Transforming Church

How to include all genders in our churches: FAQ about gender identity
This information booklet is designed to introduce people to transgender issues and help them understand the various terms involved. This is by no means an exhaustive list of terms and do feel free to ask one of the group leaders any questions. Please be aware that not all questions may be answered but this is a safe space to ask and learn.

**Glossary**

**Sex**

The classification of a person as male or female. At birth, infants are assigned a sex, usually based on the appearance of their external anatomy. (This is what is written on the birth certificate.) A person's sex, however, is actually a combination of bodily characteristics including chromosomes, hormones, internal and external reproductive organs, and secondary sex characteristics. Some people don’t fit into the sex binary and these people are intersex; they display physical characteristics of both sexes. For example, someone may have testes but also an excess of oestrogen and would be classed as intersex.

**Gender Identity**

A person's internal, deeply held sense of their gender. For transgender people, their own internal gender identity does not match the sex they were assigned at birth. Most people have a gender identity which matches their gender assigned at birth who are called ‘cisgender’. For some people, their gender identity does not fit neatly into one of those two choices and can be ‘genderqueer’ or ‘non-binary’
(see FAQs below). Unlike gender expression (see below) gender identity is not visible to others.

**Gender Expression**
External manifestations of gender, expressed through a person's name, pronouns, clothing, haircut, behaviour, voice, and/or body characteristics. Society identifies these cues as masculine and feminine, although what is considered masculine or feminine changes over time and varies by culture. Typically, transgender people seek to align their gender expression with their gender identity, rather than the sex they were assigned at birth.

**Sexual Orientation**
Describes a person's enduring physical, romantic, and/or emotional attraction to another person. Gender identity and sexual orientation are not the same. Transgender people may be straight, lesbian, gay, bisexual, or queer. For example, a person who transitions from male to female and is attracted solely to men would typically identify as a straight woman. A person’s sexual orientation is separate from their gender identity but may change if their gender identity changes.
FAQs

What does the word “transgender” mean?
Transgender – or trans – is an umbrella term for people whose gender identity or expression is different from those typically associated with the sex assigned to them at birth (e.g., the sex listed on their birth certificate).

Conversely, cisgender – or cis – is the term used to describe people whose gender identity or expression aligns with those typically associated with the sex assigned to them at birth.

Can I still call people “transsexual”?
Generally speaking, this term is outdated and rarely used except with some members of the community. It is sometimes preferred by people who have permanently changed their gender through medical interventions. Unlike transgender, transsexual is not an umbrella term. Many transgender people do not identify as transsexual and prefer the word transgender. It is best to ask which term a person prefers. If preferred, use as an adjective (e.g. transsexual woman or transsexual man).

Where did the ‘Q+’ come from in LGBTQ+?
LGBT stands for Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender. There is now an awareness that more people belong in the community than just lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people; the Q+ is short for ‘queer or questioning’ and is part of the reclamation of the word queer.
What’s the difference between sex and gender?
Sex refers to the designation of a person at birth as either "male" or "female" based on their anatomy (e.g. reproductive organs) and/or their biology (e.g. hormones). As stated above, sex is not binary and around 2% of the global population fall outside of the strict male/female binary system.

Gender refers to the traditional or stereotypical roles, behaviours, activities and attributes that a given society consider appropriate for men and women. Gender is a social construct as decreed by the World Health Organisation.

What does it mean to transition?
Transitioning is the process some transgender people go through to begin living as the gender with which they identify, rather than the sex assigned to them at birth. Transition can include some or all of the following personal, medical, and legal steps: telling one's family, friends, and co-workers; using a different name and new pronouns; dressing differently; changing one's name and/or sex on legal documents; hormone therapy; and possibly (though not always) one or more types of surgery. The exact steps involved in transition vary from person to person. Avoid the phrase "sex change".

What do the initials FTM and MTF stand for?
FTM stands for female-to-male and refers to someone who was designated female at birth but identifies and expresses himself as a man. Many FTM transgender people prefer the term "trans man" to describe themselves.
MTF stands for male-to-female and refers to someone who was designated male at birth but who identifies and expresses herself as a woman. Many MTF transgender people prefer the term "trans woman" to describe themselves.

**What does it mean to be “genderqueer”?**
An umbrella term for gender identities other than man and woman. People who identify as “genderqueer” may see themselves as being both male and female, neither male nor female or as falling completely outside these categories. Use this term only when an individual self-identifies as “genderqueer.”

**What is gender non-conforming?**
A broad term referring to people who do not behave in a way that conforms to the traditional expectations of their gender, or whose gender expression does not fit neatly into a category.

**What’s the difference between being transgender and being gay?**
Being transgender is about an individual’s gender identity, while being gay is about an individual’s sexual orientation, which is our attraction to people of the same gender, different genders or both. Gender identity and sexual orientation are two separate things.
Is there a difference between cross-dressing and being transgender?
Yes, cross-dressing refers to people who wear clothing and/or makeup and accessories that are not traditionally associated with their biological sex.

Many people who cross-dress are comfortable with their assigned sex and generally do not wish to change it. Cross-dressing is a form of gender expression that is not necessarily indicative of a person’s gender identity or sexual orientation.

Transgender women are not cross-dressers or drag queens. Drag queens are men, typically gay men, who dress like women for the purpose of entertainment. Be aware of the differences between transgender women, cross-dressers, and drag queens. Use the term preferred by the person. Do not use the word "transvestite" at all, unless someone specifically self-identifies that way.

Is being transgender a mental disorder?
No, but this remains a common stereotype about transgender people.

Transgender identity is not a mental illness that can be cured with treatment. Rather, transgender people often experience a persistent and authentic disconnect between the sex assigned to them at birth and their internal sense of who they are. This disconnect is referred to by medical professionals as “gender dysphoria” because it can cause undue pain and distress in the lives of transgender people.
In December 2012, the American Psychiatric Association announced the latest version of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-V) would no longer include the term “gender identity disorder.” The revised manual replaced “gender identity disorder” with the more neutral term “gender dysphoria.”

What is gender dysphoria?
According the NHS website, gender dysphoria is a ‘condition where a person experiences discomfort or distress because there's a mismatch between their biological sex and gender identity’. While biological sex and gender identity are the same for most people, this is not the case for everyone. For example, some people may have the anatomy of a man, but identify themselves as a woman, while others may not feel they're definitively either male or female.

This mismatch between sex and gender identity can lead to distressing and uncomfortable feelings that are called gender dysphoria. Gender dysphoria is a recognised medical condition, for which treatment is sometimes appropriate. It's not a mental illness.

Do all people who transition have surgery?
No, many transgender people can successfully transition without surgery. Some have no desire to pursue surgeries or medical intervention.

At the same time, many transgender people cannot afford medical treatment nor can they access it.
In light of these injustices, it’s important that civil rights and protections are extended to all transgender people equally, regardless of their medical histories. It’s also critical to continue advocating for full access to health care coverage for transgender people.

**How do I know which pronouns to use?**
Transgender people should be identified with their preferred pronoun. Often this is the pronoun that corresponds to the gender with which they identify. Not sure? It’s appropriate to respectfully ask their name and which pronouns they’d prefer. Some transgender people do not believe in a gender binary and prefer not to use pronouns typically associated with men (e.g. him) and women (e.g. her). Instead, they would prefer if people simply used their names or used a non-gendered pronoun such as “hir” or “they.”

**Pronouns**
Many people have heard about the debate on pronouns and whether singular they can be used, but did you know that singular they is older than singular you? The Oxford English Dictionary traces singular they to 1375 in the medieval romance *William and the Werewolf*, where singular they is used to refer to an unnamed person. However, singular you was not in use until the 17th century when it replaced thou, thee and thy!
Using singular they can seem difficult, but we use it in everyday situations. For example, ‘someone has left their wallet here’. It is the most popular pronoun used by genderqueer or gender non-confirming people.

Examples:
Nominative: They (They went to the store.)
Accusative: Them (I met them today.)
Pronominal possessive: Their (If they do not get a haircut, their hair grows long.)
Predicative possessive: Theirs (If I need a phone my friend will let me borrow theirs.)
Reflexive: Themselves (or themself- less common) (They have to drive themself to school. OR They have to drive themselves to school.)

Neo-pronouns
Not only is there a singular they, but there are some ‘neo-pronouns’ being created by people who would prefer to use pronouns outside of the binary of he and she.

Xe
There are several similar sets of neopronouns that use xe, ze, zhe, zie or some other variation. Regardless of spelling, they are pronounced zee. It was based on the German neuter pronoun sie. The earliest documented version was created in 1972.
Examples:

Nominative: Xe (Xe went to the store.)
Accusative: Xir (I met xir today.)
Pronominal possessive: Xir (If xe does not get a haircut, xir hair grows long.)
Predicative possessive: Xirs (If I need a phone my friend will let me borrow xirs.)
Reflexive: Xirself (Xe has to drive xirself to school.)

Transgender Icons

Thomas Beatie: in 2007 he became the first man to become pregnant through artificial insemination after he discovered his wife’s infertility.

Chas Bono: writer, musician and LGBTQ advocate who happens to be the son of Sonny and Cher

Wendy Carlos: musician most famous for her soundtracks for A Clockwork Orange, The Shining and for Disney’s Tron. She was one of the first musicians to experiment with synthesisers, famously recording all of Bach’s Brandenburg Concertos on Moog Synthesisers!

Laverne Cox: the first transgender actress to be nominated for a Prime-Time Emmy Award for her role in the Netflix show Orange is the New Black
**Caitlyn Jenner**: formerly an Olympic athlete, she reached fame through the show *Keeping Up With the Kardashians*. In 2014 she announced she was transgender and started her transition.

**Marsha P. Johnson**: activist, self-identified drag queen and performer. She was instrumental in the Stonewall uprising of 1969.

**Andreas Krieger**: a transgender athlete; he was systematically and unknowingly doped with anabolic steroids for years by east German officials. Later on he went through gender reassignment surgery. He has always expressed regret about not being able to transition without the doping issues.

**Lana Wachowski**: one half of the duo formerly known as the Wachowski brothers; Lana created the *Matrix* franchise with her now sister Lilly. It is said that the film is a metaphor for the transfeminine experience of transitioning.
Further Reading

Books

- The Inclusive Church Guide to Gender
- *Transfaith: A Transgender Pastoral Resource* by Chris Dowd, Christina Beardsley & Justin Tanis
- *This is my Body: Hearing the Theology of Transgender Christians* by Christina Beardsley & Michelle O’Brien
- Radical Love: An introduction to queer theology by Patrick S. Cheng
- *This Book is Gay* by Juno Dawson – an excellent introduction to the LGBTQ+ community for people of any age
- What’s Your Pronoun? by Dennis Baron – an interesting discussion on the history of pronouns in English and the search for a new gender-neutral pronoun

Websites

- hrc.org/resources/transgender-faq – a good place to start
- Glaad.org (previously known as Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation)
- Genderedintelligence.co.uk
- Sibyls.gndr.org.uk – a group of older transgender Christians; they also have a Facebook page
- transgenderchristianhuman.com – a website run by Alex Clare-Young who is a transgender pastor; his work is very interesting and thoughtful. There is also a link to his blog on the site.
- MarshaP.org – The Marsha P. Johnson Institute
- Stonewall.org.uk
- Inclusive-church.org
YouTube is a valuable resource for learning about transgender people but be careful about who you watch. Below is a recommended list of people to learn from:

**Jammidodger** – transgender man who has completed his transition but his channel includes information about his transition and life during that change. He also makes topical and funny videos about life as a transgender man.

**TheRealAlexBertie** – also a transgender man but he documented each step of his medical transition as he was going through it; it is important to see the emotional impact the waiting times had on him.

**Fox and Owl** – a couple who work to educate people on transgender issues. Fox Fisher is transmasculine person but uses they/them pronouns; Owl (Uгла Stefania) is a transfeminine person and also uses they/them pronouns who is a columnist for the Metro newspaper. They were both seen recently debating with Piers Morgan.

**Sources:**
Human Rights Campaign website; GLAAD (previously known as Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation) website; This Book is Gay by Juno Dawson; marshap.org; nhs.org.uk; and own knowledge. Created by Benjamin A. Southwick, March 2020