

LGBTQIA+



DEEPENING OUR UNDERSTANDING

A RESOURCE IN TRANSGENDER IDENTITY



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As the complexities of our life continue to deepen and accelerate, learning to be faithful in the small things is ever so important. The Bible provides a framework for being faithful in the small things and requires us to be responsible readers of our context and the context in which the Bible was written, so that we can faithfully live out our Christian witness.

The concept of becoming is historical throughout both philosophy and religion. Becoming can inform us on how to shape and shift our realities, our contexts, and our theologies and ethics. Becoming is a central part of the Hebrew Scriptures and continues on into the New Testament with the becoming nature of community, relationships, hospitality and more. Given that this resource focuses on the intersection of transgender and God, we hope that we forward a notion that as God is becoming, so we, too, as humans are becoming. This nature of becoming is rooted in the Christian tradition. It is sometimes referred to as “being on the way” or a “theology on the way.” Augustine, Margery Kempe and so many others have shared their becoming with us. Likewise, the stories that we have collected over time that have not only informed our tradition but also our practices require us, now, to invest in a theology of becoming, since gender, sex and sexuality continue to evolve.

The face of the Deep is the place of becoming, the place of emergence. Transgender is the place of becoming and the place of emergence. In Hebrew, there is a word that appears in Genesis: Tehom. This word is loosely translated as “the deep” or “the unknown place.” For transgender people, much of their gender is emerging in contrast to the imposed gender and sex that was assigned at birth. When God hovers over the Face of the Deep, the Tehom, God is calling Creation into becoming. In many respects, God is calling each of us to step into our fullest potential and our fullest self. God is calling us all to become. For some of us, our becoming translates into embracing our gendered self in ways that shape and shift our present makeup.

In this resource we have provided some insight into common questions and conversations that have been shared in connection to trans identity. The purpose of this resource is to help the larger church community have more knowledge

and understanding as we all seek to build the loving and inclusive kin-dom of God.

1 But I thought that God doesn't make mistakes.

A lot of people might think that God makes mistakes when people come out as trans, but what we need to know is that God does not make mistakes and gender is socially constructed. We need not question the sovereignty of God when someone identifies as transgender; what we need to consider is how we can support the least of these and how to engender community amid the violence against the underside of history. *1 Timothy 4*

2 Aren't there only two genders?


The two-gender system was created as a way to categorize humans. It is socially constructed and not biologically informed. We have used the two-gender system as a binary system that informs decision making, theological doctrines and dogma and our practices. The binary system is manufactured to mimic sameness and therefore destroy and deny difference. *Matthew 19*

3 Does Scripture support Transgender identity?

Transgender identity is not a new thing, but we also don't see this language in the Bible or throughout Scripture. What we do see are examples of gender bending and early histories of transgender roles and identities. Every culture has a third gender, but the dominant system does not often recognize them. The same thing is true in Scripture. People have made choices about what to make mention of and what to point out. Most of the translation of the Christian Scriptures is informed by a cisgender white heterosexual interpretation and this interpretation gets read into what we have in the Bible today. *Matthew 19 and Psalm 139*

4 How can someone who is trans still be created in the image of God?

If God doesn't make any mistakes, then all creatures are created in the image of God. Like Meister Eckhart said, “Every creature is a word of God.” In the same way, every



person who disidentifies with their assigned sex at birth is still created in the image of God. *Matthew 19 and Psalm 139:13–14*

5 What if my politics do not support inclusion but I have trans people in my family?

If we find that our politics do not support the least of these, the underside of history, which trans people are, then we might need to analyze our politics. All theology is ethics, and every ethical action organizes bodies, which are our politics. So, we need to look more deeply into our theologies to help support our ethics and our politics, because theology should be harm reduction and grounded in love. *Galatians 3:38*

6 Does God have a gender?

We can't assign a human construct to a divine being. Gender is tied to our human existence. God is tied to an otherworldly existence. While God is in all things, and we are made in the image of God, God cannot be contained to a human-designed construction. *Deuteronomy 4:15–20*

7 How does transitioning influence relationships with God/faith?

Any change impacts our relationship with God and with our expression of faith. Transitioning genders or identifying as transgender is not only an internal change but with the addition of hormone replacement therapies, there are external changes, too. These changes almost certainly create shifts and changes with our perceived notion of God and how we express our faith. Yet, we know that God is timeless and does not change. While we change, God remains present in our struggle and shapes and shifts the world around us. While we might shift our faith or deconstruct parts of ourselves in relationship to God, we can know that the process of change is part of what it means to be a person of faith. *James 1:17*

8 Do I need to recommit my life/get rebaptized?

Baptism is an indispensable part of Christian life, Christian identity and the church's mission. As people of reformed faith, we believe that your life and identity is sealed and confirmed in the life of faith once baptized. However, as being transgender is a place of living into one's truth, it is

often common that some will decide to reaffirm their baptism as their name is changed and/or true identity is lived out. *Romans 6:3–4; Galatians 3:2–28; Matthew 28:19*

9 What do/can I do if my church/congregation is non-affirming?

Having courageous conversations both in leadership and within the congregation is a necessary step to creating an affirming environment. The Office of Gender & Racial Justice offers workshops as well as resources on how to navigate language and education in growing into inclusivity. Furthermore, organizations such as More Light Presbyterians and the Covenant Network of Presbyterians offer additional support. The more we can create space for our gender-expansive congregants, the more apt we are able to heal the world around us. *Acts 8:27*

10 Does a trans person have to disclose their identity?

Disclosure can sometimes be a safety issue for people who are transitioning. Some feel it is important to disclose, but others, due to safety concerns, choose not to disclose until they feel comfortable disclosing. *Isaiah 55:8–9*

11 How do I address misinformation shared in my church/congregation?

A lot of times our communities have incorrect information about a group of people. We make judgments based on that information and many times, people are harmed. When there are times of misunderstanding and misinformation, it is important to correct that within community. *Mark 11*

12 Does our denomination support the trans community?

In 2018, the General Assembly affirmed the full celebration and inclusion of all gender identities and gender expressions in the life and ministry of our church. All are welcome to worship, serve and be free to be fully themselves.