indiana from 2012-2020 and ran for President of the United States during the 2020 campaign. Pete, who grew up Catholic, became Anglican while at the University of Oxford and later became a member of St. James Cathedral in South Bend. He and his husband, Chasten, live in Traverse City, MI.

THE RT. REV. OTIS CHARLES (HE/HIM)

(1926-2013) The Rt. Rev. Otis Charles served as bishop of The Episcopal Diocese of Utah from 1971-1993. After his retirement, Bishop Charles came out publicly as gay and became a vocal supporter for LGBTQ+ rights as a member of the House of Bishops. In 1999, Bishop Charles was arrested during a protest at the General Convention concerning the church's historical treatment of gay people. He later divorced his wife and went on to marry his partner, Felipe Sanches-Paris in 2004 and then again legally, in 2008.

LOUIE CLAY (HE/HIM)

(1936-2019) Louie Clay was a writer and college English professor known for leading a successful campaign for acceptance of gay and lesbian people in The Episcopal Church. As the founder of Integrity USA, he was widely denounced and dismissed as the church slowly caught up to agree by and large with his views and advocacy. From 2000-2006, he served on the Executive Council of The Episcopal Church and served as a six-time deputy to General Convention from the Diocese of Newark. He and his husband, Ernest Clay, married in 1974, later marrying again legally in 2013. The 2007 documentary film "Not That Kind of Christian" features them both.

THE RT. REV. MARY GLASSPOOL (SHE/HER)

(1954-) Bishop Mary Glasspool was elected to serve as bishop suffragan of The Episcopal Diocese of Los Angeles in 2009. She is openly gay and has been partnered with Becki Sanders for nearly 40 years. Since 2016, she has served as an assistant bishop in the Diocese of New York.

THE REV. DR. PAULI MURRAY (THEY/THEM)

(1910-1985) In 1977, Pauli Murray became the first Black person perceived as a woman ordained an Episcopal Priest. They were a human rights activist, lawyer, feminist, author, poet, labor organizer, and priest. The

Amazon Prime documentary, “My Name is Pauli Murray” chronicles their impact as a nonbinary Black luminary.²³

THE RT. REV. BONNIE PERRY (SHE/HER)

(1962-) The Rt. Rev. Bonnie Perry is the eleventh bishop diocesan of the Episcopal Diocese of Michigan, the first woman and first lesbian to hold this role. Prior to her consecration as bishop, Bishop Perry was a core member of the Chicago Consultation. She and her spouse, Susan Harlow, live in Detroit.

THE RT. REV. GENE ROBINSON (HE/HIM)

(1947-) The Rt. Rev. Gene Robinson was the first openly gay and non-celibate bishop elected in a large mainline denomination. He was elected and consecrated to serve the Episcopal Diocese of New Hampshire in 2003. His election was a source of major controversy in the Church, resulting in the departure of many theologically conservative members and the eventual development of the schismatic Anglican Church in North America (ACNA). The Episcopal Church continues to be the only recognized member of the Anglican Communion in the United States. Bishop Robinson is the subject of the 2012 documentary, *Love Free or Die*.

THE REV. SUSAN RUSSELL (SHE/HER)

(19XX-) Susan, now serving as Assistant Priest with All Saints Episcopal Church in Pasadena, CA and as Canon for Engagement Across Difference for the Diocese of Los Angeles, was president of Integrity USA from 2003-2009. She is a convenor of “Claiming the Blessing” and serves on the leadership team with The Episcopal Church’s LGBTQ Caucus in the House of Deputies of The Episcopal Church. Her previous leadership includes being a founding member of the HRC (Human Rights Campaign) Religion Council and membership on the National Clergy Advisory Board for Planned Parenthood, the Task Force for the Study of Marriage for The Episcopal Church, and The Episcopal Church’s Task Force for Communion Across Difference.

MATTHEW SHEPARD (HE/HIM)

(1976-1988) Matthew Shepard was a gay American student at the University of Wyoming who was beaten, tortured, and left to die near Laramie, Wyoming on October 6, 1988. He died six days later from severe head injuries received during the attack. His murder brought international attention to hate crime legislation at the state and federal level. In 2018, Matthew’s body was interred at the Washington National Cathedral in a ceremony presided over by the Rt. Rev. Gene Robinson, first openly gay bishop of The Episcopal Church, and the Rt. Rev. Marianne Budde, Bishop of Washington and out lesbian. His life, death, and legacy have been memorialized in countless pieces of media including movies, plays, and music and he is recognized on the National LGBTQ Wall of Honor within New York City’s Stonewall Inn.

²³ [My Name is Pauli Murray](#), Amazon Prime

LANGUAGE & TERMINOLOGY

There are several terms that may be used when describing members of the LGBTQ+ community and their allies. This section seeks to name and define some of those terms and concepts. This list is not exhaustive.²⁴

This section is organized by category: broad terms, terms concerning sexuality, and terms concerning gender.

Click to jump to the category:

- [Broad Terms](#)
 - [Terms Concerning Sexuality](#)
 - [Terms Concerning Gender Expression](#)
-

BROAD TERMS

Ally (noun)

An ally is someone who is heterosexual or cisgender but who supports the autonomy, agency, and livelihood of the LGBTQ+ community, acting in ways that demonstrate their solidarity.

Coming Out (noun, verb)

The process that LGBTQ+ people engage to share their gender or sexual identity openly with other people. The process is extremely personal and different for every person.

It's important to note that coming out isn't a one-time thing. Because many people assume that everyone they meet is straight or cis-gender, coming out is a constant process. Every time an LGBTQ+ person meets someone new (friends, coworkers, doctors, etc.) they have to decide if, when, and how they come out. And it can be risky to do so – they have to consider whether coming out will put them in physical danger, if they'll be discriminated against, and other implications.

Homophobia (noun)

An umbrella term referring to the irrational and systematic fear, hatred of, or aversion to LGBTQ+ people or those perceived as LGBTQ+.

Intersectionality (noun)

The concept that identities are influenced by multiple factors such as race, class, ethnicity, sexuality, gender identity, physical disability, national origin, and more, and that all of these factors do not exist individually outside of one another.

LGBTQ

An acronym for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer that is often used as a catch-all for the queer community.

Other, more or less interchangeable acronyms include:

²⁴ Sources: [NBC News Article](#), [GLAAD Website](#)

- LGBT: Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender
- LGBTQIA: Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex, Asexual (or Agender/Aromantic)
- GLBT: Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender
- +: sometimes added to the acronyms to be inclusive of all other genders and sexualities
- 2-SLGBTQ+: Two Spirit, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, +

Queer (adj.)

A sexual orientation that can be thought of as “not straight.” This word is often used by people who understand their sexuality to be outside of heteronormative societal norms.

Not every gay, lesbian, or transgender person uses this word to describe themselves, because even though it’s in the process of being reclaimed by LGBTQ+ activists, historically it has been used as a slur. If you are unsure whether it’s right to use this word to describe a person’s identity, ask first.

TERMS CONCERNING SEXUALITY

Aromantic (adj.)

An adjective to describe a person who does not experience romantic attraction and/or does not find romantic relationships desirable. This term is sometimes shortened to *aro*.

Asexual (adj.)

An adjective to describe someone who experiences little to no sexual attraction, regardless of gender.

Biphobia (noun)

An aversion toward bisexuality or people identified or perceived as being to bisexual. It can take the form of denial that bisexuality is a genuine sexual orientation or the promotion of negative stereotypes about people who are bisexual (such as beliefs they are promiscuous or dishonest).

Bisexual (adj.)

An adjective to describe someone attracted to both people of their own gender and people of other genders. People who identify themselves as bisexual are sometimes attracted to more than two genders, despite having a “bi” prefix implying “two.”

Gay (adj.)

An adjective to describe men with same-gender sexual orientation. It is sometimes also used as a general term by other genders to indicate same-gender orientation.

“Gay” should never be used as a noun as in, “he is a gay” or “the gays.”

Heteronormativity (noun)

The assumption that heterosexuality (including heterosexual people) is the default. “Straight” is the standard for defining “normal” sexual, cultural, and social behavior.

Heterosexism (noun)

The marginalization or oppression of LGBTQ+ people based on the belief that heterosexuality is the norm.

Heterosexual (adj.)

A sexual orientation that describes women who are sexually and romantically attracted to men and men who are sexually and romantically attracted to women.

Straight is a similar term, though would be used more casually.

Homosexual (adj.)

An academic term to describe those who identify as gay or lesbian. It's not politely used in modern, informal communication.

Lesbian (noun and adj.)

A sexual orientation describing a woman who is romantically and sexually attracted to other women.

Pansexual (adj.)

A sexual orientation that is not limited in choice by gender identity or sex assigned at birth. Some describe this as being attracted to "all genders."

Sexual Attraction (noun)

The gender or genders of individuals to which one finds themselves romantically or sexually attracted or not attracted (i.e. being gay, lesbian, bisexual, straight, etc.).

TERMS CONCERNING GENDER EXPRESSION**Agender (adj.)**

People who don't identify with any specific gender at all. This may be (but is not always) expressed by dressing androgynously.

Assigned Sex (noun)

The sex organs that one is born with, determined by a visual check at birth or via ultrasound during pregnancy. This is what is entered as "M" or "F" on one's birth certificate. Everyone has a Sex Assigned at Birth.

Alternative term: *Sex Assigned at Birth*

Related acronyms: AFAB (Assigned Female At Birth), AMAB (Assigned Male At Birth)

Cisgender (adj.)

Individuals whose gender identities correspond to the sex they were assigned at birth; their assigned sex and gender identity are not in conflict. This is sometimes shortened to "cis." Cisgender people identify as either male or female. The opposite of cisgender is *transgender*.

Cisheteronormativity (noun)

A patriarchal system that normalizes those who are cisgender and heterosexual. It also centers the gender binary where there are only two gender options: male and female.

Cissexism (noun)

The belief or assumption that cis people's gender identities, expressions, and embodiments are more natural or legitimate than those of trans people.

Culturally specific gender identities

In some cultures, there is language and understanding of more than two genders (which is more common to white, Western cultures). Often people in these additional gender categories were historically held in high esteem or considered to be spiritually powerful.

Examples of these include:

- *Two Spirit* - many indigenous tribes
- *Fa'afafine* - Samoa
- *Hijra* - India
- *Sekrata* - Madagascar
- *Muxes* - Mexico

Deadname (noun and verb)

A “deadname” is the name that a transgender person was given at birth and no longer uses upon transitioning. Commonly, trans people will select a name that they feel better aligns with their gender identity. To “deadname” someone is to refer to the transgender person by the name they used prior to transitioning, an error that ranges from simple forgetfulness to intended malice. Not all trans people refer to their birth name as their deadname.

Gender Affirmation Surgery (noun)

Gender-affirming surgery refers to a number of procedures (genital, facial, etc.) that allow transgender people to live their lives authentically. Not all trans people choose to undergo surgery, although many do to improve their well-being, mental health, and quality of life.

Alternative: Sex Reassignment Surgery (SRS)

Outdated alternative: Gender Reassignment Surgery

Related terms:

- Bottom Surgery (noun) - a range of gender-affirming genital surgeries.
- Top Surgery (noun) - a range of gender-affirming chest surgeries.

Gender Binary (noun)

A social system normative to white, Western contexts that assumes that people come in only two gender categories: female and male. In this ideology, all people strictly fit into one category or another.

Gender Dysphoria (noun)

A medical term describing the sense of restlessness, anxiety, dissonance, and/or distress caused by the conflict between a trans person’s gender identity and their assigned sex at birth. For some, gender dysphoria is an occasional nudge in the back of their minds. At the other end of the spectrum, it is debilitating. Gender dysphoria can cause depression, anxiety, mental unrest, and severe psychological and social distress. It is often made worse by unaddressed transphobia at work, in families, and public life. This feeling can be remedied by allowing the trans person to socially and/or medically transition, allowing the body and social expectations to reflect their gender identity.

The opposite of *gender dysphoria* is *gender euphoria*.

Gender Euphoria (noun)

The psychological state of bliss and comfort that happens when a trans person's gender expression aligns with their identity. In other words, it's an internal sense that one is physically living in a way that is consistent with who they are.

Gender Expression (noun)

The way gender identity is made visible to other people. One expresses their gender through clothing, hair, voice, and mannerisms. Every person has a gender expression.

Gender Identity (noun)

A person's internal, deeply held sense of their own gender: male, female, both, or neither. Every person has a gender identity.

Gender Nonconforming (adj.)

A person who dresses or acts in a way that is not aligned with the cultural expectations of their assigned sex, regardless of whether they are transgender or cisgender. For example, a man who paints his nails, or a woman who rides a motorcycle.

Hormone Replacement Therapy, HRT (noun)

A life-saving and life-affirming treatment process for people seeking to physically change their bodies to fit their gender identities. Estrogen HRT and testosterone HRT are two types of hormone therapy for transgender people.

Gender-Affirming Hormone Therapy (GAHT) is a similar and often interchangeable term, however, GAHT is more specific to trans and nonbinary people.

HRT is often used to treat gender dysphoria and other health impacts in cisgender people. For example, estrogen may be used by post-menopausal cis-women or cis-women with low libido. Men with low testosterone levels may take testosterone.

Intersex (adj.)

Describes people who are born with sex characteristics that do not fit typical binary notions of male and female bodies, including chromosome patterns, gonads, or internal/external genitals.

Misgendering (verb)

When a person refers to another person using gendered language, pronouns, or forms of address that do not correctly reflect the gender that they are, identify with, and wish to be known as.

Non-binary (adj.)

A word that describes someone who doesn't identify strictly as either a man or a woman. They may see themselves as a blend of both male and female, or as another gender altogether. They may or may not identify as trans.

These words mean similar things:

- *Enby (noun)* - a label derived from the phonetic pronunciation of the acronym *N.B.*, nonbinary. The term developed as a way to disambiguate between the acronym "NB" for "non-binary" and "non-Black" in social justice spaces.

- *Genderfluid, bi-gender, pangender (adj.)* - describes someone whose gender identity fluctuates between male, female, or another gender. They may feel female and express themselves femininely one day, and feel male and masculine the day after, androgynous the day after, etc. All of these experiences are part of the person's gender identity.
- *Gender Queer (adj.)* - a catch-all term for people who feel as if language doesn't yet have the words to describe their gender. Flexible.

Passing (verb)

When a trans person is assumed to be cisgender, and is greeted and treated in a manner corresponding accurately to their gender identity.

Pronouns (noun)

A word that is used to refer to someone in place of their name or noun phrase.

A note on the phrase "preferred pronouns" - this phrase should be avoided as it suggests the person's pronouns are optional.

Some pronoun uses include:

- she/her - indicates the person is a woman
- he/him - indicates the person is a man
- they/them - indicates the person is nonbinary
- Combinations - a person who understands themselves to be a blend or a spectrum between multiple genders, may ask others to use "she/they" or "he/they" or "he/she/they" pronouns (or any other combination), indicating that they will feel comfortable being referred to by multiple pronouns.
- Others - gender is a spectrum and so our typical language containers are sometimes too limited. Some trans folks are inventing language to accommodate this phenomenon. Pronoun Island²⁵ is a website that attempts to organize and document various pronoun uses.

SHE/HER	HE/HIM	THEY/THEM
Scout led music on Sunday.	Scout led music on Sunday.	Scout led music on Sunday.
She was amazing.	He was amazing.	They were amazing.
I love singing with her.	I love singing with him.	I love singing with them.
She should be proud of herself.	He should be proud of himself.	They should be proud of themselves.

²⁵ Website: Pronoun Island, <https://pronoun.is>.

Trans, Transgender (adj.)

People whose gender identity differs from the sex they were assigned at birth. The opposite of this is *cisgender*.

Outdated term: *transsexual*

Related terms:

- FTM (noun) - Female-to-Male, refers to a trans man.
- MTF (noun) - Male-to-Female, refers to a trans woman.

Transition, Transitioning (verb)

The process by which a transgender person seeks to bring their physical body and/or presentation through clothing, make-up, etc. to be in alignment with their gender identity. This process may but does not always include social, legal, or medical changes, such as changing their clothing, name, appearance, or sex designation.

Transphobia (noun)

Deeply rooted hate, fear, or disgust for transgender people or anyone who does not fit into the male/female gender binary. Transphobia results in policies that take away the rights and safety of nonbinary people and often in harassment and violence against people who are not cisgender.

COMMON MISSTEPS

There are a few common patterns of comments or questions that could cause unintentional harm to an individual who identifies as LGBTQ+. This section attempts to identify some of those common situations.

Asking a newly transitioned trans person about their pre-existing romantic relationship.

People come out at all stages of their life for a wide range of reasons, which may range from growing up in an unaffirming environment to simply coming to the realization later in life. Some will come out while they are in an existing relationship or marriage. Whatever impact their transition may have on their existing romantic relationships is the private business of those in that relationship. If something is changing, they may share that. They might not! It's okay.

Asking a person in a same-sex relationship, "Who's the man and who's the woman?"

Taken literally, we know this question is untrue. In a same-sex relationship between two men, no one is the "woman." Two women got married? No one is the "man." A relationship between two nonbinary people? No woman or a man to be found!

As it's intended, this question is rooted in expectations of traditional gender roles. In every romantic partnership, roles and responsibilities are divvied up according to the wants, needs, and dynamics of that unique relationship, sometimes according to historically traditional gender roles and sometimes not. The same is true for our LGBTQ+ siblings.

Asking a trans person, "Are you a man or a woman?"

Phrasing it this way is reductive, impolite, and not inclusive of nonbinary people. It may even make them feel insecure about not "passing." A better way to ask how someone identifies is to ask, "What pronouns do you use?" This makes it clear that you intend to respect the person's gender identity.

Asking a trans person, "What's your *real* name?"

Their real name is the name they've introduced themselves with. It's important that, as you'd respect the name of anyone else you meet, you do the same for a trans person. To insist on using the person's name they were assigned prior to transitioning, you are "deadnaming" – something that can cause gender dysphoria and could cause harm if they associate their former name with past trauma.

Asking a trans person when they "became" their gender.

Many trans people, regardless of when they came out publicly, would consider themselves to have always been that gender. It's not a polite question.

Asking a trans person whether they're on HRT.

It's private medical information. Just like you wouldn't ask someone whether they take medication for diabetes, for example, you wouldn't politely ask about medications taken by trans people in your life.

Asking a trans person whether they've had gender affirmation surgery.

This is effectively asking what their genitals look like. If they offer this information to you on their own, great! It's just not something to ask about in polite company.

Assuming that if an LGBTQ+ person is out to you that they're out to everyone.

LGBTQ+ people have to measure their safety and comfort in every room they enter. Not all people are safe

to be fully open with about one's gender and/or sexuality. If a person has come out to you individually, it's okay to ask about whether they're out in other contexts, especially if that's a context you are also present in (for example, a person may be out to a fellow vestry member but not the whole vestry just yet). They may be out at church but not out at work. Be cautious about those boundaries to keep your neighbor safe – and again, it's okay to check in with them about where those boundaries are.

Beating yourself up (or others) about incorrect pronouns.

It can take a lot of practice and intentionality to reorient oneself after a loved one comes out as trans, especially if you've known them for a long time. If you catch yourself or someone else accidentally using the person's deadname or former pronouns, just correct it quickly and calmly, as in, "Then he told me... Oops, I'm sorry, she told me..." Beating yourself up about it, spending too much time apologizing, or getting mad at someone for messing up can make your trans neighbor even *more* uncomfortable. Part of normalizing trans-ness is making the transition not a big deal! Pronouns *are* important to get right – if you're intentionally making the effort, even if you mess up sometimes at the beginning, you are loving your trans neighbor.

Depending on the LGBTQ+ person you know to educate you on the LGBTQ+ community.

As communities of faith that have been historically white, straight, and middle to upper class, The Episcopal Church and Episcopalians often have a lot to learn about less dominant communities, including our LGBTQ+ neighbors. This doesn't mean that the burden of education should be on the first gay person to walk in the door, or even the second or third or hundredth. In a safe space, an LGBTQ+ person may eventually share from their own experience or learned expertise at a time of their choosing. They may not! It's okay.

Faith leaders and communities seeking education around inclusivity have access to many resources from secular nonprofits, to religious organizations, books, websites, and more. Some of these resources are listed in Appendix A of this document. It is the responsibility of allies to educate themselves.

Respecting a person's pronouns and name when they're nearby but reverting back to their deadname and old pronouns when they're not.

Respecting the dignity of a trans person means respecting their name and pronouns all the time. Again, it's okay to make a mistake sometimes as long as you're correcting yourself and intentionally committing to doing better next time.

Saying, "You will always be ____ to me!" to a trans person.

Respecting the dignity of a trans person means respecting the name they've asked you to call them, just as you'd respect the name change for folks going by their middle name or changing their maiden name after marriage. If you're trying to communicate that you love them, do so by using their correct name and pronouns. If you're tempted to say this as part of an apology for accidentally using their deadname or wrong pronouns, switch it out for "I'm sorry, I'll keep trying and I'll do better."

Telling trans people how to "pass" better.

By making comments pointing out the ways in which a trans person may look different than a cis person, you may be inadvertently causing some dysphoria for the person while also communicating that trans people are "fake." The person may not even see passing as the goal. If they want help, they'll ask for it!

In a similar vein, avoid compliments based on stereotypes about trans people or about how heteronormative men and women should act, like the following:

- "I'd date him, even though he's transgender."
- "You look like a real woman! I never would have known that you're trans."

Tokenizing your LGBTQ+ members.

Having LGBTQ+ people present in your congregation is a gift! It's easy to slip into tokenizing someone as evidence of your congregation's diversity. Just as you wouldn't put your church's only Asian family in every single photo you take as evidence of racial diversity, you shouldn't overexpose your LGBTQ+ members as evidence of gender/sexuality diversity. They should show up in your congregation's communications and promotional materials just about as often as anyone else – not less and hidden, not more and tokenized! And it's always good to ask first anyway.

GENERAL FAQs

Can one be both transgender and gay?

Yes. For example, a person who transitions from male to female and is attracted solely to men would typically identify as a woman who is straight. Similarly, one who transitions from male to female and is attracted solely to women is considered lesbian.

Can you always “tell” when someone is trans?

No. Since there is no one transgender experience, there is no one way for trans people to look either. This means that trans people may be in groups you’re already part of without you being aware, making it important to be an outspoken ally and supporter even in spaces you perceive as not having any trans people in them.

Does the Bible talk about LGBTQ+ people?

The following was prepared for our Guide by the Rev. Dr. Randall R. Warren, Rector serving St. Luke’s Episcopal Church in Kalamazoo.

In any discussion of biological sex, sexuality, and gender, it’s important to remember that sexuality and gender are social constructs. They are also deeply complicit with racism. For example, a black biologically male slave could never be gendered as an adult male as he was always gendered as “boy,” and was placed under the control of an adult male who was white and owned property (which he could not do). Even biological sex itself contains more variation than science had previously seen. Throughout the 20th century and into the 21st, cultural forces and capitalistic marketing have influenced a rigid division between male and female and the confusion of intimacy with sexual activity. This mindset has been accompanied by a near total obsession about who is having sex with whom. These forces deeply affect what people are willing to see, and refuse to see, in the biblical texts.

Biological sex, sexuality, and gender are presented in our scriptures in more complex ways than merely a list of rules about behaviors or partners. For example, in the Book of Ruth, we read about two women, Ruth and Naomi, who, through their intimate relationship, help each other survive and ultimately thrive in a cultural setting of ardent male social priority. As such, Ruth and Naomi present a powerful model for lesbian relationships, where two women in love and commitment help each other survive, thrive, and witness to divine blessing in our own sexist age.

Sadly, the commonly raised objection to such a reading is that the text does not say that Ruth and Naomi had sex. Indeed yes, the text does not say they were having sex, but we are reading the story in terms of intimacy, commitment, and alliance, not sexual activity. The prejudices of our age confuses sexual activity with intimacy in a way that keeps us from seeing God’s blessing of intimate commitments between and among women because of our (not the story’s) obsessions about sexual activity.

We have plentiful biblical stories and texts which can be read as *affirmative* of LGBTQ+ experiences:

Genesis 2:4-25 — In this, the Bible’s second creation story (which scholars say is the older of the two stories) God makes a non-binary creature, the groundling (in Hebrew: ha-adām) from the ground (in Hebrew: adām-ah). God creates all the animals in search for a fitting partner for the groundling. Finding none, God finally splits the groundling in two. Despite what you learned in Sunday school, the Hebrew text does not

contain a rib from which Eve was fashioned. Rather, the adam is split in half, into male and female. Only after that split do we get the names Adam and Eve. So when people say things like, “God made male and female, that’s all,” this story disagrees. It also suggests divine acceptance of non-binary people.

Genesis 37-50 — Jacob’s son Joseph is dressed in a coat or robe given to him by his father. This robe is one of the principal reasons Joseph’s brothers hate him so much. It is a symbol of their father Jacob’s special love for Joseph. The name for this robe in Hebrew is *kutoneth passīm*, which would be literally translated as a tunic of the hand or foot. The implication is that it’s a long robe with long sleeves and, therefore, not meant for fieldwork. This garment, the *kutoneth passīm*, appears only one other place in the bible, at the rape of Tamar. We are told at II Samuel 13:18:

“Now she was wearing a kutoneth passīm, for this is how the virgin daughters of the king were clothed in earlier times.”

Was Jacob’s gift a dress for his cross-dressing or gender-non-conforming son? It is an entirely reasonable speculation. We know that Rachel-Jacob’s favorite wife and Joseph’s mother-was graceful and beautiful (Genesis 29:17). And we also read that Joseph had handsome features and was beautiful (Genesis 39:6). It is possible that Jacob would look favorably on a cross-dressing Joseph because Joseph’s beauty reminded him of Rachel.

Furthermore, after his abandonment in the pit by his brothers, Joseph advances in life by connecting himself to older men: Potiphar, the Chief Jailer, and Pharoah. It was not uncommon in the ancient world for young men to attach themselves to older men in a mentor relationship which also had a sexual element. As such young men aged, they would eventually take on leadership roles and wives, as Joseph did.

Joseph was an immature young man who may have enjoyed cross-dressing and who may have entered into sexualized mentoring relationships. Even so, God did not curse him, but used him to save both Egypt and Israel from severe famine.

Exodus 34:29-35 — The Prophet Moses comes down from Mt. Sinai after an extended conversation with God. Having been so long in the divine presence, the skin of Moses’ face was shining. This was so frightening that Moses would wear a veil. He would take off the veil when talking to God. He would leave the veil off while speaking to the people, allowing his shining face to verify for the people that he had indeed been talking to God. Then he would put the veil back over his face. Then, as now, the veil was a female garment. This is one example among many of Moses’ masculine gender being stretched or shifted by his encounters with God.

It is often the case that encountering the Word of the Lord makes more fluid the masculinity of the male prophets.

The Prophet Hosea’s masculine gender role is forced into crisis when God orders him to marry a promiscuous woman. Hosea doesn’t choose his wife, neither does he control her. Instead, he is open to the penetration of the divine word. The Prophet Jeremiah complains, cries out, and mourns in ways that are coded, in the 7th century BCE, as feminine behavior. The Prophet Ezekiel has a vision of God and is fascinated by the appearance of God’s loins. Such gazing is sexualized and problematic, as Genesis 9:18-29 reveals. The Prophet Jonah enters the belly/womb of a large fish that is referred to in Hebrew by both the masculine and feminine names for fish. And where plants (in Genesis 3) are a source of bodily covering, the death of the

plant in Jonah 4 leaves Jonah's body without shelter. He is left vulnerable to our prying, judgmental gaze, the same gaze to which women and LGBTQ+ people are often subjected (e.g. being seen naked as a punishment in Isaiah 47:1-4).

Our Sunday lectionary only includes speeches by the prophets. However, most of the prophets were also called upon by God to enact the divine prophecies they received in dramatic ways similar to what we would call street theatre. These sign-acts, as biblical scholars name them, had the effect of queering the prophet's body, showing the male prophet to be the receptive partner to God's dominance.

Judges 4-5 — The Prophet Deborah takes on the traditionally male role of a Judge (military leader).

Judges 11— Jephthah is a son of Gilead and a prostitute. Gilead's children from his wife chase Jephthah away and he becomes accomplished as the leader of an outlaw band of raiders. Later the Israelites ask him to lead them in a war against the Ammonites. Jephthah makes a vow to God that if God helps him win this war, he will sacrifice the first family member who returns home to him after the war. His daughter comes home singing and dancing over his victory. Jephthah tells her in sorrow that he must kill her. She comforts him and asks for two months to wander in the hills with her friends and mourn. When she returns, Jephthah makes her a burnt offering. The text says that from that day, the young women of Israel would make an annual 4 day retreat in the wilderness to mourn the daughter of Jephthah the Gileadite. This is another significant story, like Ruth and Naomi, of women's homosocial activities in response to the violence of male sexism.

I Samuel 18:1-5 — Jonathan and David fall in love and Jonathan makes a covenant with David because of their love. King Saul, Jonathan's father judges the relationship harshly, using a blatantly sexual metaphor at I Samuel 20:30-34. People sometimes have a difficult time seeing David and Jonathan's love as sexual because David marries multiple women. However, while sexual relationships between two men or two women were practiced in the ancient world, the idea of an exclusive sexual orientation is a modern construct which was unknown in antiquity.

Song of Solomon — The Song of Songs, as this book is named in Hebrew, is the story of love between a young woman and a young man. Their love is passionate and does not adhere to social norms. The book includes the passionate woman's point of view. The history of this book's interpretations involves a large number of male interpreters imagining themselves to be the bride of Christ and the receptive partner in a torrid divine love affair. Such interpreters include Rabbi Akiva (d. 135 ce), Hippolytus of Rome (d. 235 ce), Origen of Alexandria (ca. 185-253 ce), Bernard of Clairvaux (1081?-1153 ce), Denis the Carthusian (1402?-1471 ce), John of the Cross (1542-1591 ce), (James Bennett (1774-1863 ce), and Stephen D. Moore (contemporary). Clearly, these male interpreters were not afraid to use the idea of two males having sex to communicate the love of Christ for them, for Israel, or for the Church.

Matthew 8:5-13 & Luke 7:1-10 — In both Matthew and Luke, this story is Jesus' first miracle involving a gentile. The ill boy (Matthew)/slave (Luke) is a source of unusually strong concern for the Centurion who travels to ask Jesus for his boy/slave to be healed. The character of the Centurion's concern would have suggested to Jesus and first-century readers the possibility of a sexual relationship between the Centurion and the boy/slave. Such relationships were common in first-century Rome. Instead of judging the relationship, Jesus recognizes the Centurion's faith and heals the lad.

Matthew 19:11-12 — Jesus mentions eunuchs, thereby expressing an acceptance of gender diversity.

Mark 10:17-22 — Jesus looks at a male petitioner and loves him. The Greek verb used for looking suggests an intense look, stare, or gaze. In the ancient world a connection between physical and moral beauty was highly valued. Here again, an intimate gaze does not necessarily imply the presence of sexual activity, which contemporary prejudices and prudience race to assume.

The Gospel according to John — Who was the “beloved disciple” of Jesus and what was the character of their relationship? Clear answers evade us. The scene at the foot washing meal (John 13:23) certainly suggests a high level of intimacy between Jesus and this unnamed disciple. Peter’s assumption that the beloved disciple can get Jesus to answer a question he would not answer for the entire group (John 13:24) also suggests a particular closeness. The special character of this relationship is further reinforced by the episode at John 21:20-23. This is very clearly a significant and intimate relationship which Jesus shared with the beloved disciple and we can appreciate that relationship.

Acts 8:26-40 — The Acts of the Apostles is a book about the growth of the nascent Church. The book is written in the style of first century popular literature and it’s direction is definitely outward looking. One of its early expansions involves Philip being sent to encounter and baptize an Ethiopian eunuch. As mentioned above, Eunuchs were definitely a gender variant looked on with suspicion by many people. Baptizing the Ethiopian eunuch was an act of radical inclusivity.

Galatians 3:23-29 — Paul relativizes and deprioritizes gender in the light of our baptismal putting on of Christ.

Revelation 2:17 — In a letter to the church in Pergamum (modern-day Turkey), Jesus says, through John, that he knows the true name/identity of each believer and they will be called by that name in the New Jerusalem. This, plus the number of significant name changes in scripture (Abram/Abraham, Sarai/Sarah, Jacob/Israel, Simon/Peter, Saul/Paul) allows one to make a strong case against dead naming transgender persons.

These and other stories, texts, and teachings throughout our scriptures suggest a complex and richly textured reading which transcends simple allowed/disallowed interpretations. In fact, our scriptures yield the most depths when the reader is willing to recognize the frequently present tension between law and narrative. For example, in Deuteronomy 23, God says that because the Moabites refused to aid God’s people when they left Egypt, absolutely no Moabites are allowed in the assembly of the Lord and the people may never help them prosper. God seems to have said pretty definitely, no Moabites. Even so, Ruth, who is a Moabite, ends up in the genealogy of King David, and thus also in the genealogy of Jesus. We must read the text with emotional intelligence and moral judgment for values clarification. The Rabbis have read in this way and thus there is no episode in recorded rabbinic history of anyone being put to death for homosexual activity as directed in Leviticus 20:13.

There are a small number of problematic texts upon which people like to focus when opposing the full acceptance of LGBTQ+ people.

Genesis 19:1-13 — The cities of Sodom and Gomorrah are destroyed for patterns of abuse such as raping foreigners (of any biological sex) and neglecting the poor and needy. This is the judgment of the scriptures about those cities as found in Isaiah, Ezekiel, Jude, and III Maccabees. Asserting that the “sin of Sodom” was homosexuality is a misinterpretation unsupported by our scriptures.

Leviticus 18:22 — One of the great concerns of the legal materials in the Torah is mixing. For example, the legal materials prohibit mixed fabrics, mixing different types of crops in the same field, and mixing milk and meat. Chapter 18 of Leviticus is concerned that God’s people not mix themselves up in the practices of the people whose lands they are entering. Included in this list is sex with relatives (mixing up the family lines), sex with animals (mixing the distinction between animal and human), and worshipping other deities (mixing up belief and practices). Another dangerous mixing is the mixing of power with sex, as when a victorious leader sexually dominates a defeated leader. This interpretation fits with the Hebrew vocabulary of the verse and the chapter’s intent. The text does not speak to loving, same-sex relationships.

Deuteronomy 22:5 — This chapter begins by prohibiting a series of behaviors which demonstrate a lack of consideration for one’s neighbor. It includes returning straying livestock and returning a neighbor’s lost items which you may have found. There is no, “finders keepers, losers weepers,” in the Torah.

How one treats one’s neighbors is a matter of extreme importance to God. At Leviticus 19:18, for example, God commands, “You shall not take vengeance or bear a grudge against any of your people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself: I am the Lord.” In this context, the Deuteronomy 22:5 prohibition against cross-dressing is not about expressing a call to a different gender, but about cross-dressing to deceive or trick one’s neighbor.

Romans 1:26-27 — Paul, in attempting to show how bad the world has gotten, lists examples of shameful behaviors. Making lists like these is a common rhetorical practice in the first century. In these verses, Paul names women having sex with women and men having sex with men as examples of such shameful behavior. It is significant that he names the women first, particularly as there is no other verse in scripture that mentions or condemns lesbian sex.

In this text Paul is definitely revealing his first-century cultural assumptions. In that era, all sexuality and much of social order was organized around the image of the penis. The penis was a common decoration in homes and even on the streets. A real man was always penetrative, be it with women or boys. The very idea of women neither wanting nor needing a man was considered to be disruptive of the entire social order, as was the idea of a man enjoying being penetrated. Thus, when Paul is describing the world falling apart, he naturally turns to these examples and leads with the example of women having sex with women. We need not take Paul’s culturally influenced description of the world becoming disordered as an ethical imperative which relates to modern sexual understanding and contemporary sexuality.

I Corinthians 6:9 — This verse is translated in the NRSVUE as, “Do you not know that wrongdoers will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived! The sexually immoral, idolaters, adulterers, male prostitutes, men who engage in illicit sex.” The Greek words relating to male prostitutes and men engaging in illicit sexual acts were first translated as “homosexual” in 1948, and that interpretation is highly questionable. The same questionable interpretative history applies to I Timothy 1:9-11.

For further study in this area, you might like to read any of the following texts, which are also included in Appendix A of this document:

- Arentzen, Thomas, Et Al, Eds. *Orthodox Tradition and Human Sexuality* (New York: Fordham University, 2022).
- Gafney, Wilda C. *Womanist Midrash: A Reintroduction to the Women of the Torah and the Throne* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2017).

- Graybill, Rhiannon. *Are We not Men? Unstable Masculinity in the Hebrew Prophets* (New York: Oxford, 2016).
- Guest, Deryn, Et Al. Eds. *The Queer Bible Commentary* (London: SCM Press, 2006).
- Hornsby, Teresa J. and Deryn Guest. *Transgender, Intersex, and Biblical Interpretation* (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2016).
- Jennings, Theodore W, Jr. *Jacob's Wound: Homoerotic Narrative in the Literature of Ancient Israel* (New York: Continuum, 2005).
- Jennings, Theodore W, Jr. *The Man Jesus Loved: Homoerotic Narratives from the New Testament* (Cleveland: Pilgrim Press, 2003).
- Moore, Stephen D. *God's Beauty Parlor: And Other Queer Spaces In and Around the Bible* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001).
- Moore, Stephen D. *God's Gym: Divine Male Bodies of the Bible* (New York: Routledge, 1996).
- Stockton, Kathryn Bond, *Gender(s)*, a vol. in *The MIT Essential Knowledge Series* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2021).

How do I become a perfect ally?

The LGBTQ+ community is diverse and complex, coming from every region of the world, every racial and ethnic background, every age, and every faith community. This means that different members of the queer community have different needs and priorities. Similarly, there is no one right way to handle every situation or interact with every LGBTQ+ person. Be respectful, do your best, and keep trying.

If someone says they're trans, does that mean they've had surgery?

Nope! Someone can be trans and never have gender-affirmation surgery. Like all major medical procedures in the US, these surgeries are quite expensive and, of course, invasive! Remember, gender is in the mind, it's not defined by one's physical body.

If God made someone female/male, but they identify differently, does that mean God made a mistake?

The following answers to this question are excerpted from Transforming: The Bible and the Lives of Transgender Christians by Austen Harke²⁶:

"Personally, my answer is no. I don't believe God made a mistake in creating me just as I am. God created me with a body that was designated female when I was born – a body that I struggled to connect with for the first twenty-six years of my life and that I now finally feel at home in – but God also created me with a capacity for change and with a mind that identifies as male. I believe God made all of me – gender identity included – and intended for me to be a transgender person who sees the world through a different lens. I don't think God made a mistake. I think God made me transgender on purpose."

"If there's a mistake at all, it's that we've created this understanding of gender that is so deeply limiting of God's creation. That's the mistake. We've always been diverse people. We've always recognized that using tools, for lack of a better word, to best support our bodies is a good thing. Certainly, those of us who change our bodies physically because of our gender identity are not the first people in the world who have needed assistance to be our best selves."

²⁶ See list of recommended reading in Appendix A.

“God created us with the ability to also be creators, and some of those creators created surgical procedures and medical procedures and concepts and ideologies and systems and communities that do wonderful things! If we aren’t taking part in that creative process, then we’re going against our very created nature.”

“God doesn’t make mistakes; she just makes things easier or a bit more difficult to find. Transitioning doesn’t mean that God made a mistake, just that I need to work a bit harder to find the fullness of life God has for me.”

“I think that God knit me together in my mother’s womb, but has also been knitting me together every day since. I think God knit together my body and my identity. I’m not just a woman. I’m not just a man. I’m transgender. That’s what God intended.”

If I’m telling a story about a transperson from before they transitioned, what name and pronouns do I use?

No matter what time in the person’s life that story comes from you should refer to them using the name and pronouns they’ve asked you to use. Deadnaming someone, even in reference to something they did before their transition and new name, is disrespectful. When done out of sheer forgetfulness, simply apologize and restate it with the correct name and pronouns.

Isn’t it against the rules of the English language to use “they” when referring to a singular person?

Nope. The AP Style Guide has included provisions for use of the singular “they” since 2017.²⁷ And we’re accustomed to doing it already naturally anytime we’re anonymizing or referring to an unknown person in a sentence, as in “The person assigned to coordinate will share *their* email. *They* will be in contact.”

What about counseling for trans people to accept their gender assigned at birth?

Counseling aimed at changing someone’s gender identity, sometimes known as conversion therapy, doesn’t “work” and is extremely harmful. The belief that someone’s gender identity can be changed through therapy runs counter to the overwhelming consensus of the medical community. Telling someone a core part of who they are is wrong or delusional and forcing them to change is dangerous, sometimes leading to lasting depression, substance abuse, self-hatred, and suicide.

However, many trans people find it helpful to participate in (non-conversion) therapy or other counseling to help them deal with the repercussions of stigma and discrimination and any other aspects of their life.

What are some of the records that a trans person may change when transitioning?

Some trans people make or want to make legal changes as part of their transition, such as legally changing their name or updating the gender marker on their identity documents.

For many, not having identity documents like driver’s licenses and passports that match their gender identity means they may not be able to do things that require an ID like getting a job, enrolling in school, opening a bank account, or traveling. Some who use an ID that doesn’t match their external presentation often face harassment, humiliation, and even violence.

Transgender people may need to change a number of documents in order to live according to their gender identity, such as their:

²⁷ [Gendered Pronouns & Singular “They”](#), Purdue Writing Lab

- Driver's license
- Social security card
- Passport
- Bank accounts and records
- Credit cards
- Paychecks and other job-related documents
- Leases
- Medical records
- Birth certificate
- Academic records

These changes are often expensive, burdensome, and complicated. To find out the requirements for updating a driver's license or birth certificate in your state, as well as some other related info, check out [the MSU Guide for Legal Transition](#).

STEPS TOWARD INCLUSION, BELONGING, AND SAFETY

When asked for a 2022 Survey of LGBTQ+ Youth by The Trevor Project²⁸, respondents revealed the five most common ways that they felt supported by their parents and caregivers:

- 62% - when they welcomed their LGBTQ+ friends or partners
- 48% - when they talked with them respectfully about their LGBTQ+ identity
- 47% - when they used their name and pronouns correctly
- 45% - when they supported their gender expression
- 35% - when they educated themselves about LGBTQ+ people and issues

This survey tells us that our LGBTQ+ siblings, friends, and neighbors feel most included and supported when their community affirms them, educates themselves about their lives and challenges, and when the learning turns into action. To foster a community of belonging in our congregations for all people, it's crucial that we take on the work of education and take practical and systemic steps to develop safe and affirming physical spaces and cultures.

BATHROOMS

Everyone should be able to safely and comfortably use bathrooms and other gendered facilities, especially when coming into our spaces for worship and fellowship. An inclusive bathroom is one that *anyone* can use, benefiting parents with opposite-gender children, people who may require the accompaniment of a caregiver of a different gender, trans and gender nonconforming people, or any person who would simply prefer additional privacy.

Inclusive bathrooms options include:

- **Private, gender-neutral, single-use bathrooms for all** - if an existing bathroom is designed for one user at a time, make sure it's gender-neutral. There's no reason for it to be designated as a men's or women's bathroom. This is the safest, most-inclusive option.
- **Transgender women are permitted to use the women's restroom, trans men are permitted to use the men's restroom.** The option should be left to the trans individual to determine the most appropriate and safest option for them. As an extra step of explicit welcome and sign of safety, you might post signs on or near the bathroom doors expressing this is a safe space to use the restroom according to one's gender identity.

Members, whether trans or cisgender, may desire additional privacy. If possible, an additional unisex single-stall restroom may be available for any person.

- **Multiple-occupant, gender-neutral restrooms with lockable stalls** - This option would allow any person at any time to use any bathroom. Stalls should lock from the inside and allow for real privacy (avoid thick gaps between doors, for example).

²⁸ [2022 National Survey on LGBTQ Youth Mental Health](#), The Trevor Project, 2022.

This resource from the Office of Financial Management for the State of Washington outlines options for inclusive bathroom signage.

MEETINGS & OTHER GATHERINGS

An easy way to normalize the use of pronouns in your community and establish affirming spaces for your trans members to occupy, you may consider making pronouns an expected part of all introductions and, once known, to use them correctly. There are a number of ways you can do this, including but not limited to the following:

- On a registration form, include a box for all participants to check their pronoun preferences. Then, on pre-printed name tags, include their pronouns, as in, “Doug he/him” or “Morgan they/them.”
- In a small group, when going around the circle to have folks introduce themselves, ask them to provide their pronouns and model their use by sharing your own. As in, “Hi, I’m Sharon and I use she/her pronouns. Would you go next?”
- In large gatherings, where it would be unwieldy to have everyone introduce themselves individually, you might consider having nametags or pins²⁹ that folks can write on to share their own pronouns. Asking all participants to utilize them helps normalize their use for our trans members.
- In Zoom gatherings, ask participants to rename themselves³⁰ to include their pronouns. As in changing from “Polly Smith” to “Polly Smith (she/her).”

If your congregation has gendered small groups (like Men’s Bible Study, Women’s Tea, Episcopal Church Women, etc.), you may consider how you would communicate welcome and inclusivity to members who are trans (making it clear to a trans woman, for example, that she is invited to join Daughters of the King). Keep in mind that these gendered small groups may not feel inclusive at all to someone who is nonbinary – how might some of these small groups be renamed or de-gendered to be more inclusive?

CELEBRATIONS AND REMEMBRANCES

In the life of your congregation, you may have a tradition of special observances to mark holidays, anniversaries, and other special occasions³¹. These recurring dates may provide opportunities to raise awareness and/or celebrate your LGBTQ+ siblings beyond those liturgical moments intended for the individual (renaming service, marriage, etc.):

- **Feast of Aelred - January 12th**
Aelred, Abbot of Rievaulx, was a 12th century Cistercian monk most noted for the value he placed on friendship. He is often remembered for allowing his monks to hold hands and openly express their love for one another.

²⁹ A downloadable graphic for pronoun pins is included in Appendix A.

³⁰ *How to rename yourself when in a Zoom meeting* from Tufts University:

<https://tuftsedtech.screenstepslive.com/s/19028/m/94934/l/1382378-how-do-i-rename-myself-when-in-a-zoom-meeting>

³¹ [LGBTQIA+ Days of Awareness](#), College of DuPage, accessed 2023.

- **Feast of Perpetua and Felicity - March 7th**
Saints Perpetua and Felicity were North African women executed for their Christian faith in the third century. Some consider them the patron saints of same-sex couples and Perpetua is sometimes considered a transgender saint because of her vision about being transformed into a man.
- **International Transgender Day of Visibility - March 31st**
An annual holiday dedicated to celebrating transgender people and raising awareness of discrimination faced by trans people worldwide.
- **Pride Month - June**
Gay Pride or LGBTQ+ Pride is the positive stance against discrimination and violence toward LGBTQ+ people, promoting their self-affirmation, dignity, equality rights, and visibility. Ranging from solemn observances to festive celebrations, Pride events are commonly held in the month of June and may include parades and marches, rallies, commemorations, dance parties, festivals, and church services.
- **Anniversary of the Shooting at Pulse Nightclub - June 12**
Marking the date when a gunman opened fire at a gay nightclub in Orlando in 2016, taking the lives of 49 people and injuring dozens of others.
- **Anniversary of the Stonewall Riots - June 27**
The Stonewall Riots were a series of spontaneous, violent demonstrations by members of the gay community against a police raid that took place in the early morning hours of June 28, 1969 at the Stonewall Inn in Greenwich Village, NYC. This is considered to constitute the single most important event leading to the gay liberation movement and the modern fight for LGBTQ+ rights in the US.
- **Feast of Pauli Murray - July 1**
The Rev. Pauli Murray was the first African American perceived as a woman to be ordained in The Episcopal Church. In our modern understanding, many believe Pauli was nonbinary.
- **Feast of Sergius and Bacchus - October 7**
Saints Serguis and Baccus were third-century Roman soldiers, Christian martyrs, and men who modern scholars believe united in the rite of *adelphoposis*, a kind of early Christian same-sex marriage.
- **National Coming Out Day - October 17**
An internationally observed civil awareness day celebrating those who publicly identify as a gender or sexual minority. The date was chosen as its the anniversary of the 1987 National March on Washington for Lesbian and Gay Rights.
- **Transgender Day of Remembrance - November 20**
A day to memorialize those who have been killed as a result of transphobia, bringing attention to the continued violence endured by the trans community. It was founded in 1998 by Gwendolyn Ann Smith, a trans woman, to memorialize the murder of Rita Hester in Allston, MA.
- **World AIDS Day - December 1**
A day dedicated to raising awareness of the AIDS pandemic caused by the spread of HIV infection.

Government and health officials, NGOs, and individuals around the world observe the day, often with a focus on education about AIDS prevention and control.

AVOIDING GENDERED LANGUAGE

In The Episcopal Church, some of our favorite and most ingrained sayings have gendered connotations. You may consider switching some of these out in order to be more inclusive and affirming of your LGBTQ+ members and neighbors:

- Instead of, “Brothers and Sisters”
 - Brothers, Sisters, Siblings
 - Siblings
 - Y’all
 - Neighbors
 - Friends
 - Beloved
 - Folks
 - Colleagues
- In writing, avoid the anonymized “he/she” by swapping out for “they” as in, “The bishop holds responsibility for ordinations. ~~He/She~~ They lay hands on the ordinand during the service.” This practice is most common in writing policies and procedures.
- Instead of masculine language for God (“He”, “Father”)...
 - Incorporate alternative pronouns to your practice, “she” and “they”
 - Avoid pronoun usage, always referring to “God” as “God,” as in, “God loves all and brings all to Godself.”
 - Replace with balanced feminine or neutral theological terms, such as *Creator, Mother, Parent, Redeemer, Shepherd, Caregiver, Counselor*
- Avoid:
 - “Hey guys,” “you guys”

COMMUNICATIONS AND WELCOME

If your congregation has done the work to be a truly inclusive and affirming congregation, you may be considering how you can invite the LGBTQ+ community to consider joining your church.

You might consider adding these things to your website as a sign of safety and welcome:

- Rainbow Flag Icon 
- Trans Flag Icon 
- Welcome statement
- An explanation of beliefs around sexuality and gender

You may also consider identifying your congregation as affirming on common LGBTQ+ church-seeking sites like BelieveOutLoud.com and gaychurch.org.

CRAFT AN INCLUSIVE NONDISCRIMINATION POLICY

Shifting the culture of an organization or congregation takes some time. Crafting an LGBTQ-inclusive nondiscrimination policy can help clarify how your organization supports queer people and ensures there's a way to respond to those who are not supportive.

For example, Holy Comforter Episcopal Church in Atlanta, GA posted this policy on their website:

“Employment, membership, and participation in any church activity is open to all without regard to ethnicity, race, skin color, national origin, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, age, or disability.”

INVESTMENT AND PURCHASING PRACTICES

Where we spend our money matters. As a step toward inclusion and safety for your LGBTQ+ members and visitors, you may consider divesting parish funds from companies and organizations that advocate against LGBTQ+ rights in our state and at the federal level.

On a more local scale, when hiring contractors, caterers, materials for programs, etc., you may also consider whether that company has made public statements counter to our status of inclusivity and affirmation. Not only would the action of making a different choice make a moral stand against homophobia, but you are also eliminating the risk that an LGBTQ+ member or visitor might stop in and encounter an uncomfortable or even unsafe environment.

LEARN ABOUT POLICIES AFFECTING LGBTQ+ PEOPLE

What is the status of trans and LGBTQ+ policies in your local area? How does the local school system treat its trans students? It's important to learn more about the challenges that LGBTQ+ people in your area face and advocate for strong protections at all levels.

Here are ways you can step up to support your queer neighbors, friends, and siblings:

- **Call your elected officials.** Call your elected local, state, and federal officials to thank them when they do support transgender rights and to provide important criticism when they don't.
- **Work to pass laws in your city or state, and on the federal level, that outlaw discrimination in employment, housing, public accommodations, and education based on gender identity/expression/sexuality.** This could be as simple as calling your elected officials or showing up for a board meeting or as involved as a letter-writing campaign or collecting signatures for a ballot measure.
- **Change the curriculum of medical, health, crisis response and social work programs, or bring in trainers, to teach these providers about transgender people and how to treat transgender people with respect and professionalism.** Include information about the rejection, discrimination and violence that transgender people face and how to provide services and support to transgender clients.

- **Work with schools and school boards to make learning and school campuses safe for *all* students.**
- **Work with homeless shelters to make them safe for transgender people.**
- **Work with police departments to have fair written policies with regard to interacting with transgender members of the public,** regardless if they are seeking assistance or being arrested, and make sure all police officers are trained on following the policy and treating transgender people with respect.
- **Work with jail and prison systems to ensure the respectful and safe treatment of transgender prisoners,** starting with implementing the recommendations of Standing with LGBT Prisoners.
- **Take a step back.** LGBTQ+ people come from every population and are of all races, religions, ages, and more. There are gay and trans immigrants, employees, prisoners, sex workers, and every other category imaginable. Make an effort to be as inclusive as possible of all kinds of people when working to support LGBTQ+ communities.

OTHER: WHAT NEEDS EXIST IN YOUR LOCAL COMMUNITY?

As you begin to form relationship with LGBTQ+ members of your local community, you may begin to notice or begin to understand needs specific to your area. Some examples may include:

- **Space** - many of our church buildings stand empty for significant portions of the week. Is there a local community group or organization that would benefit from the use of donated space? For example, St. John's Episcopal Church in Grand Haven, MI houses a Youth Gay Straight Alliance (GSA) after they weren't allowed to organize at the local high school.
- **Financial Support** - Are there ways in which church funds or discretionary accounts can be used to support and empower our LGBTQ+ siblings to live into their life with Christ? Consider, for example, utilizing discretionary funds to assist a trans member with the exorbitant financial costs of transitioning legally, medically, and more.

THANK YOU!

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FOR QUESTIONS AND MORE

For questions about this guide, implementing some of these concepts and learnings into your congregation's culture and welcome, and more, please contact the LGBTQ+ ministries team for the Diocese of Southern Ohio:

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UPDATE LOG

2/10/2023 - *Guide* is published for the Dioceses of Eastern and Western Michigan.

3/20/2025 - *Guide* is updated for use in the Diocese of Southern Ohio.

APPENDIX A: RESOURCES

The following organizations and information hubs are excellent resources for next steps in self-learning and developing the congregation to be truly inclusive and affirming. Items with an asterisk (*) indicate that this resource helped provide information referenced in this guide.

SECULAR RESOURCES

- Your local Pride Center. Almost wherever you are, there is a local LGBTQ+ resource center/nonprofit with jurisdiction. [Click here for a list of LGBTQ+ Resource Centers](#) in Ohio.
- [Guide to Pride Flags](#)
- (PDF) [Common Missteps of Trans Allies](#)
- (PDF) [How to Be a Friend to Trans Folks Without Putting Your Foot in Your Mouth: A Short Guide for Cis People*](#)
- [LGBT Glossary from Folx Health*](#)
- [Supporting the Transgender People in Your Life: A Guide to Being a Good Ally](#) from the National Center for Transgender Equality*
- [National Center for Transgender Equality*](#)

RELIGIOUS RESOURCES

- [Episcopal Church Liturgical Resources](#) (includes marriage liturgies and renaming service)
- [Believe Out Loud](#) - an online community empowering Christians to work for LGBTQ+ equality. It is the leading platform in Christian faith and LGBTQ+ advocacy.
- [TransEpiscopal](#) - a group of transgender, nonbinary, and allied Episcopalians dedicated to fostering their full embrace in The Episcopal Church and to inspiring faith-based advocacy in the wider world.*
- [Center for LGBTQ and Gender Studies in Religion](#) - an organization providing programming and support for academic religious scholarship, faith communities and organizations working toward inclusion, and LGBTQ+ Christians.
- [The Pauli Murray Center for History and Social Justice](#) - a nonprofit located at Pauli Murray's historical home in Durham, North Carolina focused on connecting history to contemporary human rights issues.*

HIRING AND EMPLOYMENT RESOURCES

- [Model Transgender Employment Policy](#) - Trans Law Center*

- [Model Practices for Restroom Access for Transgender Employees](#) - OSHA*

DOWNLOADABLE GRAPHICS

Episcopal Church Pride Shield

- [Download from the TEC website](#)

“The Episcopal Church Welcomes You” Pronoun Pins Graphic

Credit: The Episcopal Diocese of the Great Lakes

- [Editable Adobe Illustrator Document](#)
- [PDF](#)

“God Made You Fabulous” Pride Graphic

Credit: The Episcopal Diocese of East Tennessee

- [Adobe Photoshop Document](#)
- [Adobe Photoshop Document with Organization](#)
- [Transparent PNG image](#)

Bathroom Signage

- [Sample Single Stall and Multi-Stall Signs](#)
- [Inclusive Bathroom Signage Recommendations](#) from the Washington Office of Financial Management

Website Graphics

- [Simple Pride Flag](#)
- [Simple Trans Pride Flag](#)
- [Simple Progress Flag](#) (Rainbow, Trans, and Anti-racism)

ITEMS AVAILABLE FOR PURCHASE

These links will take you to a few ethical retailers for pride flags. There are many other retailers available with many more sizing options on the internet, including Amazon.

- [Rainbow Flag](#)
- [Trans Flag](#)
- [Progress Flag](#)
- [Inclusive Bathroom Signs with Braille](#)
- [Inclusive Bathroom Signs with Braille and Spanish Options](#)

SCRIPTURE STUDY

- Sometimes things happen in the world that don’t make sense to human beings. - Job 2
- God changes the name of Sarai to Sarah - Genesis 17:1-7, 15-17

- Sometimes you say yes to God even when you have no idea what God is doing. - John 1:43-51
- Jesus shows his body to the disciples after the resurrection, scarred and transformed, yet still his own - John 20:24-29
- Joseph's coat - Genesis 37:2
- David and Jonathan - 1 Samuel (especially Chapter 20)
- Jacob/Israel - Genesis 32: 22-31
- Nothing can separate us from the love of God. - Romans 8:38
- God made us, knowing our whole parts. - Psalm 139:13-14
- All people are created by God, called by name. - Isaiah 43:1
- God welcomes all people, engages with those others have discriminated against. - Galatians 3:28, Acts 10:28, Matthew 9:11
- The Church is made of all people in the Spirit. - 1 Corinthians 12:12-13
- Love is a gift from God. - Galatians 5:22-23
- God made us to be in relationship with God and one another. - Genesis 2:18
- God creates community and families, uniting people together. - Matthew 19:5

STORYTELLING & MEDIA

- Whosoever. - an online news outlet for LGBTQ+ Christians and their allies
- My Name is Pauli Murray - a documentary available from Amazon Prime about The Episcopal Church's first Black female (nonbinary) priest and human rights leader
- Love Free or Die - a documentary about the first openly gay and partnered bishop in The Episcopal Church, the Rt. Rev. Gene Robinson.

RECOMMENDED READING

- *Transforming: The Bible & the Lives of Transgender Christians* by Austen Hartke*
- *Queer Theologies: The Basics* by Chris Greenough
- *Rainbow Theology: Bridging Race, Sexuality, and Spirit* by the Rev. Dr. Patrick S. Cheng
- Arentzen, Thomas, Et Al, Eds. *Orthodox Tradition and Human Sexuality* (New York: Fordham University, 2022).

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