

# CELEBRATING



# GENDER



# DIVERSITY



A **TOOLKIT** ON  
GENDER IDENTITY AND  
TRANS EXPERIENCES  
FOR COMMUNITIES  
OF FAITH

JUNE 2019



The United Church of Canada/L'Église Unie du Canada

### What's New in This Edition?

Updated language and definitions (throughout)  
The Bigger Picture, Church Policy, and the Law (pp. 6–7)  
A Trans Inclusive Theology: Gender Is *Tohu Vabohu* (pp. 16–17)  
Call Me by MY Name: A Global Perspective (pp. 29–30)  
Making Your Ministry Two-Spirit Inclusive (pp. 31–33)  
Updated Resource Chart (pp. 74–85)

Celebrating Gender Diversity  
A Toolkit on Gender Identity and Trans Experiences for Communities of Faith  
(June 2019)



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The Canadian Trans Flag, designed by Michelle Lindsay, a Canadian, was first raised for the 2010 Transgender Day of Remembrance in Ottawa. Image: [transflag.com](http://transflag.com)

The Progress Pride Flag, designed by Daniel Quasar, is a Pride flag with stripes added stripes to acknowledge the push for full inclusion of transgender people (white, pink, and light blue stripes) and people of color (brown and black stripes). Image: Quasar Digital (CC BY-NC-SA 4.0)

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Be sure to visit [www.united-church.ca](http://www.united-church.ca) for the most up-to-date version of this kit.

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## Welcome to The United Church of Canada's Toolkit on Gender Identity and Trans Experiences

As The United Church of Canada seeks to fully celebrate God's diversity, understanding gender identity plays an integral role. Trans people are offering valuable ministry within the church, both as lay people and as clergy. United Church communities of faith are sponsoring trans refugees for resettlement. This resource has been created to help individual members and communities of faith to deepen their understanding of gender identity, help them create welcoming and affirming communities, and integrate trans people's gifts and capacities for ministry into the life of the church, including liturgy and expressions of worship.

As you learn more about trans people and gender identity, you may find yourself rethinking our cultural approach to gender—a benefit to all, because trans people are not the only ones hurt by the ways society polices gender. Our ideas of what “normal” is limits our ability to celebrate the fullness of God's diversity. Learning new language and ways of building community can have an incredible impact on the safety and spiritual wellbeing of trans people.

Language has power and is constantly changing. The terms used in this resource and listed in the glossary are designed to empower you with language to help you deepen your understanding of gender and sexuality. For the most part, terms are based in Western understandings of gender and sexuality—they do not speak to all people's cultural experiences. Remember not to apply labels to individuals. Understand that identities are fluid and contextual, and that just because someone shares part of their identity with you doesn't mean they're comfortable with you sharing it with others.

We hope that this resource will support all ministries of the church—whether you are part of a local worship or social justice committee, an Affirming Ministry, an outdoor ministry (camp), or simply an individual seeking resources to support your own personal advocacy and relationships with trans people.

The introductory section of *Celebrating Gender Diversity* explores why this work is important and helps increase your awareness of gender identity and trans experiences. The guides provide concrete ways to get engaged and how to develop trans-inclusive ministries and events, including a gender-inclusive washroom policy and trans-inclusive registration forms. The workshops help equip your community to hold courageous conversations. Additionally, a variety of other activities and questions are included for small group discussions.

The handouts will further support your learning and engagement. It may be useful to photocopy and distribute them in your community. Several handouts—“Celebrating Trans and Two-Spirit People in Communities of Faith” and “Radical Welcome and Gender Identity”—are also available separately for this purpose. Additional sections of this resource are available as downloads at [www.united-church.ca/community-faith/being-community/gender-sexuality-and-orientation](http://www.united-church.ca/community-faith/being-community/gender-sexuality-and-orientation).

As you move from section to section in this resource, you will build understanding and find support for engaging with gender identity and trans experiences.

*When you start learning about gender identity, it may feel overwhelming. It's okay to start with just one idea. Acknowledge that you will make mistakes, but that you will learn from them. Some changes may happen quickly; others may require opportunities to practise new behaviours or involve a process of planning, acting, and reflecting. Take it one step at a time.*

*Warm blessings on your journey!*



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## Introduction to Gender Identity and Trans Experiences

### THE BIG PICTURE, CHURCH POLICY, AND THE LAW

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There are many reasons why it is important to be welcoming and affirming of trans, non-binary, and Two-Spirit people everywhere we go, and to create safe and equitable spaces for them not only in our faith communities, but also in our workplaces, our wider communities, and our homes.

#### The Big Picture

United Church policy and the law of Canada are good reasons for respecting the rights of trans, non-binary, and Two-Spirit people. However, as people of faith our foundational reason for creating safe and welcoming places need to be rooted in our faith and in our commitment to justice and human dignity. Church policy and the law of the land—while important—should not be what motivates us.

We believe that all human beings are made in the image of God, that Jesus calls us away from the center in order to be in solidarity with those on the margins, and that Jesus' ministry was to reconcile and heal. We are committed to social justice and human rights, working to ensure that all people—regardless of their gender identity—enjoy their full civil and human rights in society. We also strive to end all forms of discrimination and to support the victims of discrimination.

**To deepen your faith and theological understanding of gender identity, explore “Faith and Gender Identity in The United Church of Canada” on p. 13 and “A Trans Inclusive Theology” on p. 16. More resources are listed in the Trans and Gender Identity Resources chart beginning on p. 74.**

#### It's United Church Policy

In 2009, The United Church of Canada affirmed the participation and ministry of trans people and encouraged all congregations to welcome trans people into membership, ministry, and full participation. In 2012, the church acknowledged the difference between gender identity and sexual orientation, affirmed that gender identity is not a barrier to membership and ministry, and requested that all existing policy statements that refer only to 'sexual orientation' be updated by adding 'and gender identities.'

Today the church continues to learn to live into these policies in numerous ways, including

- Endorsing Affirm United's Affirming Ministries Program and encouraging all communities of faith to participate. To learn more about this program of Affirm United/S'affirmer Ensemble, see <http://affirmunited.ause.ca/affirming-ministries>.
- Offering extended health benefits for trans people: The health care spending account for transgender members and eligible dependants of the United Church's group benefits plan is a first of its kind both for the church and for benefits administrator Green Shield. For more information, see "Benefits for Active Members" at [www.united-church.ca/handbooks](http://www.united-church.ca/handbooks).
- Providing the Support and Advocacy Fund: Established after the church's 1988 decision about "Membership, Ministry, and Human Sexuality" (search "membership ministry human sexuality" at <https://commons.united-church.ca>), the fund provides "support and advocacy through financial assistance for gay, lesbian, bi-sexual, trans, queer, and Two-Spirit active ministry personnel who are experiencing difficulties in maintaining employment in the church because of their known or perceived sexual orientation or identity." Funds provide salary continuance for up to six months while in search of a call or appointment. Applicants may apply once every three years. If you have questions related to this fund, contact your Regional Council's Pastoral Relations Minister.

## **It's the Law**

All United Church ministries need to comply with federal and provincial laws. The Canadian Human Rights Commission states that “Every person in Canada—regardless of whom they love, or how they identify or express their gender— has the right to live free without fear of discrimination, violence or exclusion, and to be fully included and embraced in all facets of Canadian society.”<sup>1</sup>

“Bill C-16: An Act to amend the Canadian Human Rights Act and the Criminal Code”<sup>2</sup> officially became law on June 19, 2017. It added gender identity and expression to the hate crimes provisions of the Criminal Code and as a prohibited ground for discrimination in the Canadian Human Rights Act. This law makes it clear that it is never okay to discriminate against someone or target them for violence because of how they identify or express their gender.

Adding gender identity and expression to the Canadian Human Rights Act means that trans people have the same human rights as everyone else. It means trans people in Canada—like all other Canadians—are entitled to a life of equality, dignity, and respect, and a life free from discrimination.

The federal government and every province and territory in Canada have enacted human rights acts that prohibit discrimination and harassment on the grounds of gender identity (most also include gender expression). These laws are enforced by human rights commissions and tribunals, and ensure that people, businesses, schools, churches, and governments are held accountable if a trans person's rights are not respected.

Learn more from the Canadian Human Rights Commission about what discrimination looks like at [www.chrc-ccdp.gc.ca/eng/content/what-discrimination](http://www.chrc-ccdp.gc.ca/eng/content/what-discrimination).

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1 The Canadian Human Rights Commission, “Key Issues: LGBTQ2I+ Rights,” from [www.chrc-ccdp.gc.ca/eng/content/lgbtq2i-rights](http://www.chrc-ccdp.gc.ca/eng/content/lgbtq2i-rights).

2 The full text of Bill C-16 is available at [www.parl.ca/DocumentViewer/en/42-1/bill/C-16/royal-assent](http://www.parl.ca/DocumentViewer/en/42-1/bill/C-16/royal-assent).

## SOME KEY TERMS AND CONCEPTS

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To become welcoming of trans and Two-Spirit people, we need to be aware of some key terms and concepts. In the handouts section of this kit, the Glossary of Key Terms and Concepts (pp. 69–73) provides definitions for a wide range of helpful terms. In addition, there is a Gender Identity Workshop designed to help community leaders introduce the topic of gender identity (see p. 59). But to start, let's define gender.

Most of us have an understanding of gender, gender roles, and gender identity. Our understanding has been shaped by the environments in which we grew up. Family, friends, church, school, society, books, entertainment, and the media have all influenced how we think of gender. To begin, there are a few things we need to know in order to create genuine welcome for trans and Two-Spirit people.

### 1. Know the Difference between Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

We need to clearly understand that sexual orientation and gender identity are two completely separate things.

**Sexual orientation is about who you want to climb into bed with.  
Gender identity is about who you want to climb into bed as.**

**Sexual orientation** refers to a person's emotional, spiritual, intellectual, and sexual attraction

- a person whose primary attraction is to a gender other than their own is called straight/heterosexual
- a person whose primary attraction is to a person of the same gender is called lesbian/gay/homosexual
- a person of any gender who is attracted to a person of any gender is called pansexual
- a person of any gender who is attracted to either a male or female is called bisexual
- a person who does not experience sexual attraction or desire is asexual; they may or may not experience spiritual and emotional attraction to others

**Gender** is a social construct that varies from culture to culture. The World Health Organization defines gender as referring to the socially constructed roles, behaviours, activities, and attributes that a given society considers appropriate for men and women. It includes certain roles as well as appearance. Society assigns a specific set of **gender roles**—activities, expectations, and behaviours—to females and males. Most cultures recognize two basic gender roles: masculine roles for men, and feminine roles for women. But these roles vary from culture to culture. Also, there are cultures that recognize more than two genders. **Two-Spirit<sup>3</sup>** is a term used by some Indigenous people whose Spirit contains both male and female attributes. See “Understand What Two-Spirit Means” (number 3 on p. 10) and “Making Your Ministry Two-Spirit Inclusive” (p. 31).

A good place to start learning about gender is to take a few moments to reflect on your own experiences:

**See pp. 57–58 for a small group activity on gender roles and oppression.**

- When did you first become aware of your gender?
- As you grew, did you find that all men—or all women—were just like you? Were all the boys “masculine” in the same way? Were all the girls “feminine” in the same way?

<sup>3</sup> “Two-Spirit” is a term that should only be used by Indigenous people for self-identification. The term was included in this resource to respect Indigenous people that may wish to claim a gender identity outside of norms defined through colonialism (see full definition on p. 72).



- How did you learn about gender roles and expectations?
- What happened when you couldn't—or didn't want to—live up to those roles and expectations?
- Where does gender show up in your everyday life today?

**Gender identity** is a self-determined identity that reflects an individual's personal understanding of gender in regards to their own embodied experience. We express our gender identity externally through behaviours, clothing, hairstyle, voice, and other forms of presentation. We also assume the gender of others based on their **gender expression** (i.e., their behaviours, clothing, hairstyle, voice, and other forms of presentation).

People whose gender identity lines up with the gender they were assigned at birth are called **cisgender**. To understand gender identity, we need to let go of the belief that a person's gender is determined by sex traits—or, more specifically, chromosomes, genitalia, and reproductive organs.

Most of us have been taught there are two and only two genders. That concept is known as the **gender binary**. The gender binary tells us that there is only one “right,” “normal,” or “healthy” way for gender to be understood, identified, and expressed—that is, as either male or female, masculine or feminine. The gender binary tells us that there are no grey areas, no middle ground, no continuum. If you've gone through the process to become an Affirming Ministry (see <http://affirmunited.ause.ca/affirming-ministries-program>), you've learned that human sexuality is experienced on a continuum. In the same way, gender occurs across a continuum of possibilities, rather than just two distinct boxes—man or woman.

But even recognizing a continuum is not expressive enough. There simply are not enough “labels” to identify each point along the continuum. But there are enough people! Every one of us—cisgender and transgender alike—expresses and identifies with our gender in different ways.

## 2. Understand What Transgender Means

The terms **transgender** and **transsexual** are often used interchangeably, but the two terms actually have different meanings (see definitions, pp. 69–73). Transgender, or trans, is an umbrella term whose meaning remains in flux. The term “trans” is broadly used to include a community of people (transgender, transsexual, genderqueer, pangender, bigender, non-binary, etc.), and also includes those who may

- have a gender identity different from their biological or assigned sex
- express their gender in ways that differ from societal expectations
- transition from one gender to the other (permanently or intermittently), such as male-to-female (MTF) or female-to-male (FTM)
- identify their sexual orientation as heterosexual, homosexual, bisexual, pansexual, or asexual

A survey conducted in 2015–2016<sup>4</sup> found that 27 percent of youth ages 12 to 17 in California (about 796,000 youth) identify as non-binary—resisting dominant expectations around gender expression and identity. Today more and more people—both trans and cisgender—are defying society's gender norms (see definition of **non-binary** on p. 71).

Being trans is not a mental illness, sexual deviance, or disorder. Many obstacles lead to distress for trans people—including finding the social supports needed to express their gender identity. Other obstacles include finding affordable resources such as counseling, hormone therapy, and medical procedures. As a

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4 Bianca D.M. Wilson, Soon Kyu Choi, Jody Herman, Tara Becker, and Kerith Conron, “Characteristics and Mental Health of Gender Nonconforming Adolescents in California,” from <http://healthpolicy.ucla.edu/publications/search/pp/detail.aspx?PubID=1706>.

result, trans people may struggle with depression and anxiety at rates higher than cisgender people (see “Barriers in Church and Society” on p. 18).

It is important to note that not everyone is comfortable adopting the terms trans, transgender, or transsexual. Trans men (FTM—female-to-male) and trans women (MTF—male-to-female) may decide to undergo a transitioning process that can include gender confirmation surgery (or gender/sexual reassignment surgery) and/or hormone replacement therapy (HRT). A person who is transitioning is not “becoming” or “changing into” a man or a woman – they are starting to live openly as their true gender. It is important to note that not all trans people who transition feel the labels FTM or MTF reflect their experience with gender.

Being trans is not the same as being a cross-dresser. A cross-dresser is a person who, on occasion, wears the clothing considered typical for another gender, but does not necessarily desire to change their gender.

### **3. Understand What Two-Spirit Means**

Two-Spirit is term used by some Indigenous people whose spirits contain both male and female attributes. Being Two-Spirit is not about sexuality or even gender presentation, but is about a person's spirit.

There is no one definition of Two-Spirit, allowing each Indigenous person to define it for themselves. Each experiences and expresses it personally within their own context (including nation, language, and culture). “Two-Spirit” should only be used by Indigenous people for self-identification; it could be considered cultural appropriation to apply it outside of a First Nations context.

Though the term “Two-Spirit” came into being in 1990, Two-Spirit people have existed through history in almost every nation and tribe across Turtle Island (North America). Each nation has different understandings of gender. For example, the *Anishinaabemowin* language (Ojibwe) has no gendered pronouns and Cree teachings recognize six genders.

The roles Two-Spirit people perform include mediators, social workers, name-givers, matchmakers, holy people, puberty ceremony facilitators, peacemakers, doctors/medicine people, and leaders of ceremonies.

### **4. Know the Importance of Names and Pronouns**

It is common courtesy, as a sign of respect and acknowledgment, to call someone by their **name**. A person's name is what they choose to call themselves. With trans people that can often be different from their birth name.

Just as we would respect a person's choice who wishes to use their middle rather than first name, we need to use the name a trans person has chosen to be identified as.

What we shouldn't do is call someone by their birth name if they have chosen to change it. That can cause harm—making public their private information and **misgendering** them in the process. It is not about political correctness. It's about being polite and showing respect for an individual human being and child of God.

Since **pronouns**—“she” or “he,” or gender-neutral options such as “they”—are understood to communicate an individual's gender, they play an important role in gender identity (see “Facts about Pronouns,” p. 67). When assumptions are made about which pronoun should be used to refer to another person, there is the potential that the wrong pronoun will be used. This is referred to as **misgendering**, because it does not correctly reflect the gender with which a person identifies. Pronouns are particularly important for non-binary (those who don't conform to society's expectations of gender expression or gender identity) and/or trans individuals, because the use of the correct pronoun is a way of affirming the individual's gender identity.

Further terms relating to this topic can be found in the glossary on pp. 69–73. As you can see, gender is a concept that influences culture and institutions. Gender also plays a role in an individual's relationships with themselves and others. We hope that this introduction gives you some tools to engage in conversations about gender.

## 5. Listen to the Stories

Stories are all around us. They are what move us, make us feel alive, and inspire us. Cultures around the world have used stories to share their history or cultural events with the next generation. Jesus used stories to teach and challenge his listeners. Today Sunday School teachers and clergy alike continue to use biblical and other stories to instruct and to change their listeners. Stories can entertain, heal, and motivate, helping to form communities by creating a sense of unity among the listeners.

See p. 55 for a small group process with questions called “Listening to the Stories.”

The personal story helps us to understand others who have different experiences than we do. Watch a video, read a book, listen to an audio story, and invite a trans or Two-Spirit person to speak; hear the personal stories of trans people in church and society. Some stories you may wish to explore are

- **Ruth's Story** (<http://youtu.be/FD4XITKjtL4>)  
Rev. Ruth Wood, a retired former minister in Kingston, Ont. speaks about her journey as a trans person and her theological reflection on acceptance and love.
- **Celebrating Gender Diversity: Five Stories** (<https://youtu.be/YcIynOerCME>)  
This recorded webinar features five trans and non-binary United Church people sharing a bit of their personal stories as people of faith.
- **“Two Spirit”—Injunuity** (<https://youtu.be/iDyknNmg28>)  
This four-minute animated video features the stories of Two-Spirit people.
- **Belonging in the Body: Transgender Journeys of Faith** (available for purchase at [www.generousspace.ca/shop/](http://www.generousspace.ca/shop/))  
This resource offers a collection of stories from the lives of trans Christians. A trailer is available at [https://youtu.be/h17I8ol50\\_8](https://youtu.be/h17I8ol50_8).
- **I've lived as a man and a woman—here's what I've learned** (TEDx Talk available at <https://youtu.be/lrYx7HaUIMY>)  
Rev. Dr. Paula Stone Williams, a transgender woman and former CEO of a large religious non-profit before transitioning, talks about the differences between living as a man and a woman.

You'll find more stories, webinars, YouTube videos, and other films in the Trans and Gender Identity Resources chart beginning on p. 74.

## A Word about Intersex<sup>5</sup>

An estimated one in 2,000 babies is born with reproductive anatomy, sexual anatomy, and/or a chromosome pattern that doesn't seem to fit typical binary definitions of male or female. These traits are sometimes grouped under the term “intersex.” Intersex people have lived in all cultures throughout history. Individuals and societies have developed different ways of responding to this reality.

Intersex refers to people who are born with any of a range of sex characteristics that may not fit a doctor's notions of binary “male” or “female” bodies. Variations may appear in a person's chromosomes, genitals, or internal organs like testes or ovaries. Some intersex traits are identified at birth, while others may not

5 This content on intersex is reprinted with permission from [interACT: Advocates for Intersex Youth](https://interactadvocates.org/) (<https://interactadvocates.org/>).

be discovered until puberty or later in life. There are over 30 specific intersex variations and each intersex person is different. Potential causes of intersex traits include random genetic variations, changes in the number of sex chromosomes, gonadal differences, natal exposure to unusual levels of sex hormones, or different responses to sex hormones.

The terms transgender and intersex are often confused. While a person who is transgender has a gender that is different from the one traditionally associated with the sex they were assigned at birth, a person who is intersex was born with a variation in their sexual or reproductive anatomy such that their body does not fit typical definitions of male or female.

Both intersex and transgender people can identify as men, women, gender-fluid, non-binary, or in a multitude of different ways. While transgender people may identify differently from how they were assigned at birth, their biology at birth typically conforms to a binary understanding of sexual and reproductive anatomy. Intersex people are generally assigned male or female despite their anatomical atypicality, but may later identify differently and correspondingly identify as transgender. A person cannot transition to “become” intersex because the intersex condition is a variation in reproductive anatomy present at birth.

For more information on intersex, including the similarities and differences between the intersex and transgender communities, see interACT, Advocates for Intersex Youth’s website <https://interactadvocates.org>.

### **Additional Resources**

To deepen your understanding, explore some of the resources listed in the Trans and Gender Identity Resources chart beginning on p. 74. These include United Church resources, downloadable online resources, print resources, online organizations, YouTube videos, other films, and theatre. Resources are identified for types of audiences: general, churches and clergy, children, parents of trans people, children of trans people, and trans and non-binary people.

## Faith and Gender Identity in The United Church of Canada

Being trans can play a significant role in a person's spiritual life. Due to the many challenges and blessings that occur, the experience of having a gender identity that is different from their biological or assigned sex, expressing their gender in ways that differ from societal expectations, and/or transitioning (from female to male, or male to female) are opportunities for deep spiritual reflection and growth. The call to authenticity is sacred. The trans and non-binary person is forced to peer deeply into their own soul in order to confront and evaluate the meaning of their life, in a way that others rarely need to do. These are spiritual questions that go to the fundamental nature of being.

Being trans is not about having a "problem" that needs "fixing," whether that be gender or sexuality—it is about unifying the body and soul and becoming whole. For the trans person, being true to their own originality is a spiritual issue because it is the way in which spiritual truths are physically embodied.

Trans people merit acknowledgement of their sacredness and uniqueness simply because they are human beings who hold within themselves a grain of the sacred, as we all do. They have voices and are seeking the truth. By their presence in the world they sanctify all life.

Those who stand outside of the trans community need to learn to listen and respond with an embrace that signifies the holiness, dearness, sacredness, and depth of another human being.<sup>6</sup>

### THEOLOGICAL STATEMENT

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God has brought forth human beings as creatures who are male, female, and sometimes dramatically or subtly a complex mix of male and female in their bodies. Human cultures have created a broad diversity of roles for men and women, and have sometimes created roles for people named as neither male nor female, often revered and respected roles.

Rules of appearance in the Bible, such as in Deuteronomy 22:5 (wearing clothes of the opposite sex) are certainly among the rules criticized by Jesus as focused on outward conformity rather than inward integrity grounded in the acceptance of God's love.

There are numerous biblical affirmations of the goodness of creation and the love of God for all people, including Genesis 1, Psalm 139, John 1:1–5, and Acts 10:34–43. Galatians 3:26–29 is another example, which calls on those who are baptized to put on Christ like a garment and to look past human divisions to become one person in Christ. If we were to follow this mandate, trans and non-binary people would not be excluded but welcomed as equals, nor would distinctions be placed on the roles of women and men.

In her book *Omnigender*, Virginia Mollenkott reflects on Jesus' words about eunuchs in Matthew 19:12 (NRSV). "For there are eunuchs who have been so from birth, [includes intersex people] and there are eunuchs who have been made eunuchs by others, [includes trans people who have undergone gender confirmation surgery], and there are eunuchs who have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven [includes all transgender and non-binary people]. Let anyone accept this who can." Mollenkott goes on to state that what Jesus means by being eunuchs "for the sake of the kingdom of heaven" is to be true to one's own original and deepest nature.<sup>7</sup>

For more on trans theology, see "A Trans-Inclusive Theology" on p. 16 and the resource chart on p. 74–85.

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6 Adapted with permission from "The Heart/Spirit, Not the Head/Mind: Being Transgendered Is a Spiritual Phenomena and Not a Psychological Condition" presented at the Sixth International Congress on Sex and Gender Diversity, Manchester Metropolitan University, 2004 by Kenneth Dollardhide.

7 Virginia Ramey Mollenkott, *Omnigender: A Trans-Religious Approach* (Cleveland: Pilgrim Press, 2001).

## A RECENT HISTORY OF TRANS/GENDER DIVERSITY WORK IN THE UNITED CHURCH OF CANADA

Here is an overview of some highlights related to the work of trans/gender diversity in the church:

<b>2009</b>	The church approves its Commitment to Inclusion (search "Commitment to Inclusion" at <a href="https://commons.united-church.ca">https://commons.united-church.ca</a> ), which states that, in matters respecting worship, doctrine, membership, and governance, the United Church is opposed to discrimination against any person on any basis (race, sexual orientation, gender identity, physical ability, socioeconomic status, age, language, or any other basis on which a person is devalued). The church further commits to becoming an anti-discriminatory and welcoming denomination.
	The church affirms the participation and ministry of trans people, and encourages all congregations to welcome trans people into membership, ministry, and full participation.
	The Trans/Gender Diversity Task Group is formed.
	Resources on being trans are posted on the United Church website.
<b>2010</b>	Rev. Cindy Bourgeois is the first openly transgender person ordained in the United Church.
	A survey on being transgender in the United Church, completed by 193 trans people and 138 allies, informs the work of the Trans/Gender Diversity Task Group.
<b>2011</b>	383 people participate in a series of GLBTT national consultations, which provide opportunities for LGBTQ people to help shape an open, welcoming, and affirming United Church. A report is offered to inform the directions of General Council 41 (GC41). (For a definition and explanation of the term "2SLGBTQIA+", see the glossary of key terms and concepts on pp. 69–73.)
<b>2012</b>	The work of the Trans/Gender Diversity Task Group comes to an end, having created online resources and laid the foundation for ongoing work. A final report with recommendations is received, and work assigned to appropriate General Council Office staff and/or United Church committees for follow-up.
	The church acknowledges the difference between gender identity and sexual orientation, affirms that gender identity is not a barrier to membership and ministry, and requests the General Secretary to update all existing policy statements that refer only to "sexual orientation" to include "gender identities."
	The registration form for GC41 includes, for the first time, the option for participants to self-identify their gender. This is acknowledged at GC41 as a way the church is working to more fully welcome trans people.
	At GC41, Ruth Woods, a transgender woman and United Church ordained minister, shares her story in a video entitled "Ruth's Story." ( <a href="http://youtu.be/FD4XITKjtL4">http://youtu.be/FD4XITKjtL4</a> )
<b>2013</b>	A Trans and Gender Identity Facebook group ( <a href="http://www.facebook.com/groups/561099660605534">www.facebook.com/groups/561099660605534</a> ) is created for allies of trans people. A private Trans Network [UCCanada] is created for trans people in the church (contact <a href="mailto:transgender@united-church.ca">transgender@united-church.ca</a> for instructions on how to join).

*Celebrating Gender Diversity: Faith and Gender Identity*

<b>2015</b>	General Council 42 approves the Living Apology to Members of LBTTQ Communities (as a travelling, interactive art installation project—see also 2017, 2018).
	<i>Celebrating Gender Diversity: A Toolkit on Gender Identity and Trans Experiences for Communities of Faith</i> (the first edition of this resource) is published.
	The United Church begins offering extended health benefits for trans employees (and their dependents) who are transitioning. (For more information, see “Benefits for Active Members” at <a href="http://www.united-church.ca/handbooks">www.united-church.ca/handbooks</a> .)
	The webinar “Celebrating Gender Diversity: Five Stories,” which shares stories of five trans and gender queer people in the United Church, takes place. A recording is made available ( <a href="https://youtu.be/YclynOerCME">https://youtu.be/YclynOerCME</a> ).
<b>2016</b>	A Take Action is launched to support Bill C-16, a bill which would add gender identity and gender expression to the Canadian Human Rights Act and the Criminal Code. The bill becomes law in 2017.
<b>2017</b>	Iridesce: The Living Apology Project ( <a href="http://www.iridesce.ca">www.iridesce.ca</a> ) is launched as an invitation for story-sharing to all affected by the church’s 1988 decision. Stories are welcomed from before, during, and after the 1988 decision—to help the church discern if and how it might live into a possible apology to the church’s Two-Spirit and LGBTQIA+ people.
	A Global LGBTQTwoSpirit Consultation is jointly presented by The United Church of Canada and Affirm United in order to host a dialogue on Two-Spirit and LGBTQIA+ rights, with a focus on the church’s role in understanding and supporting those rights. Included are eight global partners, the United Church’s Partner Council, as well as ecumenical and civil society organizations.
	The Rev. Cheri DiNovo, then a Member of Provincial Parliament for Ontario, successfully passes the Trans Day of Remembrance Act that marks November 20 as the official day. Ontario becomes the first and only government in Canada to legislate recognition of the day.
<b>2018</b>	The Iridesce installation was shared at General Council 43 (see the interview at <a href="https://generalcouncil43.ca/news/iridesce-living-apology-project">https://generalcouncil43.ca/news/iridesce-living-apology-project</a> ), and the Iridesce Theatre Presentation was performed (see <a href="https://youtu.be/a_WPStoEeD0?t=868">https://youtu.be/a_WPStoEeD0?t=868</a> ). At General Council 43, the church approved the continuation of this project. It was relaunched in 2019, and a report and recommendations will go to General Council 44 in 2021.



## A TRANS INCLUSIVE THEOLOGY: GENDER IS *TOHU VABOHU*

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— by Rev. Cindy Bourgeois. *Cindy was the first openly transgender person ordained in the United Church (in 2010). Since 2013, she has served in ministry at Wesley United Church in Regina, Sask. In 2019, Cindy was awarded the Craig Chaplin Award from the Senate of United Theological College, Montreal for outstanding contributions made by a person from the LGBTQ2 community within and beyond the structures of the Christian church.*

Any trans-inclusive theology begins with the premise that there is no need to justify trans people. The acceptance that we are diverse and that a person's gender has no intrinsic bearing on their worth is central to any life-giving understanding of the gospel. Jesus the Christ, in the prophetic tradition of his ancestors, insists that the table is open to everyone, especially those forced to the margins. Whether you are trans or bigender, enby,<sup>8</sup> or agender, you are welcome at the table.

Furthermore, any trans-inclusive theology must acknowledge Christian colonialism and must not repeat the crimes of the past. Settler gender theories cannot be forced on Indigenous peoples and peoples of other traditions. Joshua Whitehead, in his open letter “Why I’m Withdrawing from My Lambda Literary Award Nomination” ([www.tiahouse.ca/joshua-whitehead-why-im-withdrawing-from-my-lambda-literary-award-nomination](http://www.tiahouse.ca/joshua-whitehead-why-im-withdrawing-from-my-lambda-literary-award-nomination)), showed how gender, sexuality, and his 2SQ (Two-Spirit, queer, Indigenous) identities “supersede Western categorizations of LGBTQ+ because Two-Spirit is a home-calling, it is a home-coming.” Forcing 21st-century, settler gender theory on Indigenous cultures is colonization. This doesn't mean that settler gender theory is bad or wrong. Gender theorists have agreed that gender is culturally constructed, so our way is not the only way. Seeking an understanding of gender is a fruitful exercise, but we must do so through our traditions in relationship and love.

When we look at our tradition, when we go back to the beginning, when we engage the deep, we see that, in the beginning, everything was *Tohu Vabohu* and the *Ruach Elohim* vibrated over the face of the deep. In *The Face of the Deep*, Catherine Keller points out that the formless void or emptiness that many scripture translations offer comes from the Hebrew words *Tohu Vabohu*, which convey not a formless void but rather a roiling chaos of possibility; not a something, not a nothing, but instead, the deep.<sup>9</sup>

The history of theology has leaned toward a cosmos, by definition viewing the universe as a well-ordered whole. But that is not what we see in scripture or in our lives. Instead, as James Joyce writes in *Finnegan's Wake*, life is a “chaosmos” where “Every person, place and thing of Alle anyway connected in the gobblydumped turkerey was moving and changing every part of the time.”<sup>10</sup> The nature of reality is not order and stasis but instead is *Tohu Vabohu*, “moving and changing every part of the time.” The tendency towards chaos is a good thing. If the universe was truly well ordered, we would be stuck in an unjust world. Chaos is an agent of change. And the *Tohu Vabohu* of the deep is a promise of possibility. It is the promise that we can have a world where the first will be last and the last will be first.

But it is not just the deep. The *Ruach Elohim*, the breath of God, the Spirit of God, the pneuma is moving, hovering, vibrating over the deep, always in relationship and luring us to all that is good, beautiful, and just. This is the life-force of love, the draw to love and justice. This is the *Ruach Elohim* hovering and vibrating over the face of the deep—perpetually seeking relationship through the flow of creativity. This is the pulse of the universe—the source of love, justice, and goodness seeking relationship with and within the deep—the chaotic source of possibility. The deep, the source of mystery beyond mystery, is always in relationship with *Elohim*.

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8 Enby is a short form of “non-binary.” It can be used instead of “boy” or “girl” to refer to non-binary people. Not all non-binary people are comfortable with this term.

9 Catherine Keller, *The Face of the Deep: A Theology of Becoming* (New York: Routledge, 2007), Kindle edition.

10 James Joyce, *Finnegan's Wake* (New York: Garland, 1978), Kindle edition.



*Elohim* is not an old man bellowing into the void. As Catherine Keller wrote, the word *Elohim* “can only be whispered: *Elohim*, a flux of syllables, labial, and multiple. Its ending, the ‘*him*’ in *Elohim*, marks it stubbornly as a plural form of ‘*eloh*.’”<sup>11</sup> We must remember that *eloh* is not a proper name for the God of Abraham, like *Yahweh* or *Adonai*; rather, it’s a generic label of the divine. It might be used to refer to any deity.

Complicating things in Genesis 1:1, this *Elohim*, this plurality of the divine takes the single verb form: *bara*. *Bara Elohim*. In English, it would be like saying, “They is creating.” This plurisingular *Elohim* is more than one while being one. It/they/she/he cannot be nailed down or identified. We can’t place a gender on *Elohim* or on its breath—the spirit, the *Ruach*.

To be created in the image of this Divine Manyone, this plurisingular flux of energy, this mysterious “they” cannot be used to enforce a gender binary or any expression of gender. The authors of Genesis were not foreshadowing 21st-century gender theory, but the closest readings of the first chapter of Genesis do not support a gender binary. It doesn’t insist on a male and a female with nothing between them. Instead, it insists on a multiplicity. It disseminates many genders and manifold ways of being, making possible “genders of unspeakable openings.”

Being created in the image of God means that, like the divine, gender is all *Tohu Vabohu*. It’s a roiling, rolling sea of possibility. There is no gender binary; there is no perfectly masculine man or perfectly feminine woman. There are women and men, but each of us are a complex amalgam of femininity and masculinity and both and neither. Men are not from Mars and women are not from Venus. We are all from the earth. We are truly earth-lings. From the earth we have come and to the earth we shall return. Our diversity of gender cannot separate us from that similitude.

Recalling our precept that any trans inclusive theology begins with the premise that there is no need to justify trans persons, the dictum becomes dicte when we confess that the full participation in the beloved community of the myriad genders of creation is good news. Christ’s clarion call to an open table insists that when we honor peoples’ felt gender we enter the divine. When we truly learn to accept persons and their genders as they are presented, we see a glimpse of the kin-dom. We receive a hint of the new heaven and new earth, where pain and suffering are no more and God has wiped away every tear.

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<sup>11</sup> Catherine Keller, *The Face of the Deep: A Theology of Becoming* (New York: Routledge, 2007), Kindle edition.

## **BARRIERS IN CHURCH AND SOCIETY**

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Around the world today, communities fueled by religious-based transphobia align with right-wing and nationalist politicians. The resulting transphobic power is tremendously destructive to trans people's lives and their basic human rights.

Between January 1, 2008 and September 30, 2018, a total of 2,982 trans people have been reported murdered in 71 countries worldwide.<sup>12</sup> The most terrifying part of this figure is that these numbers are only a glimpse into a reality which is undoubtedly much worse than the numbers suggest, as they are just the homicides that have been documented. They don't include trans people who ended their own lives or murder cases in which the victim may have been misgendered. They also don't include transgender people who were shot, stabbed, or brutally attacked, but survived.

Beyond the extreme physical violence directed towards trans people, they experience other barriers in church and society, including

- being refused accommodation or difficulty in finding safe accommodations
- loss of employment and difficulty in finding employment
- lack of access to health care by a physician who is both respectful of trans people and knowledgeable of their health needs
- prohibitive costs associated with transitioning (provincial health coverage is spotty and the wait times can be atrocious)
- lack of safety and accessibility when travelling (for example, they are often harassed—or worse—at security points at airports or border crossings)
- having their chosen name and/or pronoun ignored
- a lack of safe access to washroom facilities that line up with their gender identity
- having no option beyond two boxes (the gender binary: male or female) on forms
- difficulty in changing documentation when a person has transitioned and identifies with a new name (includes church certificates such as baptism and confirmation, as well as ordination, commissioning, or recognition of designated lay ministry.)<sup>13</sup>
- the common practice of breaking into groups (for example, in choirs) based on the gender binary (men or women), leaving no room for anyone who identifies as both or neither

### **Discrimination against Transgender People**

In 2011, an American survey was conducted by the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force and the National Center for Transgender Equality. Interviews with over 6,400 transgender and non-binary people made it the largest such study ever conducted until a second survey was conducted in 2015, this time with 27,715 respondents.

The U.S. Transgender Surveys<sup>14</sup> revealed that transgender and non-binary people face harsh discrimination at every turn: in homes, schools, faith communities, and workplaces; at the grocery store, doctor's offices, and emergency rooms; and before judges, landlords, police officers, and other service providers.

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<sup>12</sup> These numbers are according to the Trans Murder Monitoring Project and available at <https://transrespect.org/en/research/trans-murder-monitoring>.

<sup>13</sup> The United Church of Canada's Office of Vocation will provide updated documentation for a minister who has transitioned and identifies with a new name, including certificates for ordination, commissioning, and recognition of designated lay ministry.

<sup>14</sup> The 2011 survey report is available at <https://transequality.org/issues/us-trans-survey>; the 2015 survey report is available at [www.ustranssurvey.org/reports](http://www.ustranssurvey.org/reports).

One of the most important findings was that the intersection of anti-transgender discrimination with structural racism is especially devastating. Racialized trans and non-binary people in general, including those who are multiracial, fare worse than White trans and non-binary people across the board. This is highlighted in the following statistics:

- 57 percent of respondents overall, 59 percent of Indigenous respondents,<sup>15</sup> and 67 percent of Black respondents said they would feel uncomfortable asking the police for help.
- 47 percent of respondents overall, 53 percent of Black respondents, and 65 percent of Indigenous respondents have been sexually assaulted at some point in their lifetime.
- 40 percent of respondents overall, 47 percent of Black respondents, and 57 percent of Indigenous respondents have attempted suicide in their lifetime (the suicide rate for the general U.S. population is 4.6 percent).
- 30 percent of respondents overall, 42 percent of Black respondents, and 57 percent of Indigenous respondents have experienced homelessness at some point in their lives.
- 29 percent of respondents overall, 38 percent of Black respondents, and 41 percent of Indigenous respondents were living in poverty (the poverty rate for the general U.S. population is 12 percent).

While similar Canada-wide statistics are not available for comparison with the above American ones, the Trans Pulse Project,<sup>16</sup> which surveyed transgender Ontarians in 2015, found

- 34 percent had been verbally threatened or harassed
- 24 percent reported having been harassed by police
- 20 percent had been physically or sexually assaulted for being trans
- 13 percent were fired for being trans (another 15 percent who were fired were unsure if the reason was due to their being trans)
- 10 percent of trans emergency room patients reported having care stopped or denied

A national 2011 report “Every Class in Every School” looked at homophobia, biphobia, and transphobia in Canadian schools. The study surveyed over 3,700 high school students from across Canada. Among its findings was that, when all identity-related grounds for feeling unsafe are taken into account (including ethnicity and religion), 78 percent of trans students feel unsafe in some way at school. Forty-four percent reported being likely to miss school, and 15 percent reported having skipped more than 10 days of school because of feeling unsafe.<sup>17</sup>

A second national survey on school climate in Canadian schools (see <https://egale.ca/climate-survey/>) is currently underway, seeking to document the experiences of all students about the climate in Canadian schools. Results will be posted on the Egale Canada website ([www.egale.ca](http://www.egale.ca)) by January 2020.

A University of British Columbia-led survey conducted from 2013 to 2014, *Being Safe, Being Me: Results of the Canadian Trans Youth Health Survey of Canadian trans youth*, shared some key findings:<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> For the purposes of this resource, we have chosen to use the term Indigenous when referring to the statistics cited in the survey under the grouping of “American Indian and Alaska Native.”

<sup>16</sup> Greta Bauer, Rebecca Hammond, Jack Pyne, Nik Redman, Kyle Scanlon, Anna Travers, and Robb Travers, *Trans PULSE Survey*, from <http://transpulseproject.ca/resources/trans-pulse-survey/>.

<sup>17</sup> Catherine Taylor and Tracey Peter, *Every Class in Every School*, from <http://egale.ca/every-class>.

<sup>18</sup> Elizabeth Saewyc, *Being Safe, Being Me: Results of the Canadian Trans Youth Health Survey*, from [www.saravyc.ubc.ca/2018/05/06/trans-youth-health-survey](http://www.saravyc.ubc.ca/2018/05/06/trans-youth-health-survey).

- Two thirds of participants reported discrimination because of their gender identity; about half reported discrimination due to their physical appearance.
- Most of the youth (70 percent) reported sexual harassment, more than one in three of the younger participants had been physically threatened or injured in the past year, and nearly half of older youth participants reported various types of cyberbullying.
- Nearly two thirds of the participants reported self-harm in the past year, a similar number reported serious thoughts of suicide, and more than one in three had attempted suicide.
- Many of the participants reported missing needed physical health care (33 percent of younger youth and 49 percent of older youth); even more missed needed mental health care (68 percent of younger youth).
- Poverty and hunger is an issue for some trans youth: one in five younger youth and more than one in three older trans youth reported going hungry in the past year because they could not afford food.
- More than one in four younger trans youth reported they had run away from home in the past year; this was more likely among those who reported having a history of physical or sexual abuse.

## **The Power of Family**

Family support is the factor most strongly associated with healthier outcomes for trans youth. More and more research shows that family acceptance or rejection has a profound impact on the physical and mental health of Two-Spirit and LGBTQIA+ youth and young adults. Moderate and high levels of family rejection are associated with greater odds of attempted suicide.

The “Being Safe, Being Me” survey showed that family relationships are important. While trans youth generally reported feeling that their parents cared about them, 70 percent reported their family did not understand them, and about one in three did not have an adult in their family they could talk to about problems. When youth reported high levels of parent support and family connectedness, they also reported much better health. Trans youth who had supportive adults both inside and outside of their family were four times more likely to report good or excellent mental health and were far less likely to have considered suicide.<sup>19</sup>

The Family Acceptance Project (<https://familyproject.sfsu.edu>) revealed that LGBT youth from highly rejecting families are more than eight times as likely to try to take their own lives.<sup>20</sup>

The 2015 U.S. Transgender Survey Report ([www.ustranssurvey.org/reports](http://www.ustranssurvey.org/reports)) revealed that transgender people with supportive families were far less likely to attempt suicide, be homeless, or experience serious psychological distress (31 percent of respondents whose families were supportive reported some combination of this, compared to 50 percent of respondents whose families were unsupportive). Respondents who were rejected by their families were more likely to have attempted suicide (54 percent) than those who were not rejected (37 percent).<sup>21</sup>

## **Removing Barriers in the Church**

There are many ways in which the church and its people can work to remove barriers and build safer and more welcoming places for trans people in the life and ministry of the church.

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Caitlin Ryan, ed., *Supportive Families, Healthy Children: Helping Families with Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Children*, from <https://familyproject.sfsu.edu/publications>.

<sup>21</sup> National Center for Transgender Equality, *2015 U.S. Transgender Survey*, from [www.ustranssurvey.org/reports](http://www.ustranssurvey.org/reports).

The guides in this kit, “Making Your Ministry Two-Spirit Inclusive” (pp. 31–33), “Creating Trans-Inclusive Ministries and Events” (pp. 34–37), “Creating a Gender-Inclusive Washroom Policy” (pp. 38–40), “Creating Trans-Inclusive Registration Forms” (pp. 41–45), as well as the workshop “Creating Radically Inclusive Communities” (pp. 46–54), may be particularly helpful. Also see the handouts in this kit, especially “Celebrating Trans and Two-Spirit People in Communities of Faith” and “Radical Welcome and Gender Identity” (pp. 63–66, or available separately for download at [www.united-church.ca](http://www.united-church.ca)).

In addition, special Sundays and international days are opportunities for communities of faith to make anew the welcoming message of the gospel and reaffirm to all who are oppressed, “You are not alone.” Search [www.united-church.ca](http://www.united-church.ca) for worship and other resources related to the following:

- International Day against Homophobia, Transphobia, and Biphobia—May 17
- Pride Sunday—first Sunday in June
- Transgender Day of Remembrance—November 20

You may also find the guide “Gender Identity and Our Faith Communities” helpful.<sup>22</sup> There are also more resources listed on pp. 74–85.

## **GENDER IDENTITY AND OPPRESSION**

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Many aspects of society are designed with the assumption that people are assigned a gender at birth that never changes. This means that society often does not allow space for the needs and stories of trans and Two-Spirit people. The name given to this type of oppression is **cissexism**.

Due to this assumption that being cisgender is “normal,” trans people’s experiences and bodies are often forgotten or erased. It can be dangerous to be made invisible in society. Trans people’s needs are often misunderstood or overlooked, making safe professional and personal relationships difficult. As the previous section detailed, trans people also experience oppression when they encounter intentional exclusion, meet barriers in being accepted for who they truly are, or encounter overt forms of violence.

### **Personal and Institutional Oppression**

To understand the full impact of trans experiences of oppression, some insight is required into how cissexism can occur on personal and institutional levels in addition to the barriers mentioned in “Barriers in Church and Society” above (p. 18).

Personal examples of cissexism are

- social rejection (from family, partners, friends)
- street harassment and other acts **of transphobic** and **transmisogynist** violence<sup>23</sup>
- people treating a trans person as a different gender than their gender identity (using the wrong name or pronouns)
- harassment, such as a trans person being asked invasive questions about their body

Institutional examples of cissexism are

- loss of employment

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<sup>22</sup> Chris Glaser, ed., *Gender Identity and Our Faith Communities: A Congregational Guide for Transgender Advocacy*, from [www.hrc.org/resources/entry/gender-identity-and-our-faith-communities-a-congregational-guide-for-transg](http://www.hrc.org/resources/entry/gender-identity-and-our-faith-communities-a-congregational-guide-for-transg).

<sup>23</sup> **Transphobia:** conscious or unconscious hatred of, fear of, and discrimination against individuals who do not conform in appearance and/or identity to cisnormative or “traditional” conceptions of gender. **Transmisogyny:** a specific form of sexism and misogyny that regularly demonizes and ridicules trans women.

- lack of access to safe washrooms
- lack of support or understanding while trying to address injustices in the legal system
- medical abuse from doctors and nurses, or the inability to find effective medical care
- hurtful media representation and a lack of representation of diverse trans experiences

### **Trans Justice for a Diverse Community**

In society, there are many ways through which people have access to power or are denied access to power. When addressing issues of trans and Two-Spirit justice, it is important to be aware of the ways in which class, race, education level, ability, and more play a factor in determining one's ability to access resources, safety, and empowerment.

This is where the term “transmisogyny” is helpful. It highlights the fact that trans women experience the interconnected challenges of being women in a sexist society as well as trans in a transphobic society.

For trans and Two-Spirit people who experience mental illness, accessing medical services can be difficult. They might experience discrimination for being trans or have to deal with medical professionals who have had no training on how to serve trans people.<sup>24</sup>

### **Decolonizing Gender Identity**

There are trans people who identify as men or women, and trans people who identify as trans men or trans women. These people may choose to transition medically or they may decide not to. There are also individuals who are trans and who do not identify as either a man or a woman. They may identify in many different ways (a variety of terms are included in the “Glossary of Key Terms and Concepts,” pp. 69–73— including **non-binary, gender non-conforming, agender, genderqueer, and bigender.**)

To understand all of these identities, we need to pay attention to the ways in which culture is connected to gender roles and norms. While people who have non-binary gender identities (do not identify as a man or a woman) exist within and challenge Western notions of gender, there are other cultures where gender is understood very differently, including the recognition of more than two genders. (For more information, see “A Map of Gender-Diverse Cultures” [www.pbs.org/independentlens/content/Two-Spirits\\_map-html](http://www.pbs.org/independentlens/content/Two-Spirits_map-html).)

Non-binary experiences outside of Western gender norms remind us that race and gender intersect in all trans experiences. These experiences challenge conversations about trans justice to always include an analysis of and commitment to racial justice and decolonization. Many cultures hold understandings of gender that differ from the dominant binary gender model.

It is important to note that some people wish to be understood as part of the trans community, while others wish their gender to be understood as separate from being trans. Within Canadian contexts, the term “Two-Spirit” is used by some Indigenous people as an identity that relates to more than just their gender and sexuality. Gender roles within some Indigenous communities, understood outside of definitions ascribed by colonial patriarchy, mean that the term “Two-Spirit” can act as a challenge to Western understandings of gender, gender expression, and sexuality.

The use of this term varies among communities and from person to person. More resources are listed below to help you explore how unlearning colonialism is an important element of understanding gender identity and being able to hold the stories of all experiences of all genders.

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<sup>24</sup> For an example of such discrimination, see Gwen Benaway, “When it comes to health care, transphobia persists,” *Globe and Mail* (July 20, 2018), from [www.theglobeandmail.com/opinion/article-when-it-comes-to-health-care-transphobia-persists](http://www.theglobeandmail.com/opinion/article-when-it-comes-to-health-care-transphobia-persists).

## Asking Questions and Making Change

Since we are immersed in our communities and culture, it can be hard to step back and realize where and how oppression is being experienced. Understanding oppression requires an awareness of power: Whose voice is respected? Who is allowed to make decisions? Who feels in control?

Power can be expressed on a personal level. For example, in a gathering, who speaks up and how often? Whose opinion is asked for and listened to? Who is treated as a leader, or invited into leadership? Who is assumed to “belong”? Who holds positions of authority? Power is also expressed in the structures of our society. Are all genders treated equally? Are all sexual orientations respected? Are all age groups listened to in the same way? What language is used? Is one ethnic background assumed to be “normal”?

Searching for answers to these questions can certainly help illuminate where change is needed so that all people may feel fully respected and included. The United Church of Canada’s intercultural vision (p. 54) invites us to ask these kinds of questions so that we may deeply examine our differences; name and address the power dynamics in our communities; and seek to create communities that honour all of who we are—our differences and what we have in common. (For more, search “intercultural” on [www.united-church.ca](http://www.united-church.ca).)

## How to Empower Trans and Two-Spirit People

Addressing the loss of power that trans and Two-Spirit people experience in society involves changes on personal, communal, and societal levels. On a personal level, we are called to think about the way that our language fails to make space for them. Within our churches and other communities, we are called to look at the messages we are sending about the value we place on their lives. How are we listening to and honouring their stories? As a society, we are called to address the many injustices trans and Two-Spirit people are experiencing and call our governments, churches, and more, to be accountable.

More information about helpful, necessary next steps can be found in the guide, “Making Your Ministry Two-Spirit Inclusive” (pp. 31–33) and in the handouts, particularly “Celebrating Trans and Two-Spirit People in Communities of Faith” and “Radical Welcome and Gender Identity” (pp. 63–66, or available separately at [www.united-church.ca](http://www.united-church.ca)).

## Recommended Resources

### Non-binary identities

- [Words by Non-binary People re: Non-binary Experiences \[PDF\]](#): A resource for service providers who want to be more “non-binary friendly” ([www.excellenceforchildandadulthood.ca](http://www.excellenceforchildandadulthood.ca), search “non-binary friend”). This resource by Omnes et Nihil explores the diversity of non-binary experiences of gender. It helps service providers be more mindful of providing safe, affirming services.

### Two-Spirit

- Gender Abolition as Colonisation (<https://medium.com/gender-2-0/gender-abolition-as-colonisation-f32b55505e38>): An article on how different cultural understandings of gender complicate the creation of gender justice.
- Hearing Two-Spirits (<http://briarpatchmagazine.com/articles/view/hearing-Two-Spirits>): A short article in *Briarpatch* on the role of Two-Spirit experiences in resisting colonialism.
- “Two Spirit”—Injunuity (<https://youtu.be/iDyaknNmg28>): A four-minute animated video by Injunuity featuring the stories of Two-Spirit people.



- [Two-Spirited Aboriginal People: Continuing Cultural Appropriation by Non-Aboriginal Society \[PDF\]](http://pi.library.yorku.ca/ojs/index.php/cws/article/viewFile/6129/5317) (<http://pi.library.yorku.ca/ojs/index.php/cws/article/viewFile/6129/5317>): Michelle Cameron's article in *Canadian Woman Studies* explores the history of the term "Two-Spirit" and its role in naming a culturally unique experience of gender and/or sexuality.
- [Language, Culture, and Two-Spirit Identity](http://apihtawikosisan.com/2012/03/language-culture-and-two-spirit-identity/) (<http://apihtawikosisan.com/2012/03/language-culture-and-two-spirit-identity/>): This blog post by *âpihtawikosisân* focuses on the role that language plays in naming culturally specific concepts and experiences. It looks at Cree terms used to discuss gender and sexuality.

To deepen your understanding, explore some of the additional resources listed in the Trans and Gender Identity Resources chart beginning on p. 74.

## BEYOND CHURCH WALLS

— by *Lisa Salazar*. Lisa is the author of *Transparently: Behind the Scenes of a Good Life, as well as a spiritual care practitioner, educator, and advocate*. Learn more at [www.lisasalazar.com](http://www.lisasalazar.com).

When I speak with ministers and church people who ask me how they can become affirming and welcoming of trans and non-binary persons, a question is often raised. "Why bother going through all the work of becoming an affirming congregation if after all the hard work not many, if any, trans persons are going to join my church community?"

**Because being affirming and welcoming is not fully measured just by how you treat people who enter the four walls of your church or sanctuary. What matters is how the members of your congregation treat trans people out in the world.**

Consider the following questions—these are just a few. How you answer these types of questions will bear witness to how inclusive and accepting of non-binary persons you really are.

- If your 10-year-old child has a trans classmate, will that trans child be invited to play with your child? Or, will you allow your child to go to the trans child's home to play?
- Will you allow your son or daughter to date a trans person?
- Will you reach out to the trans relative or neighbour who has been shunned by others?
- If you own or manage a business, will you hire a trans person?
- If you own rental property or are looking for a housemate to share the rent, will you welcome a trans person?
- If you are having a neighbourhood event, will you include the family with a trans person?
- If you patronize a business—such as a coffee bar or restaurant—that employs trans persons, will you support it and recommend it to your friends?
- Will you not only show solidarity at events such as a Transgender Day of Remembrance, but also attend, for example, school board, city council, or parks board meetings when trans inclusion is on the agenda?
- Will you write to your elected officials in support of trans-inclusive policies?
- Will you make an effort to befriend and include a fellow worker or employee who is trans?
- Will you step into a conversation to offer informed commentary when others are mocking or saying pejorative things about trans persons? In other words, will you challenge transphobic remarks?
- Will you make it a practice to show respect to a trans person by using their chosen name and pronouns, including asking when you are not sure?



Many trans people are suspicious and weary and will remain at arm's length of anything that smacks of patronizing, dismissive, or condescending treatment. They don't want to be the elephant in the room, the panache factor, or the trans poster child for your congregation.

In a recent study by Matthew Heinz,<sup>25</sup> trans and non-binary persons were asked what they find most stressful about interpersonal communication (in other words, any social context with one or more people). Their top four answers were

1. The fear of constant judgement and scrutiny
2. Concern over being belittled and/or not accepted
3. Being anxious about false assumptions and attitudes
4. Being misnamed, misgendered (wrong pronouns), and/or being outed

The researchers also asked what advice they had for cisgender (non-trans) persons to help them not be so stressed. Some answers given were

- Make friendly eye contact
- Don't use dismissive tone or language
- Don't assume sexual orientation
- Signal warmth and openness
- Don't ask any unnecessary questions (for example, have you had surgery?)

Being considerate and respectful, regardless of a person's gender identity or gender expression, does not require any special skills. Rather, display basic human respect.

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<sup>25</sup> Matthew Heinz, "Communicating While Transgender: Apprehension, Loneliness, and Willingness to Communicate in a Canadian Sample," *SAGE Open* (April–June 2018), pp. 1–17. Available at <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/2158244018777780>.

## Intersections

Gender identity and sexual orientation don't exist in a vacuum. Both are powerfully shaped by racial privilege and oppression. *Mandate* magazine asked three United Church people to reflect on how race complicates the search for social justice—and on the challenges of finding welcome in the church if you are marginalized in more ways than one.

The first three of the four reflections below were first published in *Mandate*, Spring 2018 issue, “The Affirming Journey.” Reprinted with permission.

### ON BEING TWO-SPIRIT

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— by Rev. Evan Smith. *Evan is a minister with The United Church of Canada at Toronto Urban Native Ministry.*

I identify as Two-Spirit, queer, and trans. There are times when these identities feel like a holistic way of identifying my place on the gender-sexuality spectrum. Yet they are also three distinct identities, and though my queerness is often easily explained, my trans and Two-Spirit identities can feel far more complicated.

There have been great strides in the church around sexual identity, but the complexity of gender identity is something that the church has only begun to explore. And, because of lack of understanding, it has only been in very recent years that I have begun speaking about my trans identity.

It feels even more daunting to try to speak about being Two-Spirit, but it is something that I feel strongly I have to do. The church has caused immeasurable damage to Indigenous communities. When the lack of real understanding of Indigenous culture and teachings is paired with a colonial, conservative, and anti-sexual notion of what and how queer and trans people should be and act, it feels at times impossible to begin explaining what it means to be Two-Spirit.

But as I look around at the suicides of so many LGBTIQ2S+ and Indigenous youth, I see a volatile situation. So, despite the emotional labour it takes for me to explain Two-Spiritness, I have no choice. Within the church there have been very few attempts to start acknowledging Two-Spirit people. With only one or two exceptions, I cannot recall a time when I felt like Two-Spirit people were named by the church, let alone lifted up for the gifts we carry.

Being Two-Spirit is not about sexuality, or even gender presentation, but about our spirits. As a Two-Spirit person, my spirit is both male and female. This duality of personhood allows me to understand more about the duality of life. It means that I have a role to play in the community because I am often able to see two different sides of a conflict.

Within the United Church, however, Two-Spirit people are often lumped in with the LGBTQ community, which fails us in at least two different ways. First, it fails to recognise that being Two-Spirit doesn't necessarily make you lesbian, gay, or bisexual. There are many Two-Spirit people who are heterosexual. Second, it fails to recognise not only the spiritual nature of being Two-Spirit, but also the teachings around the role of Two-Spirit people and the unique gifts we could bring to the church.

As the church continues on its path to reconciliation, I believe that Two-Spirit people have an important role to play. Part of the gift of being able to see “both sides” is that many of us have a strong understanding of both settler and Indigenous perspectives. We are gifted in ways that allow us to walk between the two communities and act as spiritual guides to ensure that both sides feel they are being heard and respected. My hope is that through education and the lifting up of Two-Spirit people, the path of reconciliation will be easier, more fully actualized, and will not leave anyone behind.

*Miigwetch.*

## PRIVILEGE IN THE LGBTQIA+ COMMUNITY

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— by *Jordan Sullivan*. Jordan is a trans man and the LGBTQIA+ and Two-Spirit Justice staff person at the United Church's General Council Office.

On July 3, 2016 a Canadian Prime Minister, Justin Trudeau, marched in a Pride parade for the first time, joined by Ontario Premier Kathleen Wynne and Toronto Mayor John Tory. The acceptance of LGBTQ people was being affirmed publicly, and the LGBTQ community in Toronto was buzzing with excitement. And then Black Lives Matter staged a sit-in, bringing the parade to a halt for 30 minutes.

Immediately, social and mainstream media were filled with angry White people condemning Black Lives Matter. The backlash from many in the LGBTQ community was vicious and hateful. "All Lives Matter" was thrown out in response to Black Lives Matter. It was as if most of us saw the word "only" in front of the latter phrase.

Although they face racism on a daily basis, it was heartbreaking to watch my racialized friends and colleagues endure such attacks. Many of them had to disconnect from social media sites, overwhelmed as they were by the onslaught of racist hatred that social media exposed.

I found it exhausting to respond to the comments on social media, and I struggled to get my head around the layers of oppression and privilege that the situation exposed. A *Globe and Mail* piece stated, "Black Lives Matter is dramatic, unsettling and inconvenient. That's the point." In the days that followed, my recognition of the work I have to do deepened.

As a trans man I experience an increase in privilege. I am seen and listened to as a man in ways I never was as a woman. I also have privilege and power as a White LGBTQ person. I didn't ask for it—but it's there, everywhere I go!

At Affirm United's conference in 2016, the Very Rev. Jordan Cantwell, then-Moderator of The United Church of Canada, offered her reflection on what we are called to do with our privilege.<sup>26</sup> "Jesus challenged conventional wisdom and societal assumptions at every turn," she reminded us, "He showed people another way to live—the way of intentional downward mobility. He wasn't interested in securing for himself a place at the center of society; but rather ensuring that no one was abandoned on the margins." She continued, "The reconciliation that God offers us...requires that we relinquish privilege and the systems that give rise to privilege."

Speaking of how shocked she'd been by the callous racism that the backlash to the Black Lives Matter sit-in revealed within the LGBTQ community, Cantwell said, "It got me thinking about how hard it is for those who have had the experience of being marginalized, but who have now attained some level of social acceptability, to allow themselves to be drawn back to the edges, to stand in solidarity with those who continue to be left out. We don't welcome their voices, their critique, their challenge of the new status we are enjoying. The lure of privilege is seductive." There's much truth in the adage, "When you are accustomed to privilege, equality can feel like oppression."

As individuals and as a community, White LGBTQ people are faced with a challenge, perhaps best framed as a question: What measure of privilege are we willing to give up to create equity for others?

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<sup>26</sup> The full text of her reflection is available at <http://affirmunited.ausc.ca/worship-resources>.

## **QUEER? ABSOLUTELY. BLACK? NOT SO SURE**

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— *by Basil Coward. Basil is a queer Black writer, minister, and psychotherapist.*

A decade ago, the doors of The United Church of Canada were flung open for me, and it was with deep gratitude that I stepped across the threshold, assuming that all of me was welcomed. However, to fit in I needed to cleave myself into three separate pieces: queer, Christian, and Black. Space has been made for the queer piece of me, and the whole context exists to house the Christian piece. The haunting question lingers: Is there room within the United Church for my Black body? Because too often, my experience has been that there is not room for my Black body, even as my queer one is affirmed.

And if as an ordained professional I experience this cleavage—if I am compelled by systemic White supremacy and classism to divide my very self—then I wonder about the lived experiences of my queer Black relatives who seek spiritual and pastoral care from the United Church.

Two decades ago, I began hearing stories from Black LGBTQ2S+ folks about their experience of visiting Affirming United Churches in Toronto. The dominant narrative then, as it is now, was that the United Church is not a place of welcome or affirmation for them.

One story still stands out. A queer Black young man recalled how on his first visit he had a visceral sense that he'd be tapped on the shoulders and someone would say, "Get that Black body out of here," but he persisted and visited that congregation thrice in three months. On his second visit he said that a kindly gentleman offered an enthusiastic greeting: "Welcome. We didn't expect you again because folks don't usually return." He did not ask whom the folks were who did not return. On his third visit he said that each sign of the peace communicated, "There is really no need to come again. We know this won't be home for you." And he never did.

I resisted the repeated narrative shared by queer Black folks that certain actions, attitudes, and structures—basically Whiteness and its multiple barriers—make the United Church inaccessible unless one is willing to fit into a box with queer White folks.

Without challenging our hard-won commitment to gender justice, which is firmly rooted in excellent theology, I resist the tendency to assume that the conversation is finished because the dominant White church has "won the battle." In our important focus on welcoming LGBTQ2S+ folks into the church and ministry, perhaps there is a race issue festering alongside that focus that has gone silent, or at least has been smoothed over in a very Canadian way. Yes, you can be queer in The United Church of Canada. But can you be both queer and Black, and enjoy a secure, nourishing, celebrated, and visible presence?

There can be no hiding from real conversations about race, spirituality, queerness and Blackness within the United Church. I refuse to be invisible, especially because anti-Black racism in the church is not overt—it's more like an omission that, in the Canadian way, the church hopes might simply disappear with time and silence. But neither will heal it. It will not go away if we do not talk about it.

## CALL ME BY MY NAME: A GLOBAL PERSPECTIVE

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— by Jim Hodgson. Jim is the Program Coordinator for Caribbean and Latin America Partnerships at the United Church's General Council Office.

Among the challenges faced by other cultures and languages around the world with regard to gender and gender identity are those that derive from the persistence of colonial power relationships. In a given context, your identity may not fit neatly into categories developed in far-off lands.

In the wake of the 1969 Stonewall riots—led by trans people of colour whose resistance is written out of history—gay, White, cisgender men in North America (like me) seemed to define the parameters of the modern sexual and gender diversity movement. In a similar way, rainbow flags and that impossible alphabet acronym are imposed on identities and expressions known by other names in other languages and cultures around the world.

In the mid-1980s in the Dominican Republic, people who were impoverished regarded “gay” as something upper-class—something involving people who went to Miami or New York. Rich people, on the other hand, thought of homosexuality as something that went on among the poor. Reality, of course, was more complex. In a way, both answers were correct.

There was an emerging “gay” identity among those who recognized something of themselves in the North American movements. Among less wealthy people, there was a history of apparently male couples living together, but one would live as a man and the other as a woman—each adopting the cultural roles associated with the gender with which they identified.

In the decades since then, the growth of evangelical Christianity has all but removed the social space for such couples in the Dominican Republic and in many other countries. Religious-based homophobia and transphobia have made life much more unsafe for people whose identities do not fit cisgender and heterosexual norms.

The ways of thinking and speaking about sexual diversity and gender identity are contextual and rooted in cultures. Even when we speak in terms of our “intersectional” identities—the ways our race, gender, orientation, and religion play out in different contexts—our descriptive powers seem limited. But as we ask each other about culture and language and the ways we name ourselves, we're all enriched.

In November 2017, about 40 people from around the world gathered to advise the United Church on dialogue with global partners about queer and trans issues. We asked about the ways we and others described us. When we named ourselves in many languages, the post-it notes covered a large section of a wall.

Sometimes, people who do not fit the gender binary are referred to as a “third sex” or “third gender,” but more and more, they press back. We're *hijras* (in India); we're *fa'afafine* (in Polynesia). *Khawaja sira* people in Pakistan say that their identity is not the same as trans identity, which they see as a Western import. At the same time, some celebrate the “third gender” idea, seeing themselves (as do the *muxe* in Zapotec culture of southern Mexico) as part of established history and claiming their part in the future.

In the face of our western penchant for categories, they might all be saying to us: “Call me by MY name.”

At the 2018 Parliament of World Religions held in Toronto, one of the workshop presenters was Jerry Johnson, editor of *I'm Divine: So Are You*. This is a book of essays about queer and trans themes in the “karmic” religions: Hindu, Buddhist, Jain, and Sikh. He counted 67 words in various languages associated with these faiths that refer to what we in the West reduce to “sexual orientation and gender identity and

expression" (SOGIE)<sup>27</sup>. In these religions, he said, diversity is a given, but inclusion is a choice—and therein rest many contemporary challenges in many societies.

For those who are translators or interpreters, the ways people call themselves and the ways we call them present special challenges. Words in different languages are not codes for each other. The North American Indigenous descriptor Two-Spirit is sometimes translated into French as *berdache* (a word that carries some colonial baggage) or as *bispiritualité*. Queer usually becomes *altersexuel*, which is entirely understandable, but it loses the school-yard epithet contained in reclaiming queer. At the same time, the English word “queer” has been taken up in academic circles, including *estudios queer*, *théologie queer*, and so forth. But everywhere else, it has to be explained and compared with other words like *loca* in Mexican Spanish or *tapette* in Québécois French—words not welcome in polite universities.

In recent years, we have come to understand that human sexualities and gender identities are experienced as a variety of possibilities, rather than just distinct boxes—man or woman, heterosexual or homosexual. Such binary identifiers tell us that there are no grey areas, no middle ground, no continuum. But even recognizing a continuum (or two) is not expressive enough. There simply are not enough “labels” to identify each point on a line. But there are enough people! Think of it: 7.6 billion people, and no two of them (even twins) are exactly alike.

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<sup>27</sup> The acronym SOGIE—Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity/Expression—is used in order to encompass and represent all identities and peoples who fall on the sexual orientation and gender identity spectrum. This includes heterosexual and cisgender identities.

## Guides

### MAKING YOUR MINISTRY TWO-SPIRIT INCLUSIVE

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#### Introduction

— by *Waabskiiki-Gah-Bo, White Bear Standing, Snapping Turtle Clan, RW Hoekstra*

We *Niizh Manidoowag* (or Two-Spirit) are not born with two spirits but transcend both the physical world and the spiritual world. We see both directions. We take on both the symbols of the men and the women. We are the balance between the men and the women. We are called many names by the Nations of First People across North America—*nadle, winkte, heemaneh, yaawaa, or berdache*<sup>28</sup>—but the term “Two-Spirit” is not the same as gay, lesbian, or transgender.

Our modern day gender roles in Indigenous communities are not gender-based as they are in Western societies. It is not a sexual role/placement but a spiritual/community role/placement that we occupy. As *Niizh Manidoowag*, we carry our medicine—the unique capacity of belonging to male and female—and within our gender-born roles we have the power with the people. It is an honour, a culture from the beginning of Creation, specially thought and brought about by Creator, the Unformed Formed Spirit.

With the arrival of the first second peoples (or Europeans), they saw the power that we held within Indigenous communities so this was the first Indigenous identity to be fully decimated. Today, the lingering aftershocks from this time long ago are still felt.

In our own communities, we, too, have those who still deny the place of Two-Spirit people. It was the grandmothers, the Clan mothers, and the aunties who told us to bury our ceremonies and bundles long ago and hide amongst ourselves. Our prophecies (the Ojibway lodge) told that the time would come again when we would be needed to do our work in balance, taking back our place in the community. That time is now, and it’s happening all across Turtle Island—with great urgency. We *Niizh Manidoowag* are only now picking up our bundles once again, retrieving as best as we can our own healing/medicine songs and ceremonies.

#### Creating Space for Two-Spirit People

— by *Mizheekay nindoodem/Anishinaabe/niizh-manidoowag endow (Turtle Clan/Anishinaabe/Two-Spirit), Rev. Evan Smith, a minister with The United Church of Canada at Toronto Urban Native Ministry.*

Many (but not all) Two-Spirit people have been isolated in their lives—from their communities, their families and their friends—as a result of homophobia, transphobia, and a colonised aversion to diverse understandings of gender identity.

What Two-Spirit people often need is a space where they can authentically be themselves and feel valued as a member of the community. A great way to do this is to engage in right-relationship building with Indigenous communities as a whole while also creating space for Two-Spirit people within the congregational setting.

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<sup>28</sup> While many Indigenous people consider the term *berdache* to be offensive (it was originally a derogatory anthropological term used by Europeans to mean a passive homosexual partner, or male prostitute), other Indigenous people are reclaiming the term.

**Does your church have books written by Two-Spirit people in its lending library?  
What about children's books that feature Two-Spirit people?**

One of the first steps to make a space inclusive is for non-Two-Spirit people to educate themselves. There are a growing number of books written by Two-Spirit people, which can increase understanding and knowledge among non-Two-Spirit communities. It is important not to rely on Two-Spirit people in your midst to do all of the educating. People come to church to grow in their connection to God and to find spiritual community. Expecting emotional labour from marginalised communities is unfair and can put a huge burden and responsibility on people that is not theirs to carry.

**Does your church have literature, posters, paintings, sculptures etc. by Two-Spirit artists or that depict Two-Spirit people? What about signs that welcome Two-Spirit and other non-binary people? Do your nametags have a spot for a person's preferred pronouns?**

It is important to create a space where Two-Spirit people feel like they are recognised. Many times churches use language that assumes there are no Two-Spirit people present at the time. Often this is expressed when the worship leader uses "us and them" language. During prayer, for example: "God, help us to be in right relations with our Indigenous brothers and sisters."

The assumption is that "we" (i.e., the congregation) is non-Indigenous and that Indigenous people are outside the church. Though it may seem small, it can be off-putting and cause a person to feel othered within the space. Another issue with the prayer above is the gendered language. In many Indigenous communities there are more than two understandings of gender: *Nēhiyaw* (Cree) culture recognises six distinct genders, while in *Anishinaabemowin* (The Ojibwe language) there are no gendered pronouns, (things and people are only animate or inanimate). Alternatives to "brothers and sisters" that are non-gendered, such as "family," "community," or "folks," are more Two-Spirit-inclusive options.

**Does your church include theology written by Two-Spirit and other Indigenous voices?  
What happens if the church's theology is different than Indigenous teachings?**

When we engage with people who have been historically left out of the church, it can sometimes feel challenging to have conversations around theology during which we may be challenged by what we or others believe. We have to engage in these conversations with an open mind and heart, and believe that God speaks to us in many different ways and through many different voices. We also need to ensure that there is a diversity of voices represented in our liturgy, including prayer, song, words, and imagery.

A Navajo teaching uses a word to mark sacred speech—*jini*.<sup>29</sup> Translated as "it is said" or "that is what they say," it has multiple connotations, one of which is a humility in expressing truth. Implicit is the idea that we are limited in our presentation and understanding of truth, and that sacred truth is handled with great humility—we cannot convey it fully or imply that we understand it comprehensively. The European missionaries (or second peoples) did not like such expressions and promoted the idea of certainty in their religious teachings without the standard attachment of *jini*. (Thanks to the Right Rev. Mark MacDonald, the Anglican Church of Canada's National Indigenous Bishop, for sharing this teaching.)

**Why do you want to be inclusive of Two-Spirit people?**

It is important to understand our own motives for becoming an inclusive community. Is it simply so that we can check off a box for the people you welcome? Or do you genuinely wish to enter into relationship with Two-Spirit people, believing that they have many gifts that can be offered to the community?

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<sup>29</sup> In *jini*, both "i"s are pronounced as the "i" in bin.



## **Are there places in your church that Two-Spirit people can serve that are not Indigenous-specific?**

Often Two-Spirit people are welcomed into a community and then only asked to engage on Indigenous issues. For example, the only time they may be asked to speak is on Indigenous or Pride Sunday, or to serve on a right relations committee. It is important to look for the other places that Two-Spirit people can serve. Perhaps they would make a good treasurer or a good greeter. In many traditions it was Two-Spirit people who would care for the children and elders. We need to be careful to recognise the fullness and diversity of people's talents and callings.

## **The big question that churches need to ask: is the non-Indigenous church helping people to experience a relationship with God that celebrates the uniqueness of Two-Spirit identities, or is it calling us to a relationship which asks Two-Spirit to mimic non-Indigenous, colonial versions of gender and sexual expression?**

When churches are open to expanding their understanding of what it means to support Two-Spirit people in the fullness of their beings, everyone benefits and together communities can further their commitment to right relations.

### **Recommended Resources**

- Ma-Nee Chacaby, *A Two-Spirit Journey: The Autobiography of a Lesbian Ojibwa-Cree Elder* (<https://uofmpress.ca/books/detail/a-two-spirit-journey>)
- *Koja and Angel Adeyoha, 47,000 Beads* ([www.flamingorampant.com/books/47000-beads-by-koja-and-angel-adeyoha-illustrated-by-holly-mcgillis](http://www.flamingorampant.com/books/47000-beads-by-koja-and-angel-adeyoha-illustrated-by-holly-mcgillis))
- Qwo-Li Driskill, Chris Finley, Brian Joseph Gilley, and Scott Lauria Morgensen, eds., *Queer Indigenous Studies: Critical Interventions in Theory, Politics, and Literature* (<https://uapress.arizona.edu/book/queer-indigenous-studies>)
- Daniel Heath Justice, ed., *Sexuality, Nationality, Indigeneity* ([www.dukeupress.edu/sexuality-nationality-and-indigeneity](http://www.dukeupress.edu/sexuality-nationality-and-indigeneity))
- Qwo-Li Driskill, Daniel Heath Justice, Deborah Miranda, and Lisa Tatonetti, eds., *Sovereign Erotics: A Collection of Two-Spirit Literature* (<https://uapress.arizona.edu/book/sovereign-erotics>)
- Jean O'Hara, ed., *Two-Spirit Acts: Queer Indigenous Performances* ([www.playwrightscanada.com/Books/T/Two-Spirit-Acts](http://www.playwrightscanada.com/Books/T/Two-Spirit-Acts))

Additional resources are listed in the Trans and Gender Identity Resources chart beginning on p. 74.

## CREATING TRANS-INCLUSIVE MINISTRIES AND EVENTS

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Take the time in your learning process to reflect personally and as a community on the impact of these new ideas. The tools in this kit are intended to guide the beginning of an ongoing learning process that will require patience and persistence. Below are some key aspects of creating trans-inclusive spaces for gatherings or events. They reflect a consciousness of the complexity of gender identity and make space for all experiences of gender.

### 1. Community building; safe, accessible, and affirming programs

#### a. Effective training for the leadership/staff

Ensure that people who are in leadership positions—who act as role models in your community—are well educated about trans experiences and gender identity. Leaders who are empowered with knowledge serve the community better. They can also play a key role in ensuring that people of all gender identities and gender expressions feel safe in the community.

For leadership training opportunities, contact a local community centre for people of all sexual orientations and gender identities, Affirm United/S'affirmer Ensemble (<http://affirmunited.ause.ca/>), or your Regional Council office ([www.united-church.ca/search/locator](http://www.united-church.ca/search/locator)). You may also start by using any of the resources listed in “Trans and Gender Identity Resources” (beginning on p. 74) to deepen your knowledge.

#### b. Watch your assumptions

When we see someone new, the very first thing our brain does is take note of two characteristics: race and gender. When it comes to gender, we assume that we have correctly identified a person's gender by their gender expression—how a person looks (for example, their hair, dress style, and mannerisms). From there a whole host of assumptions arise.

We also make assumptions about how the members of our community of faith are connected to gender identity issues. Not only may we be unaware of trans or non-binary people in our midst, but we also often forget that any one of us may have family, friends, neighbours, or coworkers who are trans. Family and friends are often uncertain how “out” they can be about trans family member(s). Creating a safe space for trans and non-binary people means creating a safe space for all of us.

#### c. Being aware of how and when gender is being used

It may be helpful to ask yourself: *Do I need to reference gender right now?* or *How can all gender expressions and identities be included right now?*

When planning activities (for example, ice breakers), take note of the ways in which gender is present. Are gender categories being used in ways that reinforce gender stereotypes or that only give space for two genders? If so, there are many other creative ways to explore commonalities and differences among a community or establish groups for activities. It is also important to give people opportunities to talk about their experiences with gender and explore their own identities. Opportunities for intentionally uplifting gender in its diversity are an important part of affirming trans experiences. They also encourage everyone to think critically and creatively about gender identity and expression.

#### d. Creating graceful learning spaces

Within any community of faith, there will likely be a wide range of experience when it comes to understanding gender identity. This means that people will need to support each other's learning in a way that encourages growth instead of fostering fear or shame for “not knowing enough.” It also means that special attention should be given to supporting and caring for those who are marginalized due to their gender identity.

To learn more about what it means to navigate these relationships as a community, take a look at the workshop “Creating Radically Inclusive Communities” (pp. 46–54). These activities are designed to help communities of faith explore this topic together, learn some skills for apologizing when it’s needed, and help each other learn, without singling anyone out or disclosing personal information.

**e. Names and pronouns**

Being able to define for yourself how you would like to be addressed—by name and pronoun—is an important aspect of building a community where people feel seen and accepted. Some trans folk may have recently chosen a name, which was not provided before the gathering. Or they may choose to wait until meeting a community before deciding which name they feel safest using. Pronouns are also important; gender often plays a role in determining which pronouns a person prefers.

To ensure a shared understanding of the importance of respecting an individual’s name(s) and pronouns, create an opportunity for people to share their names and pronouns. It could be a get-to-know-you activity, or by using name tags. It can also be helpful to talk about what the best thing to do is when someone uses the wrong name or pronoun to refer to an individual.

Until you know an individual’s chosen pronouns, it is helpful to learn to use gender-neutral language. For example: “Can you ask the person wearing the blue sweater if they would like to join us?” or “Is this bag theirs? Can you return it to them please?”

For many reasons, people may choose to use certain names or pronouns in some settings but not necessarily in others. It is always a good idea to ask someone how they would like to be referred to outside of the established community, or to give them an opportunity to name themselves when meeting new people. For example, someone may feel comfortable being out as a trans woman in a youth group, but would rather people did not disclose their chosen name and pronouns to family members. (For more information, see “Facts about Pronouns” on pp. 67–68.)

**2. Registration forms**

**a. Transparent, honest communication**

Transparent, honest communication is important to make an event or ministry affirming of trans individuals. It enables you to show how much thought and understanding you are putting into ensuring that people with various experiences of gender feel invited and safe. And it helps individuals make informed decisions about whether they want to participate in the event or join the community.

**b. Making space for options**

Effective registration forms give space for individuals to feel cared for and respected. Providing space for individuals to list their needs and concerns can go a long way in terms of starting ongoing conversations about support. See the guide on “Creating Trans-Inclusive Registration Forms” (pp. 41–45) for a sample registration form with accompanying commentary.

**3. Accommodations: providing information and options**

The Sample Registration Form (pp. 44–45) provides information on working with participants and their guardians to ensure that trans folk feel safe at events, especially those that involve overnight accommodations. The most important elements of ensuring accommodations are accessible are

- providing as much information as possible about the accommodations and what options are available for people depending on their needs
- ensuring that there is a baseline of privacy for all participants in regards to washrooms/shower areas and changing spaces

Please see “Creating a Gender-Inclusive Washroom Policy” (pp. 38–40) for more information. Several key factors in ensuring that washrooms are accessible are

- providing a gender-neutral washroom for individuals who feel most comfortable in non-gendered spaces
- ensuring an adequate sense of privacy for individuals of all genders, through either single-stall washrooms that are available for all genders or multiple-stall washrooms that provide an adequate amount of privacy

If the space currently has limitations regarding inclusive washrooms, this is important to communicate.

#### **4. Worship**

Worship is a time for the community to gather and feel close to one another and to God. It is important that trans people do not feel a barrier to their spiritual growth because a worship space is exclusive or harmful. Here are a few considerations when planning your worship.

- Avoid using gender to determine participation in praying, singing, or speaking. Try alternate groupings like altos, tenors, and sopranos or the right side and left side of the worship space.
- Avoid using stereotypes about gender in skits or for humour. Think critically about why you are drawing on ideas about gender and how to convey your message appropriately.
- Use prayers, hymns, and scripture translations that are gender-inclusive. (Be prepared to adapt liturgy using gender-inclusive language.)
- Engage in trans theology.
  - Research theologians and queer theorists who offer exegesis of the Bible from a trans perspective. Check out this trans theology reading list for a start: [www.transtheology.org/reading.html](http://www.transtheology.org/reading.html).
  - Include stories about trans individuals and communities in sermons, invite a trans person to share their spiritual journey with your community of faith, or include trans poetry/writing as part of a service. Contact a local community centre for people of all sexual orientations and gender identities, Affirm United/S’affirmer Ensemble (<http://affirmunited.ause.ca/>), or your Regional Council office ([www.united-church.ca/search/locator](http://www.united-church.ca/search/locator)) to ask if they can connect you with trans people willing to speak with you.

#### **5. Pastoral care for people of all sexual orientations and gender identities**

Spiritual care providers who can offer support and guidance to people who are dealing with transphobia and transmisogyny are in great demand. Successfully creating a community where trans people feel welcomed and celebrated is a gift for everyone involved. It also creates an opportunity and a challenge for further ministry beyond usual programming.

Trans folks who feel safe in a community may reach out for further resources or encourage other trans folks to join the community. It can be helpful to have resources on hand, such as emergency/crisis lines specifically created for youth of all sexual orientations and gender identities.

Other forms of ministry may emerge from engaging in trans-affirming community building. These include being called on to act as an advocate, educating fellow community members about gender identity, and participating in events within trans activist communities.

## 6. Human rights codes

Get to know and understand human rights codes. Both federal and provincial governments have amended their human right codes in recent years to include gender identity/gender expression as distinct categories protected from discrimination. Refer to these standards when setting policies and ensuring that standards are being met within your ministry's programs and events. For more information, see "It's the Law" on p. 7.

## 7. Networking

It can be very helpful to network with other organizations that are engaging in trans and gender justice work. Networking enables resources to be shared, and it is also an important way to feel supported in your work. We suggest you connect with

- local Affirming Ministries (<http://affirmunited.ause.ca/find-a-ministry>) and Affirm United/S'affirmer Ensemble (<http://affirmunited.ause.ca>)
- local community centres for people of all sexual orientations and gender identities
- national and international organizations for people of all sexual orientations and gender identities
- summer camps, such as Rainbow Camp ([www.welcomefriend.ca/camp](http://www.welcomefriend.ca/camp)), CampOUT! (<http://campout.ubc.ca>), Camp fyrefly (<https://education.usask.ca/fyrefly>), Camp Caterpillar ([www.camptapawingo.net/camp-caterpillar.html](http://www.camptapawingo.net/camp-caterpillar.html)), as well as other community programming for people of all sexual orientations and gender identities. Some United Church camps are working to become Affirming Ministries—they will be listed at <http://affirmunited.ause.ca/find-a-ministry>.
- the Student Christian Movement ([www.scmcanada.org](http://www.scmcanada.org))
- campus chaplaincies (see [www.united-church.ca/search/locator](http://www.united-church.ca/search/locator))

## 8. Claiming space for gender identity justice

A powerful way to making a space feel safe and welcoming is to use signs and posters to express your community's policies around gender identity and trans experiences. Consider getting trans artists involved or engaging members of the community to create posters and statements for display.

## 9. Ongoing learning and growth

We hope that the information you read here gives you some insight into the needs of people who are trans, Two-Spirit, or **gender-variant** (see the glossary of key terms and concepts on pp. 69–73). While no resource provides a complete solution to discrimination, this resource is designed to provide enough information that you feel empowered to play a leadership role in creating change in the communities you are a part of. Change will happen differently in every community and will involve different catalysts.

This toolkit allows for communities to engage in ongoing learning processes to be affirming and safe while being grounded in accountability and justice. To learn more about these skills, check out the workshop "Creating Radically Inclusive Communities" on pp. 46–54.

This guide is also available formatted for photocopying and distribution.  
Search [www.united-church.ca](http://www.united-church.ca) for "gender."

## **CREATING A GENDER-INCLUSIVE WASHROOM POLICY**

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One obvious way that we interact with gender is the way in which public washrooms are segregated. Gender-segregated washrooms pose problems for many reasons:

- Guardians and parents are not always the same gender as the children they are taking care of.
- Personal support workers are not always the same gender as the people they are supporting.
- People end up waiting in long lines to use the washroom, when there are available stalls nearby in a washroom designated for a different gender.

From the perspective of people who are trans and/or non-binary, gender-segregated washrooms pose further problems:

- Trans and non-binary individuals may feel unsafe using a washroom that matches their gender identity. When they do, people may harass them, tell them they are using the wrong washroom, or ask intrusive questions about their gender identity.
- Trans individuals who do not identify as a man or woman may not feel comfortable using gendered washrooms.

For these reasons, a gender-inclusive washroom policy is a concrete step toward making your space safe and welcoming for people of all gender identities.

### **Step One: Planning**

1. Make an education plan.
  - a. Identify key community members who will need to learn about a trans-inclusive washroom policy. They include ushers, custodians, Sunday school teachers, youth ministry leaders, and ministers.
  - b. Network with individuals who have expertise and experience in gender identity education. (See 7. Networking in “Creating Trans-Inclusive Ministries and Events” above, p. 34.)
  - c. Members of the community who are living visibly as trans will be directly affected by the education steps you take. Invite them to be involved in the planning stage, or check in with them about the plans as they are shaping up.
2. Take stock.
  - a. Identify financial assets available to animate a trans-inclusive washroom policy. Costs could include paying for an educator, washroom reconstruction/changes, and new washroom signs.
  - b. Start collecting the names of people in your community who would be interested in offering leadership to this project.

### **Step Two: Education and Developing the Policy**

1. Host learning opportunities for your community to learn about gender identity. Training could cover gender self-determination, binary and non-binary gender identities, and affirming language to talk about people who are trans.
2. Use gathering times as an opportunity to discuss ongoing work, such as the commitment to educate others about gender identity and the willingness to address an issue relating to washroom use if it arises.
3. Create an official trans-inclusive policy for your community of faith. (Refer to examples and practical considerations below).

### **What does a trans-inclusive washroom policy look like?**

There are several ways in which washrooms can be trans-inclusive. Every building is slightly different when it comes to the existing washrooms and the resources available to make changes. Here are several suggestions of how to move forward, with comments on each option:

1. Make all washrooms “all-gender.”
  - If you make washrooms available to all genders, changes to the stalls may be needed for people to use them with a desired level of privacy.
  - Education would be key to animating this washroom policy. Individuals who do not have a full understanding of gender and trans identities may object to the use of an all-gender washroom or feel uncomfortable using one.
2. Create a single-stall washroom that can be designated as all-gender, or reassign a current single-stall washroom as an all-gender washroom.
  - A single-stall washroom might not be able to accommodate the volume of people desiring one. Users may have various reasons: child and caretaker may not be the same gender, individual may require all-gender washroom, single-stall washrooms are often the only ones that can accommodate physical accessibility needs.
  - Also, in order to be intentionally inclusive, it would be important to specifically designate a single-stall washroom as all-gender. For example, put up a sign that states “All-Gender Washroom.” Depending on the building and who uses it, more explanation may be needed.
3. Reconstruct stalls in a washroom to be more like small single-stall washrooms, with floor-to-ceiling doors and a communal sink for hand washing.
  - This option may require the most construction. But it is most likely the most effective solution, as it makes washrooms accessible for all genders by removing the need to police anyone’s gender or gender presentation when accessing the space. This is especially helpful for trans individuals who fear not being read as a woman or man when using a washroom.

Decisions on the physical building changes will need to reflect the needs and context of each community. To get ideas and a feel for the pros and cons of different options, community members would benefit from taking tours in local buildings that have all-gender washrooms.

### ***Practical considerations***

1. Make every washroom space comfortable for all bodies and potential gender presentations. Have hooks for bags and purses in all stalls. Have wastebaskets in each stall for pad/tampon disposal.
2. Ensure that the washroom spaces provide an adequate level of privacy. Older stalls in multiple-stall washrooms may not create enough privacy for all people to feel safe while using them.
3. Be sure the signage does not perpetuate the idea that gender is a binary construct. For example, images that use a half-skirt/half-pant to signify a gender-neutral space do not accurately reflect the wide range of non-binary gender experiences. Rather, they imply that all non-binary people are half-man and half-woman. It may be useful to rethink imagery that is used on all washroom signs and move away from using pants/skirt imagery to designate gender. Signage might focus on what is in the washroom (toilet, urinal, handicap stall) and who is welcome to use it (parents with children, people with disabilities, trans people).

### ***Further accessibility considerations***

1. A washroom policy that addresses trans-inclusivity is not complete without making full considerations of other forms of accessibility. Please consult other resources to learn about creating barrier-free washrooms for people with physical accessibility needs.
2. To address the needs of those with chemical sensitivity issues, consider including a scent-free policy. Commit to use scent-free soaps and cleaning supplies and encourage people not to apply scented lotion and perfume in the washroom.



### Step Three: Sharing the New Policy

1. Make information about the washrooms visible upon entering the building. Information would include where the washrooms are located and the configuration of the stalls.
2. Update relevant resources—website, brochures, social media pages, and so on—with information about the gender-inclusive washroom policy.
3. Use signs on washroom doors to communicate your inclusive washroom policy.
4. Develop a communication strategy with all groups that use the building so that they understand the recent changes. Use weekly announcements, newsletters, websites, and so on.
5. Create a process for ongoing evaluation of the effectiveness of the washroom policy.

### An Important Note on All-Gender Washrooms

It is important that trans people always have the right to choose the washroom that feels safest for them. Not all trans people will want to use an all-gender washroom, even if there is one available. If you assume that all trans people will want to use an all-gender-washroom, trans people may feel as though their gender identity is being invalidated and disrespected.

A trans-inclusive washroom policy requires learning how to value and respect all people's experience with gender. That requires education and awareness. Simply creating an all-gender washroom will not make washrooms safe for all trans people.

#### Most importantly

Washrooms are safe for trans people when all people who use the washrooms are educated about gender identity.

Empowering people with education helps to ensure the space stays safe.

An investment in community education is needed so that people will be able to live into the trans-inclusive washroom policy.

### Additional Resources

- Gender Neutral Bathrooms ([www.uua.org/lgbtq/welcoming/ways/bathrooms](http://www.uua.org/lgbtq/welcoming/ways/bathrooms))  
This link on the Unitarian Universalist Association site has a variety of resources including FAQs, documentaries, and articles. *Note: includes concrete suggestions for washroom signage.*

This guide is also available formatted for photocopying and distribution.  
Search [www.united-church.ca](http://www.united-church.ca) for “gender.”



## CREATING TRANS-INCLUSIVE REGISTRATION FORMS

### Sample Registration Form with Commentary

#### Event Description

Event descriptions are useful in providing participants with information about what to expect before committing to participating in the event. For some people, certain activities may make them feel unsafe and prior notice gives them an opportunity to contact organizers to figure out how they can participate in the event and feel safe.

**EXAMPLE:** A United Church Region’s Youth Forum is an opportunity for youth across the Region to gather and participate in the Region’s AGM. The Youth Forum is designed to introduce youth to the functions of the Regional level, engage in dialogue about key issues that will be covered at the AGM, and explore the Region’s theme through youth-specific programming. Youth attending this event will have the opportunity to attend workshops, play games, sing songs, and more within a social justice framework.

#### Basic Information

Certain information, such as legal name, age, and gender, may not be required depending on the type of event you are hosting. Below you can find an example of how to collect basic information on a registration form that is trans-inclusive.

Legal name: \_\_\_\_\_

Name found on health card to be used in medical emergencies, or name found on passport to be used for travelling purposes.

Preferred name: \_\_\_\_\_

Name to be used throughout programming and on name tag.

Gender: \_\_\_\_\_

For many social gatherings, there is no logistical reason to know the gender of the people attending. Ask yourself: do you really need to know registrants’ gender for this event? If the information is not essential, consider removing the question, or making it clearly optional (particularly for online forms).

The approach recommended on this form is to ask an open-ended question that allows people to self-identify. “Gender: \_\_\_\_\_” If the information will be entered into a database, you may prefer to give a range of options, such as this:

- |                                     |                                          |                                      |                                      |
|-------------------------------------|------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Man        | <input type="checkbox"/> Cisgender man   | <input type="checkbox"/> Trans man   | <input type="checkbox"/> Genderqueer |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Woman      | <input type="checkbox"/> Cisgender woman | <input type="checkbox"/> Trans woman | <input type="checkbox"/> Two-Spirit  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Non-binary | <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____    |                                      |                                      |

Pronouns: How would you like us to refer to you? Circle all that apply or use the space provided below.

she/her/hers      they/them /theirs      he/him/his      Other: \_\_\_\_\_

In addition to asking on the registration form, include an opportunity for individuals to name themselves and share their pronouns at the start of the programming. Someone may change their preference between the time of registration and participation at an event.

Age: \_\_\_\_\_

Access needs: How can we make you feel safe and supported at this event?

You may use this space to communicate emotional/mental health needs, concerns about participating in a particular event, physical/mobility access needs, and more.

Alternatively, include relevant check boxes such as these:

- physical accessibility—low mobility
- physical accessibility—use mobility device
- require ASL interpretation
- require access to quiet/low sensory space
- require warning before bright and/or flashing lights are used
- require access to electricity to charge mobility device
- require use of microphones to hear people talk in large spaces
- require trigger warning before discussions of sensitive material

(please expand upon as much as you are comfortable under Other below)

- require child care
- would like assistance walking to/from accommodations
- other: \_\_\_\_\_

Health care needs: Do you have any medical conditions that we should be aware of to ensure your safety and well-being at this event?       Yes     No

If yes, please specify: \_\_\_\_\_

Medication: \_\_\_\_\_

Instructions for medication administration: \_\_\_\_\_

It is possible for someone who is transitioning to be taking medication (hormone blockers or hormones). Especially for events that last longer than a week, it could be important to provide a participant with a quiet, clean space where injection needles may be used and properly disposed of. For camps that have on-site nurses, inquire if the nurse is familiar with hormone replacement therapy and understands how to administer hormone replacement therapy injections.

Concerns: Please feel free to contact us if you have any questions or concerns about attending this event or use the space below:

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### **Accommodations**

Describe sleeping arrangements, changerooms, showers, and washrooms (include details, i.e., public stalls or private single stalls).

**EXAMPLE:** Participants at this event will be staying at the local university’s residence with 2–3 people assigned to each room. People can request individual sleeping arrangements as needed. Each floor will have two public washrooms, which will be designated as gender-neutral. Showers are available on each floor in a room that has private stalls for standing showers. One of the residence floors has a single-stall bathroom that includes its own private shower. Programming will take place at a United Church that has two public washrooms for men and women, and one single-stall, wheelchair-accessible washroom.

*Preferred accommodation:* Please list where you would feel most comfortable staying, participants you would like to share a room with, and/or what genders you would feel most comfortable sharing a room with.

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Concerns: Please list any needs or concerns you have about your accommodations (sleeping arrangements, changerooms, washrooms, etc.):

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### **Leadership Policy/Statement**

A vision or mission statement of the ministry team offering the event is an effective way to give participants an understanding of the values that will be uplifted at the event. This is also an opportunity to inform participants about any training that the leadership team has undergone.

**EXAMPLE:** This event has been organized by a collective of volunteers from a United Church Region, including ministry personnel and lay people, on behalf of the Youth and Young Adult Programming Unit. Our goal is to provide engaging, challenging, and nurturing opportunities for youth to build community and explore their faith. The Region’s Youth Forum is currently in the process of being recognized as an Affirming Ministry. Members of the leadership team for this event have undergone training in gender identity and sexual orientation, mental health awareness, suicide intervention, and First Aid.

## Sample Registration Form (Empty)

### Event Description

- (events)
- (topics discussed)
- (people involved)

### Basic Information

Legal name: \_\_\_\_\_

Name found on health card to be used in medical emergencies, or name found on passport to be used for travelling purposes.

Preferred name: \_\_\_\_\_

Name to be used throughout programming and on name tag.

Gender: \_\_\_\_\_

Pronouns: How would you like us to refer to you? Circle all that apply or use the space provided below.

she/her/hers      they/them /theirs      he/him/his      Other: \_\_\_\_\_

Age: \_\_\_\_\_

Access needs: How can we make you feel safe and supported at this event?

You may use this space to communicate emotional/mental health needs, concerns about participating in a particular event, physical/mobility access needs, and more.

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Health care needs: Do you have any medical conditions that we should be aware of to ensure your safety and well-being at this event?       Yes       No

If yes, please specify: \_\_\_\_\_

Medication: \_\_\_\_\_

Instructions for medication administration: \_\_\_\_\_

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Concerns: Please feel free to contact us if you have any questions or concerns about attending this event or use the space below:

---

---

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### Accommodations

- (sleeping arrangements)
- (changerooms)
- (showers and washrooms; public or single stalls)

*Preferred accommodation:* Please list where you would feel most comfortable staying, participants you would like to share a room with, and/or what genders you would feel most comfortable sharing a room with.

---

---

*Concerns:* Please list any needs or concerns you have about your accommodations (sleeping arrangements, changerooms, washrooms, etc.):

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***Leadership Policy/Statement***

- (leadership team)
- (values)
- (training)

## Workshops

### CREATING RADICALLY INCLUSIVE COMMUNITIES

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This workshop will help communities develop the tools for having courageous conversations. Although the activities are not necessarily focused on trans or Two-Spirit experiences, they explore the importance of embodying values, and personal and communal forms of accountability.

You may choose from among a variety of activities. You might explore the activities one at a time weekly, as a community-building exercise. They can be integrated with other curricula, such as a youth group, Bible study, or committee meeting.

When you are planning a workshop, be sure to read the notes at the end under Closing the Workshop Space (on p. 53) about ending the meeting well and community care.

### Setting Up the Workshop Space

#### *Territorial Acknowledgment*

*Goal:* Part of living out the United Church's commitment to right relations is to find ways for communities to be conscious of the history of colonialism in Canada. One way to encourage awareness of our relationship with the land we live on is to take time at the beginning of an event to acknowledge the Indigenous people whose land is being used. Search [www.united-church.ca](http://www.united-church.ca) for "acknowledging the territory in worship" for more information about this practice.

*Material:* Information about the history of the land you are gathered on, especially the names of the Indigenous communities who have lived and/or continue to live on the land.

*Process:* A short statement or prayer may be spoken. How you engage in this process will vary, depending on your own identity and experiences in regard to colonialism and the people who are part of the community that is gathering.

*Debrief:* Not always necessary, but space for questions or feedback can be a learning opportunity.

#### *Care Tags*

*Goal:* Participants have an opportunity to name themselves and their needs in order to better understand how to care for one another as a community.

*Material:* The more craft supplies the better! As a minimum, markers and one piece of paper for each participant and leader.

*Process:* Invite participants to create "care tags." These are name tags that include pronouns, important pieces about the individual's identity, and how they would like to be treated in the workshop space (also referred to as access needs). Depending on the community, it may be important to explain a little about pronouns and offer examples.

#### **EXAMPLE**

**Name:** Michiko

**Pronouns:** they/them

**Access needs:** time to think of answers to questions asked by the workshop leader

*Debrief:* Invite each participant to share their care tags with the rest of the group and display them in a way that enables them to be read.

## **Establishing Group Norms**

*Goal:* To ensure a shared vision of how everyone should treat each other and the space, by taking time for a communal conversation about it.

*Materials:* Chart paper and markers.

*Process:* Invite participants to share their thoughts on what commitments should be made by all the participants in regards to behaviour and communication. During the discussion, have someone record the comments on chart paper. Ask questions such as these:

- How do you feel about the start and end time of our gatherings? Is it okay to start with people missing? What should we do if we're late or unable to attend?
- How should we share our opinions with each other?
- What should happen if someone feels hurt by a comment made in this community?
- How do we feel about cell phone use during gatherings?
- How are we to treat the stories shared in this group? What does confidentiality look like?

*Debrief:* Once this process is complete, ask:

- Does this conversation feel complete?
- Would you like another opportunity to return to this later?
- If we want to adapt or change these commitments, how should that happen?

## **Activities**

The following activities are designed to be connected, but they also work as standalone activities. Choose activities that suit your gathering's available time and resources.

### **Embodying Values Activity**

*Goal:* A teamwork activity to help people make connections between values and behaviours. The exercise focuses on community values such as accessibility, justice, love, and peace, which are created through actions of all sizes.

*Materials:* Chart paper and markers. A hard copy of the "values prompts" (below) can be helpful, particularly for visual learners.

#### **Values Prompts**

Healthy communities are diverse.

Healthy communities have people who are accountable.

Healthy communities believe all people deserve to feel empowered.

Healthy communities believe that all people are worthy.

Healthy communities make decisions from places of love rather than fear.

*Process:* Introduce the activity: *You are about to form groups of 4–6 individuals to explore what makes a community safe and healthy. Each group will receive chart paper, a marker, and a values prompt to brainstorm with. Share your thoughts based on the prompt you receive, and identify three concrete actions that relate to the prompt.*

It may be helpful to clarify the difference between a concrete action and an abstract value statement. Help groups brainstorm with questions such as these:

- What would this value taste, look, sound, feel, and smell like?
- What words or phrases would someone use if they were demonstrating this value?
- What would the opposite of this value look like?

Here are some concrete vs. abstract examples for the value prompt “healthy communities are diverse:”

<b>Concrete Action</b>	<b>Abstract Value Statement</b>
People of different genders are invited to lead worship.	There are different people.
The community has engaged in education about White privilege and members are reflecting on how White cultural norms can make people of colour feel less welcome.	Everyone is welcome.
The community participates in the city's Pride Parade every year.	The community supports all people.

*Debrief:* Invite each group to share the values prompt they received and the concrete actions they came up with. Depending on your time, you can also encourage questions among the different groups, or take time to ask further questions such as these:

- What was challenging about this exercise?
- What was enjoyable?
- Do you think these concrete actions are reasonable?
- Why do you think people engage or do not engage in the behaviours you have listed?

*Key Points:*

- Living into our values means unlearning old habits and practising new ways of being.
- It can be easy to think and talk about healthy community values without embodying them.
- To create healthy communities, we need to think intentionally about change. Take time to consider how you will measure the health of the community and what actions will reflect the community's values.

### **Dealing with Conflict: Group Setting Activity**

*Goal:* To use drama to explore different forms of conflict, and to work as a group to problem solve difficult situations.

*Materials:* Scenario prompts. Some examples are provided below. However, it's even better to make scenario prompts that are appropriate for the context of your community.



### Sample Scenario Prompts

*Person 1* routinely uses the words “retarded” and “gay” to put others down or to talk about things they don’t like. *Person 2* has known *Person 1* for a while and has decided to have a conversation with them about their language.

What should *Person 2* say?

\*\*\*

*Person A* and *Person B* have just met at a party and started a conversation. It’s mostly been small talk. *Person A* becomes aware that *Person B* is using the wrong pronouns for someone who is also present at the party.

What should *Person A* do?

\*\*\*

*Person 3* and *Person 4* attend church together. *Person 3* recently mentioned to *Person 4* that they would leave the church if the voted to become an “Affirming congregation.” *Person 3* feels that this would be giving too much attention to the LGBTQ community and would be unfair to everyone else who attends the church.

What should *Person 4* do?

\*\*\*

*Person C* has posted something personal on Facebook about feeling hurt and betrayed after a breakup and has been receiving really negative responses from several people who are personally attacking them. *Person D*, who is close friends with *Person C*, logs onto Facebook and comes across the posts in their feed.

What should *Person D* do?

Process:

1. Ask participants the following questions:
  - What is conflict?
  - How do you feel when you are part of a conflict?
  - Does everyone act the same way when there is a conflict? Why?
2. If you are working with a large group (30+), it may be beneficial to break off into smaller discussion groups with assigned leaders to explore each scenario. In a smaller group, this exercise can be done with the whole group. Present the scenario prompt to the group and allow time for some conversation on the subject. When there has been sufficient conversation, invite two volunteers to demonstrate an example of how to address the scenario being discussed.
3. After the scenario has been presented, invite feedback:
  - What did you notice?
  - What did you think was helpful about how the situation was handled?
  - What did you think of the words chosen? Would you have chosen the same words?
  - What would have made the situation worse?
  - What would have happened if nothing was said?

*Debrief:* Although this activity involves debriefing each scenario, it may be helpful to take some time to debrief the concept of conflict in general. You may wish to ask questions such as these:

- Do you need to address a problem if it will compromise your safety?
- How has your culture or family influenced how you understand conflict?
- What is the best way to feel prepared for situations like this that come up in everyday life?
- Is body language important when trying to solve a conflict? Why?
- How does power or privilege play a role in the way conflicts are solved?

*Key Points:*

- It takes practice to learn how to address conflict when it arises.
- We have a responsibility to have difficult conversations with each other to help each other learn and grow together.
- Calling attention to someone's (potentially) hurtful or problematic behaviour is most healing and educational when we do not place blame or judgment on each other.

### **Processing Conflict: Journaling Activity**

*Goal:* To create space for participants to work individually on processing an experience of conflict and hurt.

*Materials:* Participants may be invited to bring a journal, or pen and paper can be provided. Some participants may prefer to use other devices for note-taking, such as a laptop or cell phone.

*Process:*

1. Invite participants to think of a time when they experienced an injustice that felt unresolved.
2. Tell participants that they will have 10 minutes to compose a letter addressed to the person/thing that hurt them. This exercise is meant to be confidential. They will not be required to share anything they write.

*Debrief:*

- How did it feel? What did you notice?
- Was that easy/hard? Why?
- What feelings did this exercise bring up for you?

At the conclusion of this activity, it is important to acknowledge that every individual will have their own process that works best for them for healing. Sometimes these processes can take a long time, with many ups and downs. Remind participants that if they are struggling with something, they can seek out people they trust to talk things through, and that if they have been hurt, they have the right to seek justice/reconciliation.

*Key Points:*

- It's important to create space to listen to ourselves about what is causing us pain in our life.
- Being able to name an injustice when we experience it as an important part of healing, even if it is just for our own knowledge.

## Giving a Good Apology Activity

*Goal:* A hands-on experience to learn about how to offer and receive apologies.

*Materials:* n/a

*Process:*

1. Explain to participants that even in the best of communities and relationships, mistakes can still happen. Apologies are an important part of building healthy communities. Most of us have experienced needing to apologize or being told to apologize, and we have a variety of experiences with receiving all sorts of apologies.
2. Invite participants to find a partner with whom they will practise apologizing. Offer a simple scenario that would require an apology (e.g., you have said something that hurt the other person's feelings). Instruct each person to take turns both giving and receiving an apology.

*Debrief:* The following questions could be used to debrief this exercise:

- How did it feel?
- Was it easy or difficult? Why?
- What made the apology effective? What can make an apology feel incomplete?
- When and where would be a good time to apologize?
- Do you always need to accept an apology? Why or why not?

*Key Points:*

- It's not always making a mistake, but refusing to apologize that can cause the most damage to a relationship in the long term.
- In cases of emotional manipulation or abuse, someone may be asked to apologize for something they should not have to be responsible for. If giving an apology makes you feel confused or upset, take some time to think about what is causing you to feel that way. It's okay to choose not to apologize if the situation is unjust.
- It's okay to ask for time and space to think about how you want to apologize.
- Apologies should involve not only words but a change in behaviour or action.

## Exploring the Intercultural Vision Activity

*Goal:* Learn to honour and deepen our understanding of difference by engaging in conversation about the church's vision for becoming an intercultural church

*Materials:* Print out copies of the United Church's "Vision for Becoming an Intercultural Church" (p. 54).

*Process:*

1. Read out loud the United Church's social policy position "Vision for Becoming an Intercultural Church" (p. 54).
2. Explain the Process of Mutual Invitation.

### Mutual Invitation

Mutual invitation is one way to engage in intercultural conversation. In this process, the group leader or a designated person shares first. Then they invite another person to share—ideally, invite someone who is not seated next to them—by name and with a question: “George, may I invite you to speak next?”

After the next person has spoken, they invite another. If you are invited to share, and are not yet ready, say “pass for now” and the group will offer you another invitation later. If you are invited to speak and do not want to speak at all, say “pass” and the group will honour your silence.

Continue the process until everyone in the circle has received an invitation to speak, and everyone who said “pass for now” has been re-invited to speak.

The process of mutual invitation is from the study guide for *Our Common Vision* (United Church DVD, 2011).

It is described fully in *The Wolf Shall Dwell with the Lamb* by Eric H.F. Law (1993, pp. 113–14).

3. Respond to the following question using the process of mutual invitation:
  - a. What did you find exciting about the vision?
  - b. What did you find challenging about the vision?
  - c. What are some tangible ways you might seek to live into the church's intercultural vision?
  - d. In the introduction to the kit we stated, “Our ideas of what ‘normal’ is, when it comes to gender, can limit our ability to celebrate the fullness of God’s diversity. So this kit supports the church’s intercultural vision of honouring differences.” How do you see the interconnection between the intercultural vision and gender identity?

#### Debrief:

- How did the process of mutual invitation feel? What did you like about it? dislike about it?
- How might you continue to engage in the intercultural vision in your community of faith?
- What further questions arise when you consider becoming an intercultural church?

#### Key Points:

- God exists in community, and we are invited to be in community together. Individually and in community, we do everything through the lenses of our cultures: there is no such thing as a culture-free perspective.
- Our experiences and understandings are shaped by our cultures. Since we cannot capture the complexity of God through our limited cultural understandings, our understanding of God is limited when we see this God through only one dominant cultural perspective. Instead, our understandings of God and our scriptures can be deepened when we come together, as disciples of Jesus Christ, in all of our differences and diversities to acknowledge intercultural reality and richness.
- We strive to become an intercultural church to deepen our understandings and experiences of God and of one another. Within The United Church of Canada, a variety of cultural expressions of faith are affirmed and welcomed.
- Part of the vision of the intercultural church is to create a space where we can sustain our own cultural identities while also affirming those of one another.

*More Information:*

For additional engagement on becoming intercultural, explore the Intercultural Ministries web page by searching "Intercultural Ministries" at [www.united-church.ca](http://www.united-church.ca).

## **Closing the Workshop Space**

### ***Ending the Meeting***

At the end of the workshop, thank the participants. This is a way to communicate that learning is a communal process and that their presence in the community is valued.

Take some time to talk about further contact among fellow participants and leaders. This can help communities stay in touch, as well as establish any necessary professional boundaries.

### ***Community Care***

Offer resources for individuals who are interested in further learning or require further support. This can be a way of ensuring that participants do not leave the workshop without any further help or direction. In particular, information about help lines and local counselling services can be useful.

Some of the exercises offered in this workshop guide could create space for people to disclose personal information that may require follow-up. Plan your event with grace time at the end, to ensure that people who require one-on-one conversations after the workshop can receive the support they require.

## Vision for Becoming an Intercultural Church

*When we affirm and welcome a variety of expressions of faith,  
it deepens our understanding of God and of each other.*

### **An intercultural church is a welcoming church...**

- It is joyful, accepting, and life-giving.
- It trusts that God's Spirit opens us to new experiences. It recognizes that those experiences can be challenging, painful, or uncomfortable.
- In referring to God, it uses a range of names and images. In writing policies and making statements, it uses many different images and ways of speaking.
- It is committed to listening and learning, not just to speaking and teaching. It invites full participation and dialogue. It allows itself to be changed.

### **a relational church...**

- It treasures the different contexts that God gives to different communities. It values diverse expressions of faith.
- It offers a positive vision of the whole community, together in its diversity. It encourages a healthy critique of each other's points of view.
- It values the give and take of respectful relationships. It commits to building right relationship with all of creation.
- It takes steps to become a multilingual community.

### **an adaptive church...**

- It is able, with God's grace, to accept mistakes. It learns from the past and grows.
- It is open to being vulnerable.
- It affirms diverse cultural identities, and avoids their assimilation into the dominant culture.
- It dares to engage in an ongoing transformation of heart, mind, structure, and policy. It adapts to change when change is called for.

### **a justice-seeking church...**

- It keeps finding new ways to share resources, redress imbalances of power, and challenge unfair systems. It seeks the equitable participation of all—both inside and outside of the church.
- It faithfully addresses racism and White privilege.
- It recognizes the churches' participation in historic injustices. It strives to do things differently.
- It thinks globally and commits itself to seeking justice.

### **an intentional church...**

- It aims to be enriched by different experiences and points of view. It knows that we hold much in common, but also have many differences.
- It provides a safe context for difficult conversations.
- It supports and encourages diverse leadership. This is especially important in communities that have been marginalized in the past.
- It examines itself, reflects, and keeps learning. It prays, educates, and consults. It monitors how well it is living out its intercultural vision.

### **a missional church**

- It looks for and applies the biblical and theological foundations for becoming an intercultural church.
- It affirms that the God of mission has a church in the world. We—in all of our differences—are active participants in God's mission.

### **What does “intercultural” mean?**

It means living together with a respectful awareness of each other's differences.  
We do this by examining ourselves, building relationships, and distributing power fairly.

This is a plain language version of the “Vision for Becoming an Intercultural Church” adopted at the Executive of General Council in October 2012, as part of the report “Intercultural Ministries: Living into Transformation.”

## **USING THE MATERIAL IN THIS STUDY GUIDE FOR SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION**

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### **The Value of Small Groups**

Small groups (or study groups) are an opportunity for participants to discover and struggle with ideas and to learn something new. Within a prayerful, open environment that promotes discussion in a challenging but affirming way, there is the opportunity for transformation.

A group process that includes prayer and intentional time for personal reflection provides a vessel within which things can happen. And things do happen to suggest God's healing, transformative power. The group process provides the space for participants to "minister" by being there for each other, listening to each other, and prayerfully challenging each other, with openness to God's Spirit.

### **Listening to the Stories**

1. Ask participants to get comfortable. Tell them that they are going to watch a video, a story about someone whose feelings and experiences are often invisible to most people. Then, watch "Ruth's Story," available online at <http://youtu.be/FD4XITKjtL4>. You may also wish to watch a different video of your choosing—see "Listen to the Stories" on pp. 10–11 or the resources chart starting on p. 74 for a selection of possible webinars/videos/films.
2. Ask participants to count off, so that they wind up in small groups of about four individuals each. Each group will discuss the story, using the following questions:
  - What was this story about?
  - What is being transgender?
  - What obstacles faced Ruth (or the person whose story you watched)?
  - Why did it take Ruth a long time to become the person she wanted to be?
  - What elements of your own story do you see reflected in Ruth's story?
3. Ask everyone to reassemble. Discuss the story together, briefly going over the four questions with the entire group. Make the point that everyone's life has a story, and that knowing that story can help us understand and care about people—both those whose lives are similar and those whose lives are very different from our own. End with these questions:
  - Have you ever felt sure that you wanted to be someone other than who you are (such as to be rich instead of poor, or to have a different skin colour or different gender, or to be from a different family)?
  - Were you able to tell anyone else how you felt? If so, how did they react? If you couldn't talk about how you felt, why not?
  - Have you ever known anyone who identified as a gender other than the one assigned to them at birth? Were you supportive? Why or why not?
  - What are some things you can do to be supportive of people who are trans?

## Additional Discussion Questions

All responses to the evaluation questions found under Questions & Feedback at the end of this kit (p. 86) are welcome.

Invite participants to anonymously submit questions (e.g., through a question box) that can be discussed safely in the group. At any point, the group can consider the following questions:

- Did anything surprise or excite you?
- Did anything make you uncomfortable?
- What questions or concerns does the kit raise in your mind?
- How does the text support or affirm your faith?
- How does the text challenge your faith?
- What faith questions does it raise for you?
- Has the text stirred you to some form of action? If so, what?

## Small Group Activities

### A. Umbrella Activity

*Goal:* This activity will help participants to become more familiar and comfortable with some of the terms and definitions introduced in *Celebrating Gender Diversity*.

*Materials:*

- Print each of the umbrella terms from the list below, to cardstock (or paper).
- Print the definitions for each of the terms on a separate cardstock (or paper). (Use the definitions found in “Gender and Sexuality: Glossary of Key Terms and Concepts,” pp. 69–73.)
- Ensure all participants have a copy of the Glossary of Key Terms and Concepts.
- Create a complete Umbrella Words and Definitions “cheat sheet” for yourself as the facilitator.

Umbrella Terms				
agender	ally	bisexual	cisgender	cissexism
gender	gender binary	genderfluid	gender identity	genderqueer
heterosexism	non-binary	queer	sexuality	
sexual orientation	trans	transgender	transsexual	
transition	transmisogyny	transphobia	Two-Spirit	

*Exercise* (15–20 minutes):

1. Welcome and introduction
2. Invite each participant to share their name and preferred pronoun (he/him, she/her, they/them).
3. Explain the Umbrella Words and Definitions Exercise:



- You are going to break up into groups of 3–4.
  - Each group will receive a stack of word cards and a stack of definition cards.
  - The goal is to match each definition to the correct word.
  - You can start by having someone read one of the definitions out loud. Then the group can find the word card that matches that definition.
  - Before moving on to the next definition, one person in the group needs to use the word in a sentence (to show understanding).
  - Repeat activity with next definition.
4. Come back together into plenary to debrief:
- Are there any questions about the content? Did you notice anything new/different about the language used? What was it like to do this exercise?

## ***B. Gender Roles and Oppression***

*Establishing Group Norms:* Prior to engaging in this activity, we recommend that the group works to create a safe space by completing the Establishing Group Norms activity (see p. 47). Responses to questions in this activity may raise strong emotions in participants, as they recall times of being bullied or abused. If someone starts crying, allow the pain, create space for it, have tissues easily available, and check with the person (Do you want to take a break? Are you okay now?) before proceeding.

*Purpose:* This exercise can be a lead-in for discussion around multiple issues. The facilitator can use the exercise to look at how sexism, heterosexism, and transphobia<sup>30</sup> are related to one another (share the definitions in the footnotes, if needed).

Also explain that while we are looking at dominant mainstream ideas of gender, we want to acknowledge that gender roles may vary depending on ethnicity, culture, class, ability, family, and so on.

Let participants know that in this exercise we are going to ask them to say words that might be challenging or uncomfortable for some people.

*Materials:*

- flip chart
- markers

*Exercise:*

Draw two boxes on the board. On top of one box write “Be a Real Man.” On top of the second box write “Be a Real Woman.” *Note: This exercise intentionally focuses on the gender binary and looks solely at men and women.*

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<sup>30</sup> **sexism:** the attitude or behaviour—based on traditional stereotypes of gender roles—that discriminates or devalues people based on their sex or gender.

**heterosexism:** the assumption that everyone is heterosexual, and that the normal way for humans to bond is with a partner of the opposite sex. Heterosexism is the systemic promotion of heterosexuality, and the simultaneous stigmatization of all other sexual orientations.

**transphobia:** conscious or unconscious hatred of, fear of, and discrimination against individuals who do not conform in appearance and/or identity to cisnormative or “traditional” conceptions of gender. It is typically demonstrated through disrespect, denial of rights and needs, and often harassment and violence.

Be a Real Man	Be a Real Woman
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Ask the following questions—first responding to questions 1–5 for men, then responding to questions 1–5 for women. Participants can also do the exercise in pairs or small groups. Remember that this exercise seeks to look at stereotypes, not at individual behaviour.

1. Have you ever been told, or have you ever heard someone else being told, to “be a real man/woman” or “act like a man/woman”? What are the expectations (that may or may not be the reality) that society has of someone who is a “real man/woman”?  
*Write these responses inside the appropriate box—for men they may include a list of don'ts such as don't cry or don't show your emotions, be strong/dominant, fix things; for women they may include be gentle and sweet, look pretty, be submissive, care for children.*
2. What names are men/women called, who fall outside this box?  
*Write these responses outside and around the appropriate box—for men they may include wimp, like a girl, fag, queer, pussy, gay; for women they may include dyke, butch, tomboy, lesbian, slut, ho, whore.*
3. What kinds of things happen physically to people outside the box?  
*Write these outside and around the appropriate box—for men and women they may include harassed, teased, ignored, physical and/or sexual assault, bullied.*
4. How might those people who are outside the box feel?  
*Write these outside and around the appropriate box—for men and women they may include afraid, insecure, lonely, different, abnormal.*
5. How might those people who are inside the box feel?  
*Write these around the insides of the appropriate box—for men and women they may include safe, comfortable, happy, proud, confident, cocky, fake, afraid of being found out.*
6. Invite people to share personal stories if comfortable.

*Reflection Questions: Transphobia/Homophobia/Heterosexism*

1. How many men here today fit in to the box all of the time? How many women? How many fit beyond the binary? *(invite people to share as they are comfortable)*
2. Is it always safe inside the box and unsafe outside the box?
3. Where do you think power lies, inside or outside the box?
4. How do these boxes contribute to the existence of sexism? heterosexism? transphobia?
5. How do the stereotypes listed in the boxes relate to stereotypes for straight and queer people?
6. What might these boxes look like inside the church? What are the expectations (gender roles, behaviour, and expressions) of men in the church? women? transgender or non-binary people?
7. How do we change these expectations in the church? in society?
8. What is the role of resistance?

## A GENDER IDENTITY WORKSHOP FOR COMMUNITIES OF FAITH

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— by Michiko Bown-Kai. Michiko is currently a candidate for ministry in the United Church.

This workshop (approx. 90 minutes) is designed to help community leaders introduce the topic of gender identity to a community of faith. While the workshop environment benefits from having people of all experiences as participants, it is designed to meet the needs of individuals who are still learning about gender identity and trans experiences.

*Note for facilitators:* Explaining basic concepts is easier when you have a deeper understanding of the topic. This workshop requires thorough preparation and may generate many questions.

*Before the workshop:*

- E-mail participants asking them to share why they are interested in attending, what they hope to learn, and any concerns they have about attending.
- Make a point of learning about the workshop location. Are there any concerns about accessibility or finding the space?
- Please see each activity to prepare materials.
- Consider preparing a questionnaire to gather feedback at the end of your workshop. This will help you determine what resources or education opportunities to recommend in the future.

### 1. Gathering (3 min.)

*Materials:* copies of *More Voices*

Invite participants to sing “I Am Walking a Path of Peace” (MV 221). For the purpose of the workshop, try singing the hymn with an additional “I am learning...” verse.

### 2. Setting Up the Workshop Space (25-30 min.)

Use processes found on pp. 46–47 of this kit:

- Territorial Acknowledgment, p. 46
- Care Tags, p. 46
- Establishing Group Norms, p. 47

### 3. Bodies, Genders, and Sexualities (15 min.)

*Goal:* To explain and explore the connections between body, gender identity, gender expression, and sexual orientation.

*Material:* Prepare four sheets of paper with the words *body*, *gender identity*, *gender expression*, and *sexual orientation*. Or write each term separately on a chalkboard.

*Process:* Using the four terms you have written out and the suggested script, explain the differences and connections between bodies, gender identity, gender expression, and sexual orientation.

### Suggested script

Most of us in this room have been taught by our families, teachers, churches, and media about the following four topics: bodies, gender identity, gender expression, and sexual orientation.

The most dominant story in our society goes like this: When you are born, your body determines what gender you are. Based on this gender, you are expected to wear certain clothes and behave certain ways, and it is assumed that you will be attracted to a certain gender. For example, a child is born and assigned female at birth. This person is assumed to be a woman, who will be attracted to men. *(For both the explanation and example, point to each word and trace the connections.)*

However, from our own lived experiences and relationships, we know that this story about bodies, gender identity, gender expression, and sexuality does not ring true for everyone. For example, for trans people, the gender they were assigned at birth *(point to word: BODY)* is different than their gender identity *(point to word: GENDER IDENTITY)*. We also know that people of any gender *(point to word: GENDER IDENTITY)* may be attracted to other people *(point to word: SEXUAL ORIENTATION)*.

After completing your presentation, take a few minutes to answer any questions.

*Debrief:*

- Ask participants to turn to a partner for a three- to four-minute conversation. Reflect on times when you have seen these assumptions at play.
- In the large group, share any key findings you had in your discussion.

*Key Points:*

- What becomes apparent from these stories is that assumptions about people's bodies, gender identity, gender expression, or sexual orientation are often based on stereotypes and can be hurtful.
- Learning about the assumptions we make about how these categories connect can help us recognize where we need to give people more space and opportunity to name those things for themselves.

## 4. Making Space and Starting Conversations (15–20 min.)

*Goal:* To help participants think through common concerns around how someone addresses gender identity issues are addressed within the church.

*Materials:* Copies of individual case studies (see below) for small discussion groups. (Feel free to create your own as well.)

*Process:* Divide into groups of three and give each small group a different case study to discuss for 10 minutes. Depending on the size of your group, you may use several case studies more than once.

### Case Studies

- a. A person e-mails the church asking if it would be safe for a trans person to attend a worship service. What do you do?
- b. You are part of a team that is hosting a youth event that will have a youth participant who has been questioning their gender identity. What do you do?
- c. Someone who has been part of your community of faith for several years has started to change their gender presentation when attending weekly worship service. What do you do?

*Debrief:* Invite everyone to return to the larger group and allow each group to share highlights from their discussion.

*Key Points:*

- Supporting trans people or gender-variant people requires that you respect their privacy and ability to determine what their own needs are.
- We all have a responsibility to show support and understanding of gender identity issues so that people will feel safe enough to approach us.
- Asking if someone would like ongoing support is important. People may need help that extends beyond one conversation.

## 5. Learning New Language (10 min.)

*Goal:* To become aware of how gender and language are very closely connected.

*Materials:* hymn books

*Process:*

Explain to participants that the language we use can say a lot about gender without us even realizing it. For example, expressions such as “ladies and gentlemen” or “mom and dad” assume there are only two genders. We can also communicate ideas about gender through the pronouns we use or the way we refer to people. For example: “Can you ask the woman over there if she is looking for something?” or “Is this your son? How old is he?”

Look together at a hymn that would be familiar in your community of faith. How is gender used in the hymn? Does it only talk about men and women? Is God only referred to as one gender?

*Debrief:*

- How do you think people who do not identify as a man or a woman feel when singing these hymns?
- Can you think of ways to modify these hymns so that they are more inclusive?
- What are some other times we should be aware of the language we are using in church? (*suggestions may include prayers, the language ushers use to greet newcomers, the way a minister tells a story in a sermon*)

*Key Points:*

- Even hymns or prayers that communicate a message of welcome may exclude people by the language they use.
- Becoming aware of how connected language is to gender is a long learning process. It can feel like unlearning aspects of language that feel very comfortable to us.

## 6. End of Workshop Take-Away (10–15 min., depending on size of group)

Invite each participant to reflect on one thing they would like to commit to doing based on the lessons they have learned in the workshop.

*Debrief:* Invite each participant to share how the workshop has affected them and what commitment they have made. After everyone has had an opportunity to share, thank the group for their participation. This is also an ideal time to share resources you are aware of that support further learning in the area of gender identity.

## **7. Closing (3 min.)**

*Material:* copies of *More Voices*; feedback questionnaire (optional)

*Closing song:* Invite participants to sing “I Am Walking a Path of Peace” (MV 221). Try singing the hymn with an additional “I am learning...” verse.

If you have prepared a questionnaire, hand it out at the end of the workshop. Feedback can help you determine what resources or education opportunities to recommend to your community in the future.

## Handouts

### **CELEBRATING TRANS AND TWO-SPIRIT PEOPLE IN COMMUNITIES OF FAITH**

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In communities of faith, all should feel loved and welcomed. Therefore, these spaces should challenge the hurtful messages trans and Two-Spirit people receive from the rest of society every day. This is why it is so important to commit to trans and Two-Spirit justice as a community of faith.

We live in a world that teaches us many hurtful assumptions about people who are trans and Two-Spirit. So it requires intentionality to help someone who is trans or Two-Spirit feel affirmed. This work will directly benefit individuals who are trans or Two-Spirit as well as family and friends of trans and Two-Spirit people. But remember, too, that when communities are created where everyone feels fully welcome, it benefits the entire community.

Here are some ways that you can engage in trans and Two-Spirit justice.

#### **1. Uplift and affirm the experiences of trans and Two-Spirit folks.**

Find ways to explicitly name trans and Two-Spirit people as children of God in liturgy. Use sermons to explore theologically how trans and Two-Spirit people are blessed members of the kingdom of God, and explore how trans and Two-Spirit experiences can influence someone spiritually.

#### **2. Make sure that trans and Two-Spirit folks are given the space to speak for themselves.**

As you engage in allyship, be sure to carefully consider the folks who are living visibly as trans and Two-Spirit in your community. Always give space for trans and Two-Spirit folks to express their needs and boundaries so that they feel safe and respected.

#### **3. Encourage trans and Two-Spirit leadership in your community by giving them an opportunity to share their gifts.**

Trans and Two-Spirit folks are not only gifts to their communities because of their presence and insight on gender. They also have many skills and gifts that they want to be invited to share. Take the time to get to know the trans/Two-Spirit folks in your community.

#### **4. Create a trans-inclusive washroom policy.**

Safe washrooms exist when communities are educated about gender and understand that all people have the right to choose the washroom that feels safest for them. For some trans and Two-Spirit folks, having a gender-neutral washroom is an important piece to feeling safe. However, it is also important to ensure that trans men and trans women can access gendered bathrooms while feeling safe and respected.

#### **5. Use language that is inclusive of all genders.**

The more you learn about trans and Two-Spirit experiences, the better you will become at using inclusive language. For example, phrases such as “ladies and gentleman” or “brothers and sisters” do not allow space for people who have non-binary gender identities. Try alternatives such as “folks,” “family,” or “siblings.” Trans and Two-Spirit inclusive language challenges the assumption that everyone is cisgender. For example, it does not assume that all women can give birth or that everyone lives as the same gender their whole life. Inclusive language should be part of all that your community engages in including your website, bulletins, Sunday school curriculum, liturgy, and conversations.

## 6. Learn how to support.

Make sure your pastoral care providers are educated about trans and Two-Spirit issues so that they can provide adequate support to trans and questioning individuals as well as their family and friends.

## 7. Offer ministry to trans/Two-Spirit folks beyond your community.

Do you have any resources you could offer to members of the trans and Two-Spirit communities? Networking with organizations that are engaged in trans or Two-Spirit activism is a great way to let people know of the resources and gifts your community of faith can share with others.

## 8. Review the current policies and resources that are being used in your community to ensure that the language and ethos are trans-affirming and trans-inclusive.

Are your marriage certificates and policy inclusive of all genders? Is gendered language used in baptism certificates? Are any educational resources on gender and/or sexuality outdated but still in circulation?

*It is important to note that, for some cultures, more than two gender identities are recognized and that there may be a more appropriate identity that an individual prefers to use in conjunction with or instead of “trans.”*

*The term “Two-Spirit” is used by Indigenous peoples, but holds a variety of meanings depending on the community. The term “Two-Spirit” was included in this resource to respect that people may wish to claim a gender identity outside of norms defined through colonialism.*

*For more information, see “Making Your Ministry Two-Spirit Inclusive” on p. 31. Further information on the use of the terms “trans,” “Two-Spirit,” “cisgender,” and so on, may be found in this kit.*

This handout is also available formatted for photocopying and distribution. Search [www.united-church.ca](http://www.united-church.ca) for “gender.”



## **RADICAL WELCOME AND GENDER IDENTITY: IDEAS FOR ENGAGING IN TRANS AND TWO-SPIRIT JUSTICE**

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### **1. Read, learn, listen.**

There are so many different experiences in trans and Two-Spirit communities that you can always learn more by listening to people's lived experiences. The more trans and Two-Spirit stories you are exposed to, the better you are able to understand the complex realities of many different members of trans and Two-Spirit communities.

### **2. Teach yourself not to make assumptions about other people's experience with gender.**

When you stop making assumptions about others, you are creating space for them to truly be themselves. These are some common assumptions that people often make:

- you can tell who is cisgender and who is trans or Two-Spirit
- all trans and Two-Spirit people want to medically transition
- all trans and Two-Spirit people want to talk about gender and their experiences of being trans

### **3. Ask for pronouns and offer your own when you are meeting someone.**

Learning someone's pronouns is like learning a new person's name. You can't tell someone's name or pronouns by looking at them, so it's important to ask. And if you forget, it's best to simply ask for a reminder. The practice of asking people what pronouns they prefer is a reminder that you cannot tell someone's gender by looking at them. It is best to ask all people, not just those you perceive as non-binary and/or trans.

### **4. Challenge people when you hear them say things that are transphobic, cissexist, or transmisogynist.<sup>31</sup>**

If you notice someone expressing ideas that are not inclusive or welcoming to trans and Two-Spirit folks or using slurs that hurt members of trans and Two-Spirit communities, it is important that it does not go unchallenged. Education can happen in many ways—so don't be afraid to be creative!

### **5. Share and support the stories and ideas of trans and Two-Spirit people in your everyday conversations and social media.**

Help make sure that trans and Two-Spirit folks are not only treated as footnotes in conversations about gender. Being an ally also means trying to find ways to bring trans and Two-Spirit stories into your everyday life.

### **6. Challenge the institutions you are a part of to be safer spaces for trans and Two-Spirit folks.**

Demand all-gender bathrooms at schools, campuses, and workplaces. Encourage teachers to use trans and Two-Spirit authors and artists in their class materials. Ensure policies and communications use language that is inclusive of all genders.

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31 **transphobic:** hating, fearing, and (conscious or unconsciously) discriminating against individuals who do not conform in appearance and/or identity to cisnormative or "traditional" conceptions of gender.

**cissexist:** assuming that everyone is cisgender and adheres to the gender binary, and seeing this as the only normal or healthy way to express gender. Cissexism oppresses people with trans identities.

**transmisogynist:** the use of language and behaviour that is sexist, misogynist, and regularly demonizes and ridicules trans women.

## 7. Support the work of trans and Two-Spirit artists.

Go see trans and Two-Spirit art shows, poetry readings, plays, and more! Also, there are always crowd-funding initiatives looking for money to support the work of trans and Two-Spirit artists.

## 8. Learn how to talk about bodies, gender, and sexuality in ways that are trans-inclusive.

Language is important. Take time to learn and practise new ways of talking that are inclusive of all bodies. These are some common language mistakes:

- language that only recognizes men and women (the gender binary) such as “ladies and gentlemen,” “brothers and sisters,” “the opposite gender”
- associating genitalia and/or reproductive organs with someone’s gender

## 9. Learn how to make mistakes.

Even people with the best intentions will likely still make mistakes. As an ally, one of the most important things you can do is be willing to always listen. It is easy to feel guilty or ashamed if you make a mistake, but in these situations the best thing to do is engage in learning and apologizing.

## 10. Ask.

Check in with the trans folks in your life about what information you’re allowed to share and what kind of advocacy they would appreciate. Every person’s needs are unique. Make a point of asking the trans people in your life what support looks like to them as individuals.

## 11. Don’t make trans and Two-Spirit folks apologize for being themselves.

Exploring gender expression and gender identity can be a tricky process with many ups and downs. Make sure that the trans and Two-Spirit folks in your life know that you support them, regardless of how they choose to live out their identity. Giving a trans or Two-Spirit person the space to be themselves without judgment can make a world of difference.

*It is important to note that, for some cultures, more than two gender identities are recognized and that there may be a more appropriate identity that an individual prefers to use in conjunction with or instead of “trans.”*

*The term “Two-Spirit” is used by Indigenous peoples, but holds a variety of meanings depending on the community. The term “Two-Spirit” was included in this resource to respect that people may wish to claim a gender identity outside of norms defined through colonialism.*

*For more information, see “Making Your Ministry Two-Spirit Inclusive” on p. 31. Further information on the use of the terms “trans,” “Two-Spirit,” “cisgender,” and so on, may be found in this kit.*

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## FACTS ABOUT PRONOUNS

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— by Michiko Bown-Kai. Michiko is currently a candidate for ministry in the United Church. They created the first edition of the Celebrating Gender Diversity resource in 2015, while on staff at the United Church's General Council Office.

### What are pronouns?

Pronouns are words used to refer to a person, place, or thing. In English, the pronouns “he” or “she” are frequently used to talk about a singular person.

### Why should we talk about pronouns?

Most people are raised to believe that there are only two genders and that gender can be determined based on appearance. This involves many assumptions when referring to other people, including the decision to use “he” or “she” pronouns. However, there are people who are hurt when these assumptions are made. They may not identify with “he” or “she” pronouns and would prefer something gender-neutral like “they.” They may be a trans person whom you are reading as the wrong gender.

### When should we talk about pronouns?

It's great to talk about pronouns when meeting people or when group introductions are being made. You can't assume someone's name without asking; the same goes for someone's pronouns.

### Can I make a joke when sharing my pronouns?

If you have been asked to participate in sharing your pronouns, it is important that you engage in the exercise with respect. For people who rely on pronoun sharing in order not to be misgendered, pronouns are a serious matter. When you don't take sharing pronouns seriously, you are telling other people that you are unaware or unsympathetic about how painful it can be to live in a world where your identity is frequently disrespected or ignored.

### What do I do if someone's pronouns bother me?

Find someone who is educated about the issue and ask if you can talk to them—it is important for you to work through your feelings about this. In the meantime, understand that people have the right and ability to choose what gender identity and pronouns work best for them, regardless of your opinion.

### What do I do if someone uses the wrong pronouns for someone else when I am around?

If you know the person who is being referred to, you can ask them how they would like you to respond in those situations. But when possible, correcting the pronoun is helpful. If the person using the pronoun seems confused or resistant to the correction, consider taking time to fully explain the importance of using correct pronouns.

### What do I do if I use the wrong pronouns?

Apologize and correct yourself by using the right pronoun. This will help you learn how to use the right pronoun in the future. Your apology should not be made in a way that demands the person you misgendered to forgive you or make you feel better.

### What do I do if I don't know the person's pronouns?

Use their name or gender-neutral pronouns.

### **If a person wants to use “they” as their pronoun, which is correct: “they are” or “they is”?**

Use the plural verb conjugation when using “they” as a pronoun that refers to an individual. Example: “They are a talented artist.” Or you could try rewording the sentence to avoid both a gender identification and the need for a pronoun. Example: “The artist is talented.”

### **How do I introduce pronouns as a facilitator in a space?**

Since discussions about pronouns may be new to many people, offer a brief explanation of the process. A suggested introduction would be:

“When we take turns sharing our names, I want to ask each of you to also share the pronouns that you would like people to use to refer to you. For example, ‘My name is Michiko; I use *they* and *them*.’ Although we often use assumptions about gender to determine someone’s pronouns, this exercise will give us all a chance to name how we want to be addressed so we can better respect each other’s gender identities.”

In this process, people may need reminding and prompting. But it is important that all people participate, even those who are privileged enough to never have to think about stating their pronouns.

**This handout is also available formatted for photocopying and distribution. Search [www.united-church.ca](http://www.united-church.ca) for “gender.”**

## GENDER AND SEXUALITY: GLOSSARY OF KEY TERMS AND CONCEPTS

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*Disclaimer:* Language has power and is constantly changing. The terms used in this resource and listed in the glossary are designed to empower you with language that will help you better understand discussions of gender and sexuality. Many of the terms are self-identifications; they mean something different to each person who identifies with the term. For the most part, terms are based in Western understandings of gender and sexuality so they may not speak to the experiences of those from many cultures. Remember not to apply labels to individuals. Understand that identities are fluid and contextual—just because someone shares part of their identity with you doesn't mean they're comfortable with you sharing this with others.

### General Terms

**ally:** a heterosexual and/or cisgender person who supports equal rights for people of all sexual orientations and gender identities. They actively challenge heterosexism, homophobia, biphobia, transphobia; they are aware of heterosexual and cisgender privilege in themselves and others.

**intersex:** refers to people who are born with any of a range of sex characteristics that may not fit a doctor's notions of binary "male" or "female" bodies. Variations may appear in a person's chromosomes, genitals, or internal organs like testes or ovaries. Some intersex traits are identified at birth, while others may not be discovered until puberty or later in life. There are over 30 specific intersex variations and each intersex person is different. Potential causes of intersex traits include random genetic variations, changes in a person's number of sex chromosomes, gonadal differences, natal exposure to unusual levels of sex hormones, or different responses to sex hormones.<sup>32</sup>

**LGBTQIA+:** an acronym used to denote identities of individuals and groups. It is a Western placeholder that stands for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender/transsexual, queer/questioning, intersex, asexual/allies, and all other sexual and gender identities. The understanding behind the acronym is that sexuality and gender are fluid and that language is contextual and evolving. The intent of the acronym is to be inclusive while recognizing that it is not perfect.

**SOGIE:** an abbreviation combining **S**exual **O**rientation, **G**ender **I**ntity and **E**xpression that has become one of the main reference terms to describe the LGBT (or lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender) community outside of North America. It is currently being introduced in legal doctrines and United Nations documents, and is becoming popular in social media. Its usefulness lies in its inclusiveness: The term "LGBT" is specific to lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people, but "SOGIE" refers to characteristics common to all human beings because everyone has a sexual orientation and a gender identity. Everyone also has a gender identity and gender expression, not just lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people.

### Sexuality

**sexuality:** beyond the physical aspects of our body, sexuality covers our sexual desires, sexual identity, and emotional and physical sexual health. Sexuality impacts our relationships with our own bodies as well as our relationships with other people. It involves our thoughts, desires, and experiences. Our understanding of sexuality is based on culture; religion, family, media, and more all play a role. In this sense, sexuality is something that can feel deeply personal and also be understood on a societal level.

**sexual orientation** (also known as *sexuality*): refers to a person's emotional, spiritual, intellectual, and sexual attraction

<sup>32</sup> Definition is reprinted with permission from InterACT: Advocates for Intersex Youth (<https://interactadvocates.org/intersex-definitions/>).

**asexual:** a person who does not experience sexual attraction or desire. This person may or may not have spiritual and emotional attraction to others.

**bisexual:** some bisexual communities, reflecting an understanding that there are more than two genders, define bisexuality as a person who is sexually and/or emotionally, spiritually, and intellectually attracted to both their own gender and people of other genders. However, a popular understanding of bisexual is an individual of any gender who is attracted to both men and women.

**lesbian/gay/homosexual:** a person whose primary sexual and/or emotional, spiritual, and intellectual attraction is to a person of the same gender

**pansexual:** someone who identifies as being attracted to all gender identities or for whom gender is not a consideration when choosing a romantic or intimate partner

**queer:** a term that may include lesbians, gays, bisexuals, trans people, and people who challenge the boundaries of sexual orientation, sex, and gender. The term can sometimes be an insult. It is also used frequently as an affirmative political and/or identity statement, and it describes a school of thought called queer theory.

**straight/heterosexual:** a male-identified person who is attracted to female-identified people, or a female-identified person who is attracted to male-identified people

See p. 56 for the “Umbrella Activity,” a small group activity to help participants become more familiar with some of these terms and definitions.

## Gender

**gender:** a social construct that differs from culture to culture. The World Health Organization defines *gender* as referring to the socially constructed roles, behaviours, activities, and attributes that a given society considers appropriate for men and women (such as certain roles, as well as appearance).

**gender identity:** a self-determined identity that reflects an individual's personal understanding of gender in regard to their own embodied experiences

**gender presentation/expression:** how a person chooses to express their gender to others (through clothing, behaviour, etc.)

**gender binary:** the concept that there are only two genders – male and female; and understands this as the only one “right,” “normal,” or “healthy” way for gender to be understood, identified, and expressed—that is, as either male or female, masculine or feminine. The gender binary tells us that there are no grey areas, no middle ground, no continuum.

**afab and amab:** A child born with female genitalia is typically assigned female at birth, or afab. A child born with male genitalia is typically assigned male at birth, or amab. Some trans people prefer the terms dfab/dmab which stands for *designated* female/male at birth.

**agender:** Some agender people feel that they have no gender identity, while others feel that agender is itself a gender identity. This is similar to and overlaps with the experience of being gender-neutral or having a neutral gender identity.

**androgynous, gender blender, and gender bender:** individuals who challenge cisnormative gender binary boundaries through their gender presentation.

**bigender:** someone who identifies as having two gender identities.

**cisgender:** a term that describes individuals whose gender identity is the same as the gender they were assigned at birth.

**cross-dresser:** a person who, on occasion, deliberately dresses in clothes traditionally associated with a gender different than they were assigned at birth and takes on the social behaviours associated with the gender being portrayed. A person who cross-dresses does not necessarily identify as trans, but is fulfilling other needs or desires.

**drag kings** and **drag queens:** individuals who present larger-than-life images of men (kings) and women (queens), exaggerating sexual stereotypes for entertainment or self-gratification.

**enby:** a short form of non-binary or NB. It is used instead of boy or girl to refer to non-binary people. Not all people who identify as non-binary are uncomfortable with the word enby, however.

**gender dysphoria:** a term that has replaced gender identity disorder. It characterizes the experience of distress caused when a person's assigned birth gender is not the same as the one with which they identify.

**genderfluid:** refers to those whose gender identity and expression are fluid and change depending on personal circumstance and desire.

**gender non-conforming:** refers to people whose gender expression or appearance does not conform to what society considers appropriate for one's perceived gender. While some gender non-conforming people identify under the trans umbrella, not all do. You may be considered gender non-conforming if you are a cisgender man who wears make-up or paints his nails, or a cisgender woman who shaves her head or repairs and maintains the family car. Not all cisgender people conform to society's gender expectations, and not all transgender people defy them.

**genderqueer:** someone who does not necessarily identify as a man or a woman, may identify as both a man and a woman, or identifies outside the confines of traditional Western ideas of gender.

**gender variant:** a word used to describe some people whose gender identity and/or gender expression does not conform to conventional expectations of masculinity and femininity. People who express gender variance may also be called gender non-conforming, gender non-binary, gender diverse, gender atypical, or genderqueer.

**non-binary:** an umbrella term used to describe a number of gender identities. It is used by people who do not identify as a man or a woman; who may feel like a combination of man and woman; who have a sense of their gender being beyond the categories of man and woman entirely; or who do not identify with any gender at all. Non-binary may also refer to gender identities that are specific to a culture that recognizes more than two genders.

**questioning:** a word often used by youth who are in the process of coming out or are still discerning their sexuality, gender identity, and/or sexual orientation.

**trans/transgender:** an umbrella term whose meaning remains in flux. The term is used to refer to a person who has a gender identity that is different from the gender they were assigned at birth, and/or expresses their gender in ways that differ from societal expectations for men and women. Trans people may identify with any sexual orientation. *Trans* is often used as a substitute for *transgender*, to include people of a wider variety of gender identities who may not feel comfortable adopting the term *transgender*.

**transition:** Trans men (sometimes called FTMs—female-to-male) and trans women (MTFs—male-to-female) may often decide to undergo a transitioning process that can include sexual confirmation surgery (also known as sexual reassignment surgery, SRS) and/or hormone replacement therapy (HRT). They may

identify as straight, gay, lesbian, bisexual, asexual, and/or queer. It is important to note that not all individuals who transition or identify as transgender/transsexual feel that FTM or MTF labels reflect their experience with their gender.

**transsexual/transgender:** someone who is transitioning from male-to-female (MTF) or female-to-male (FTM), or someone for whom the gender they were assigned at birth does not match their felt or lived gender.

**Two-Spirit:** a term used by some Indigenous people whose spirits contain both male and female attributes. Being Two-Spirit is not about sexuality or even gender presentation, but is about a person's spirit. There is no one definition of Two-Spirit, allowing each Indigenous person to define it for themselves. Each experiences and expresses it personally within their own context (including nation, language, and culture). "Two-Spirit" should only be used by Indigenous people for self-identification; it could be considered cultural appropriation to apply it outside of a First Nations context.

## Trans Grammar

**Trans and cis** are considered adjectives that can describe an aspect of someone's gender identity. Therefore, the spelling of trans man/men and trans woman/women should always have a space between the two words. Trans women are still women and trans men are still men, and failing to include a space between these words may communicate otherwise.

**Trans** is an adjective that can describe an element of someone's gender identity. It is incorrect to speak of "transgendered" individuals or use the term *transgender* as a verb (i.e., "transgendering").

**Gender-neutral pronouns** are the most effective way to ensure that individuals of all genders feel included when discussing hypothetical situations. Commonly used gender-neutral pronouns are **they/ them/theirs**.

*Example 1:* "Do you have a brother or sister? How old is he or she?" can be said as:  
"Do you have a sibling? How old are they?"

*Example 2:* "That stranger looked upset. I hope they are all right and someone has helped them."

*Example 3:* "A new employee is starting on Monday. Where are we going to put their workstation?"

Some people might feel awkward using "they" as a singular pronoun. But when you think about it, it's not that different from using "you" for both the singular and the plural.

The singular "they" is a well-established usage in spoken English and can be used when the speaker does not want to specify a gender (i.e., "he" or "she"). Dictionaries and style guides—including the Oxford English Dictionary and Merriam-Webster—are increasingly supportive of the practice, citing examples going back to Shakespeare.

## Discriminatory Practices

**lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer discrimination:** These varieties of discrimination take many forms and exist between and within individuals, as well as across institutions and cultures. Most commonly referred to as homophobia, transphobia, and heterosexism, they are manifested through the denial of human rights; through processes of silencing, exclusion, and ostracism; and through violence and verbal abuse that can be experienced daily.



**heterosexism:** the assumption by individuals, institutions, and societal customs that everyone is heterosexual. It is also the belief that the normal, natural, healthy, and mature way for humans to bond sexually, affectionately, and emotionally is with a partner of the opposite sex. Heterosexism is the systemic societal promotion of heterosexuality, and the simultaneous stigmatization of all other sexual orientations.

**cissexism:** the assumption by individuals, institutions, and societal customs that everyone is cisgender and adheres to the gender binary. It is also the belief that the normal, natural, healthy, and mature way for humans to express their gender is by upholding the norms of the gender an individual was assigned at birth. Cissexism is the systemic societal promotion of cisgender identities, and the simultaneous oppression of folks with trans identities.

**lesbophobia/homophobia/queerphobia:** conscious or unconscious hatred of, fear of, and discrimination against lesbians and gay men. It is based in a belief system and set of priorities that assert heterosexuality as “normal” and superior, and view homosexuality/queerness as deviant, abnormal, criminal, or sinful. Lesbophobic, homophobic, and queerphobic feelings can be described as fear, hatred, disgust, etc.

**biphobia:** conscious or unconscious hatred of, fear of, and discrimination against people who are bisexual. Experienced in not only the heterosexual but also the lesbian and gay communities, it is often characterized by a lack of understanding and invisibility of bisexuality as a valid sexual orientation.

**transphobia:** conscious or unconscious hatred of, fear of, and discrimination against individuals who do not conform in appearance and/or identity to cisnormative or “traditional” conceptions of gender. Experienced in both the heterosexual and lesbian/gay/bisexual communities, it is typically demonstrated through disrespect, denial of rights and needs, and often harassment and violence. As with heterosexism, transphobia can be personal or systemic, overt or covert, and intentional or unintentional.

**transmisogyny:** understood as “sexism that specifically targets those on the trans female/trans feminine spectrums. It accounts for why MTF spectrum trans people tend to be more regularly demonized and ridiculed than their FTM spectrum counterparts, and why trans women face certain forms of sexualization and misogyny that are rarely (if ever) applied to non-trans women.”<sup>33</sup>

This handout is also available formatted for photocopying and distribution.  
Search [www.united-church.ca](http://www.united-church.ca) for “gender.”

<sup>33</sup> Definition is reprinted with permission from *Whipping Girl: A Transsexual Woman on Sexism and the Scapegoating of Femininity* by Julia Serano (Seal Press, 2007).

## For More Information

### TRANS AND GENDER IDENTITY RESOURCES

Note: The United Church of Canada is not responsible for the content of external websites.

TITLE AND SOURCE	DESCRIPTION	FOR USE BY					
		INDIVIDUALS (GENERAL)	CHURCHES AND CLERGY	CHILDREN (GENERAL)	PARENTS OF TRANS PEOPLE	CHILDREN OF TRANS PEOPLE	TRANS PEOPLE
<b>UNITED CHURCH OF CANADA RESOURCES</b>							
Affirm United/S'affirmer Ensemble <a href="http://affirmunited.ause.ca/">http://affirmunited.ause.ca/</a>	An organization that works for the full inclusion of gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender people in the United Church and society.	✓	✓		✓		✓
"Our life was the picture of normal until Terry came out" (Trisha Elliott, <i>Broadview</i> [formerly <i>The Observer</i> ], February 2013) <a href="https://broadview.org/our-life-was-the-picture-of-normal-until-terry-came-out/">https://broadview.org/our-life-was-the-picture-of-normal-until-terry-came-out/</a>	Terry and Anne Wood had a normal married life. All of that changed when Terry, a lay minister, realized he was a woman trapped in a man's body.	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
International Day Against Homophobia, Transphobia and Biphobia—May 17 <a href="http://www.united-church.ca/worship-special-days/international-day-against-homophobia-transphobia-and-biphobia">www.united-church.ca/worship-special-days/international-day-against-homophobia-transphobia-and-biphobia</a>	includes a worship service, prayers, and more		✓				
Ruth's Story (YouTube video) <a href="http://youtu.be/FD4XlTKjtL4">http://youtu.be/FD4XlTKjtL4</a>	Ruth Wood, a minister at Calvary Pastoral Charge in Kingston, ON, talks about her life journey as a trans person and her theological reflection on love and acceptance.	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
The Affirming Journey (Spring 2018 issue, <i>Mandate</i> magazine) <a href="http://www.ucrdstore.ca">www.ucrdstore.ca</a>	A special issue on LGBTQIA+ and Two-Spirit people and the church. Includes articles, a timeline of LGBTQIA+ and Two-Spirit Justice in the United Church, Bible studies, worship resources, workshops, and more.	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓

TITLE AND SOURCE	DESCRIPTION	FOR USE BY					
		INDIVIDUALS (GENERAL)	CHURCHES AND CLERGY	CHILDREN (GENERAL)	PARENTS OF TRANS PEOPLE	CHILDREN OF TRANS PEOPLE	TRANS PEOPLE
<p>"3 transgender Canadians share the journeys that shaped their faith" (Erica Lenti, <i>Broadview</i> [formerly <i>The Observer</i>], November 2018) <a href="https://broadview.org/3-transgender-canadians-share-the-personal-journeys-that-shaped-their-faith/">https://broadview.org/3-transgender-canadians-share-the-personal-journeys-that-shaped-their-faith/</a></p>	<p>Stories from 3 trans folk from different faith communities that share how they explore their spirituality while transitioning.</p>	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
<p>Transgender Day of Remembrance— November 20 <a href="http://www.united-church.ca/worship-special-days/transgender-day-remembrance">www.united-church.ca/worship-special-days/transgender-day-remembrance</a></p>	<p>includes prayers, readings and sermon ideas, a worship service, and more</p>		✓				
<p>"Christian mom shares about her child's transition to Noah" (Michelle Sparrow, <i>Broadview</i> [formerly <i>The Observer</i>], May 2017) <a href="https://broadview.org/interview-with-a-mom-about-her-childs-transition-to-noah/">https://broadview.org/interview-with-a-mom-about-her-childs-transition-to-noah/</a></p>	<p>A mother and member of Fairlawn Avenue United in Toronto describes her child's transition from Nora to Noah — how he changed his appearance, pronouns, personality and mannerisms.</p>	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
<b>RECORDED WEBINARS / PODCASTS</b>							
<p>Celebrating Gender Diversity: Five Stories <a href="https://youtu.be/YcIynOerCME">https://youtu.be/YcIynOerCME</a></p>	<p>This recorded webinar has five trans and non-binary United Church people sharing a bit of their personal stories as people of faith.</p>	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
<p>Strengthening Youth Ministry: Gender Inclusion (Michiko Bown-Kai, 2018) <a href="http://www.united-in-learning.com/index.php/webinars/recordings/150-youth-ministry-gender-inclusion">www.united-in-learning.com/index.php/webinars/recordings/150-youth-ministry-gender-inclusion</a></p>	<p>This series shares creative and faithful methods for welcoming young people into the life of your faith community, especially those who are trans and non-binary.</p>	✓	✓				
<p>Transgender Inclusion in Congregations (Unitarian Universalist, 2012) <a href="https://transforming-hearts-collective.teachable.com/p/transgender-inclusion-in-congregations">https://transforming-hearts-collective.teachable.com/p/transgender-inclusion-in-congregations</a></p>	<p>A six-session online course designed to support congregations in the work of affirming trans people, meeting their spiritual needs, and valuing their gifts (\$125 for individuals, or \$400-\$800 for congregations).</p>		✓				

TITLE AND SOURCE	DESCRIPTION	FOR USE BY					
		INDIVIDUALS (GENERAL)	CHURCHES AND CLERGY	CHILDREN (GENERAL)	PARENTS OF TRANS PEOPLE	CHILDREN OF TRANS PEOPLE	TRANS PEOPLE
Trans 101: Trans Communities Part 1 (Metropolitan Community Church) <a href="https://vimeo.com/mccchurch/review/106862308/e6ebddb15a">https://vimeo.com/mccchurch/review/106862308/e6ebddb15a</a>	A one-hour webinar video for congregations and individuals who would like to better understand and welcome trans and gender non-conforming people, more effectively ministering to and nurturing the trans community.	✓	✓				
Trans 102: Trans Communities Part 2 (Metropolitan Community Church) <a href="https://vimeo.com/mccchurch/review/108186110/70d08e0439%20">https://vimeo.com/mccchurch/review/108186110/70d08e0439%20</a>	A one-hour webinar video that moves on to explore ways to apply learnings from Trans 101, including some of the best ways to “inreach” and outreach to the trans community.	✓	✓				
Two-Spirit Podcasts (Re:searching for LGBTQ2S+ Health) <a href="http://lgbtqhealth.ca/projects/two-spiritedpodcasts.php">http://lgbtqhealth.ca/projects/two-spiritedpodcasts.php</a>	Two-Spirit people share their stories about their history, culture, and identity.	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
<b>ONLINE RESOURCES TO DOWNLOAD</b>							
Casting Prayers for Survival: Towards a Black Trans Theology <a href="https://thefeministwire.com/2017/11/casting-prayers-survival-towards-black-trans-theology">https://thefeministwire.com/2017/11/casting-prayers-survival-towards-black-trans-theology</a>	A powerful call for a theology that liberates Black Trans bodies.	✓	✓				✓
Crossing Paths (Unitarian Universalist) [PDF] <a href="http://www.transfaithonline.org/fileadmin/TFexplore/UUA_crossingpaths.pdf">www.transfaithonline.org/fileadmin/TFexplore/UUA_crossingpaths.pdf</a>	Stories of transgender people and resources for worship, pastoral care, and workshops.	✓	✓		✓		
Families in TRANSition: A Resource Guide for Parents of Trans Youth (Rainbow Health Ontario, 2016) <a href="http://www.rainbowhealthontario.ca">www.rainbowhealthontario.ca</a> (search “Families in Transition”)	The first comprehensive Canadian publication to address the needs of parents and families supporting their trans children.	✓	✓		✓		✓
Gender Identity and Our Faith Communities (Human Rights Campaign) <a href="http://www.hrc.org/resources/entry/gender-identity-and-our-faith-communities-a-congregational-guide-for-transg">www.hrc.org/resources/entry/gender-identity-and-our-faith-communities-a-congregational-guide-for-transg</a>	This congregational guide for transgender advocacy empowers people of faith with the knowledge and skills necessary to transform their communities into welcoming environments.		✓				

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		INDIVIDUALS (GENERAL)	CHURCHES AND CLERGY	CHILDREN (GENERAL)	PARENTS OF TRANS PEOPLE	CHILDREN OF TRANS PEOPLE	TRANS PEOPLE
Gender Neutral Bathrooms (Unitarian Universalist Association) <a href="http://www.uua.org/lgbtq/welcoming/ways/bathrooms">www.uua.org/lgbtq/welcoming/ways/bathrooms</a>	This page offers a variety of resources on making washrooms safe spaces, including FAQs, documentaries, articles, and suggestions for signage.	✓	✓				✓
Glory to the Gender-Bending God (SCM Canada, 2018) <a href="http://scmcanada.org/resources/">http://scmcanada.org/resources/</a>	A devotional about trans lives and experience.	✓	✓		✓		✓
"Hearing Two-Spirits" ( <i>Briarpatch</i> , September/October 2012) <a href="http://briarpatchmagazine.com/articles/view/hearing-Two-Spirits">http://briarpatchmagazine.com/articles/view/hearing-Two-Spirits</a>	A short article on the role of Two-Spirit experiences in resisting colonialism.	✓	✓				✓
Straight for Equality: Guide to Being a Trans Ally (PFLAG National, 2014) <a href="https://pflag.org/publication/guidetobeingatransally">https://pflag.org/publication/guidetobeingatransally</a>	This guide helps you learn more about what transgender means, develop competency around talking about the issue, become better informed about the challenges that many trans people face, and learn how you can be a strong trans ally.	✓	✓		✓	✓	
Supporting the Transgender People in Your Life: A Guide to Being a Good Ally (National Center for Transgender Equality) <a href="https://transequality.org/issues/resources/supporting-the-transgender-people-in-your-life-a-guide-to-being-a-good-ally">https://transequality.org/issues/resources/supporting-the-transgender-people-in-your-life-a-guide-to-being-a-good-ally</a>	Learn to be an ally to the transgender people in your life, or to transgender people overall, is an ongoing process.	✓	✓		✓	✓	
transACTION, The Institute for Welcoming Resources <a href="http://www.welcomingresources.org/transgender.xml">www.welcomingresources.org/transgender.xml</a>	This trans curriculum is for churches and religious institutions.	✓	✓				
Transgender Visibility Guide (Human Rights Campaign) <a href="http://www.hrc.org/resources/transgender-visibility-guide">www.hrc.org/resources/transgender-visibility-guide</a>	This resource is to help people through the process of coming out as transgender in realistic and practical terms.	✓			✓		✓

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Transitioning to Inclusion (Kelsey Pacha, Center for LGBTQ and Gender Studies in Religion, 2015) <a href="https://clgs.org/multimedia-archive/transitioningyouthresource">https://clgs.org/multimedia-archive/transitioningyouthresource</a>	A guide to welcoming transgender children and their families in your community of faith.	✓	✓		✓		✓
Trans Student Educational Resources <a href="http://www.transstudent.org/gender">www.transstudent.org/gender</a>	Trans-related infographics which you are free to use in your presentations, publications, events, and communities (without modification).	✓	✓		✓		✓
Words by Non-binary People re: Non-binary Experiences: A resource for service providers who want to be more “non-binary friendly” <a href="http://www.excellenceforchildand youth.ca">www.excellenceforchildand youth.ca</a> (search “non-binary friend”)	This resource by Omnes et Nihil explores the diversity of non-binary experiences of gender. It helps service providers be more mindful of providing safe, affirming services.	✓	✓		✓		✓
<b>PRINT</b> (books, sermon ideas, worship, workshops, curricula)							
All God’s Children (Melany Burrill, LifeQuest, 2009) (search <a href="http://www.sdiworld.org">www.sdiworld.org</a> )	A guide to conversations with young children about gender and sexual orientation (with ideas for sermons and classroom activities).	✓	✓		✓		✓
All I Want to Be Is Me (Phyllis Rothblatt, 2011) <a href="http://www.alliwanttobeisme.com">www.alliwanttobeisme.com</a>	This illustrated children’s book reflects the diverse ways that young children experience and express their gender identity.	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓
A Two-Spirit Journey: The Autobiography of a Lesbian Ojibwa-Cree Elder (Ma-Nee Chacaby, University of Manitoba Press, 2016)	This memoir provides insights into the challenges still faced by many Indigenous people.	✓	✓		✓		✓
Beyond a Binary God: A Theology for Trans Allies (Tara K. Soughers, Church Pub Inc., 2018)	This resource explores theology from the position of a trans ally, a parent of a trans young adult, as well as priest.	✓	✓		✓		✓
Beyond Trans: Does Gender Matter? (Heath Fogg Davis, NYU Press, 2017)	Davis pushes the conversation on gender identity to its limits: questioning the need for gender categories in the first place.	✓	✓		✓		✓
Black on Both Sides: A Racial History of Trans Identity (C. Riley Snorton, University of Minnesota Press, 2017)	This book identifies multiple intersections between blackness and transness from the mid-nineteenth century to present-day anti-black and anti-trans legislation and violence.	✓	✓		✓		✓

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Born on the Edge of Race and Gender: A Voice for Cultural Competency (Willy Wilkinson, Hapa Papa Press, 2015)	This autobiography by a trans man goes further than just a transgender narrative. Wilkinson discusses his disability and mixed heritage to present a story of far more depth than one may initially expect.	✓	✓		✓		✓
47,000 Beads (Koja Adeyoha, Angel Adeyoha, Holly McGillis Illustrator, Flamingo Rampant, 2017) (search <a href="http://www.flamingorampant.com">www.flamingorampant.com</a> )	Peyton says she's not comfortable wearing a dress, so Auntie Eyota asks friends for help to get Peyton what she needs.	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓
Jazz Mergirl: The True Story of Jazz Jennings, a Transgender Girl Born in a Boy's Body (Bruce Edlen, 2015)	This story is about how Jazz Jennings and her family navigate the challenging road of her transition.	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓
Made in God's Image: A Black Church Guide to Gender Difference (Rev. Cedric Harmon and Ann Thompson Cook, Many Voices) (search <a href="http://www.manyvoices.org">www.manyvoices.org</a> )	A resource for creating dialogue about people of faith and gender differences.	✓	✓		✓		✓
My Mommy Is a Boy (Jason Martinez, 2012) (search <a href="http://www.lulu.com">www.lulu.com</a> )	A story of a girl who explains why her female-to-male transgender mommy looks like a boy.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Omnigender: A Trans-Religious Approach (Virginia Ramey Mollenkott, Pilgrim Press, 2001)	This book bridges traditional religious doctrine and secular postmodern theory regarding gender.	✓	✓		✓		✓
Our Whole Lives (United Church of Christ and Unitarian Universalist Association) <a href="http://www.ucc.org/justice_sexuality-education_our-whole-lives">www.ucc.org/justice_sexuality-education_our-whole-lives</a>	A curriculum of sexuality education programs for: grades K-1, 4-6, 7-9, 10-12, young adults, and adults.		✓				
Queer Indigenous Studies: Critical Interventions in Theory, Politics, and Literature (Qwo-Li Driskill, University of Arizona Press, 2011)	A collection examining critical, Indigenous-centered approaches to understanding GLBTQ2 lives, and communities and the implications of queer theory in Native studies.	✓	✓		✓		✓
Retreating Forward: A Spiritual Practice with Transgender Persons (David Elias Weekley, Resource Publications, 2017)	This resource advocates for a ministry of "radical hospitality" to transgender persons in the form of a spiritual retreat.	✓	✓				

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Sexuality, Nationality, Indigeneity (Daniel Heath Justice et al., Duke University Press Books, 2010)	A conversation between the interdisciplinary fields of Native American studies and queer studies.	✓	✓		✓		✓
Sovereign Erotics: A Collection of Two-Spirit Literature (Qwo-Li Driskill, University of Arizona Press, 2011)	This collection strives to reflect the complexity of identities within Native LGBTQ2 communities.	✓	✓		✓		✓
The Bible and the Transgender Experience: How Scripture Supports Gender Variance (Linda Tatro Herzer, Pilgrim Press, 2016)	This resource integrates transgender 101, biblical material, and theology that deals with gender identity.	✓	✓		✓		✓
The Singing Teacher's Guide to Transgender Voices (Liz Jackson Hearn and Brian Kremer, Plural Publishing, 2018)	The first book of its kind to provide thorough, organized information on the training of trans singers for music educators.	✓	✓				✓
The Transgender Child (Stephanie Brill and Rachel Pepper, Cleis Press, 2008)	<i>The Transgender Child</i> explores the challenges faced by families raising gender-variant and transgender children (birth through college).	✓			✓		
The Transgender Teen: A Handbook for Parents and Professionals Supporting Transgender and Non-Binary Teens (Stephanie Brill and Lisa Kenney, Cleis Press, 2016)	<i>The Transgender Teen</i> explores the challenges that families face every day raising a teenager who may be transgender, non-binary, or gender-fluid.	✓			✓		
Transfaith: A Transgender Pastoral Resource (Chris Dowd and Christina Beardsley, Darton Longman & Todd Ltd, 2018)	A resource to help ministers and congregations begin to understand and welcome transgender people (includes liturgies and Bible studies).	✓	✓		✓		✓
Transforming: The Bible & the Lives of Transgender Christians (Austen Hartke, WJK Books, 2018)	<i>Transforming</i> introduces transgender issues and language and provides stories of biblical characters and real-life narratives from transgender Christians.	✓	✓		✓		✓
Trans Forming Families (ed. Mary Boenke, Oak Knoll Press, 2003)	These real stories about transgender loved ones from the initial shock through the various feelings, to final acceptance.	✓	✓		✓		✓



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Transgender Children of God (Megan Rohrer, Lulu.com, 2012)	This resource celebrates the diverse choices transgender people can make throughout their life and declares that God will love us no matter what.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Trans-gendered: Theology, Ministries, and Communities of Faith, by Justin Tanis (Pilgrim Press, 2003)	A resource that provides an introduction and overview of transgender experience and the Biblical issues related to trans people.	✓	✓		✓		✓
Transgendering Faith (ed. Maren C. Tirabassi and Leanne McCall Tigert, Pilgrim Press, 2004)	A resource to help churches respond with love and care to transgender people.	✓	✓				
Transparently: Behind the Scenes of a Good Life (Lisa Salazar, 2011) <a href="http://www.transparently.ca">www.transparently.ca</a>	An honest story told by a Christian woman who made the call to accept what she knew she had always been.	✓	✓		✓		✓
Two-Spirit Acts: Queer Indigenous Performances (ed. Jean O'Hara, Playwrights Canada Press, 2013) <a href="http://www.playwrightscanada.com/Books/T/Two-Spirit-Acts">www.playwrightscanada.com/Books/T/Two-Spirit-Acts</a>	This collection creates a space to explore what it means to be queer and Indigenous.	✓	✓		✓		✓
The Whipping Girl (Julia Serano, Seal Press, 2007) <a href="http://www.juliaserano.com/whippinggirl.html">www.juliaserano.com/whippinggirl.html</a>	This collection of personal essays debunk many of the myths and misconceptions that people have about trans women, as well as the subject of gender in general.	✓	✓		✓		✓
<b>ONLINE ORGANIZATIONS AND RESOURCES</b>							
Canadian Parents of Trans & Gender Diverse Kids <a href="http://www.facebook.com/canadianparentsoftranskids/">www.facebook.com/canadianparentsoftranskids/</a>	This Facebook support group is for parents of gender diverse children, youth, and adults.	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
COLAGE <a href="http://www.colage.org">www.colage.org</a>	COLAGE is for people with a lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or queer parent.					✓	✓
Gender Creative Kids <a href="http://gendercreativekids.ca">http://gendercreativekids.ca</a>	Resources for supporting and affirming gender creative kids in their families, schools, and communities.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

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GLAAD: Transgender FAQ <a href="http://www.glaad.org/transgender/transfaq">www.glaad.org/transgender/transfaq</a>	A simple one-page introductory explanation of trans identity on the GLAAD website. Further resources are available through links on the page.	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
Identifying as Trans <a href="http://teenhealthsource.com/sgd/identifying-trans/">http://teenhealthsource.com/sgd/identifying-trans/</a>	A helpful webpage on the TeenHealthSource site to offer people who are questioning their gender identity, especially youth.			✓	✓		✓
#ILoveBeingTransBc campaign (GLAAD) <a href="http://www.glaad.org/ilovebeingtransbc">www.glaad.org/ilovebeingtransbc</a>	The #ILoveBeingTransBc campaign seeks to celebrate trans resiliency and bring positive visibility to the trans experience.	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
Institute for Welcoming Resources <a href="http://www.welcomingresources.org">www.welcomingresources.org</a>	These resources help faith communities become affirming of people regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity.	✓	✓				
InterACT, Advocates for Intersex Youth <a href="https://interactadvocates.org">https://interactadvocates.org</a>	This website includes a wide variety of resources on being intersex.	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
Intersex Awareness and Allyship, by the Canadian Centre for Gender and Sexual Diversity <a href="http://ccgsd-ccdgs.org/intersex">http://ccgsd-ccdgs.org/intersex</a>	This is an online resource of information on being intersex.	✓	✓		✓		✓
Language, Culture, and Two-Spirit Identity <a href="http://apihtawikosisan.com">http://apihtawikosisan.com</a> (search "language culture Two-Spirit")	This blog post by âpihtawikosisân focuses on the role that language plays in naming culturally specific concepts and experiences. It looks at Cree terms used to discuss gender and sexuality.	✓	✓		✓		✓
Le Néó <a href="http://www.le-neo.com">www.le-neo.com</a>	This French-language resource is on gender identity and orientation.	✓	✓		✓		✓
Lisa Salazar <a href="http://www.lisasalazar.com">www.lisasalazar.com</a>	Lisa is a Vancouver based author, speaker, and educator/trainer on trans issues. Her site links to a blog and more.	✓	✓		✓		✓
Many Voices <a href="http://www.manyvoices.org">www.manyvoices.org</a>	Many Voices is a Black church movement for gay and transgender justice.	✓	✓				
National Center for Transgender Equality <a href="http://www.transequality.org">www.transequality.org</a>	This is an organization devoted to ending discrimination against transgender people.	✓	✓				

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PFLAG Canada <a href="http://www.pflagcanada.ca">www.pflagcanada.ca</a>	Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays provides support and resources on issues of sexual orientation and gender.	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
Transfaith <a href="http://www.transfaithonline.org">www.transfaithonline.org</a>	Transfaith is dedicated to educating churches about trans faith and trans folk, and nurturing the expression of the sacred.		✓				
Transgender Day of Visibility, March 31 <a href="http://www.transstudent.org/tdovaction">www.transstudent.org/tdovaction</a>	This is a list of ten things you can do on March 31 for the Transgender Day of Visibility.	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
TransKids Purple Rainbow Foundation <a href="http://www.transkidspurplerainbow.org">www.transkidspurplerainbow.org</a>	TransKids is committed to the premise that Gender Identity Disorder is something a child can't control and it is society that needs to change.	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
TransTorah <a href="http://www.transtorah.org">www.transtorah.org</a>	TransTorah has information on how to access and transform tradition, and become welcoming sanctuaries for people of all genders.	✓	✓		✓		✓
TransWhat? A Guide towards Allyship <a href="http://transwhat.org">http://transwhat.org</a>	For those just starting to learn about gender identity, this resource provides basic information and how to be an ally.	✓	✓		✓		
What the Heck Are Pronouns? (Minus18) <a href="http://www.minus18.org.au/index.php/get-involved/campaigns/pronouns">www.minus18.org.au/index.php/get-involved/campaigns/pronouns</a> (see also "What Are Pronouns?" video by Minus18 below)	This resource produced by Australia's largest youth-led organization for youth of all sexual orientations and gender identities includes a short article, video, and app.	✓	✓		✓		✓
<b>YOUTUBE VIDEOS</b>							
Effective Allyship: A Transgender Take on Intersectionality (Ashlee Marie Preston, TEDxPasadena, 2018) <a href="https://youtu.be/3EcuDfDjUd8">https://youtu.be/3EcuDfDjUd8</a>	In this passionate and deeply heartfelt talk, Ashlee seeks to help promote understanding about intersectionality, allyship, and the urgency for compassion.	✓	✓		✓		✓
The Gender Axis of Evil <a href="https://youtu.be/0co0minMG6l">https://youtu.be/0co0minMG6l</a>	Zinnia Jones on the conflation of gender, gender expression, and sexuality.	✓	✓				

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I've lived as a man and a woman—and here's what I've learned (Rev. Dr. Paula Stone Williams) <a href="https://youtu.be/lrYx7HaUIMY">https://youtu.be/lrYx7HaUIMY</a>	A transgender woman (former CEO of a large religious non-profit before transitioning), Paula Stone Williams talks about the differences between living as a man and as a woman.	✓	✓		✓		✓
Transgender Day of Remembrance (Transgender Europe) <a href="https://youtu.be/HWnWV6VCNm4">https://youtu.be/HWnWV6VCNm4</a>	This video highlights November 20 as a day to mark the passing of transgender people who have died because of hate.		✓				
Laverne Cox at Creating Change 2014 <a href="https://youtu.be/6cytc0p4jwg">https://youtu.be/6cytc0p4jwg</a>	Laverne Cox, known for her role as Sophia Burset on <i>Orange Is the New Black</i> , speaks to the importance of trans justice in the context of contemporary trans issues in North America.	✓	✓		✓		✓
Living as a non-binary in a binary world (Graysen Hall) <a href="https://youtu.be/7pvLDHFCEWk">https://youtu.be/7pvLDHFCEWk</a>	Graysen Hall addresses the hardships and obstacles facing the day-to-day life of those who identify outside of the gender binary.	✓	✓		✓		✓
On the Male Side of Middle <a href="https://youtu.be/UoljapEHmDA">https://youtu.be/UoljapEHmDA</a> (see also <a href="http://www.calvinneufeld.com">www.calvinneufeld.com</a> )	This film about transgender Mennonite Calvin Neufeld captures a special moment in time between him and his family.	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
Things Not to Say to a non-Binary Person <a href="https://youtu.be/8b4MZjMVgdk">https://youtu.be/8b4MZjMVgdk</a>	Here are some of the questions that non-binary people are totally over hearing.	✓	✓		✓		✓
Transgender and Christian, by Austen Hartke <a href="http://www.youtube.com/user/ArienKatrim">www.youtube.com/user/ArienKatrim</a>	This video series helps trans Christians find hope at the intersection of their identity and their faith through the study of biblical texts, and through life-giving conversation.						✓
Transgender Basics—Gender Identity Project <a href="https://youtu.be/UXI9w0PbBXY">https://youtu.be/UXI9w0PbBXY</a>	This 20-minute educational film that discusses basic concepts of gender, sexual orientation, identity, and gender roles.	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
"Two Spirit"—Injunuity <a href="https://youtu.be/iDyknNmg28">https://youtu.be/iDyknNmg28</a>	A four-minute animated video by Injunuity, featuring the stories of Two-Spirit people.	✓	✓		✓		✓
Voices of Witness: Out of the Box <a href="https://youtu.be/QzCANWGsEdc">https://youtu.be/QzCANWGsEdc</a>	This documentary gives voice to the witness of transgender people of faith. Online <a href="#">study guides</a> are available.	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓

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What Are Pronouns? <a href="https://youtu.be/3xpvricexU">https://youtu.be/3xpvricexU</a> (see also "What the Heck Are Pronouns?" online resource above)	A video by Minus 18, Australia's largest youth-led organization for youth of all sexual orientations and gender identities, about how gender identity is connected to the use of pronouns.	✓	✓		✓		✓
<b>OTHER VIDEO</b>							
Belonging in the Body: Transgender Journeys of Faith (Generous Space Ministries, 2018) <a href="http://www.generousspace.ca/shop">www.generousspace.ca/shop</a>	A 53-minute video collection of stories from the lives of transgender Christians. See trailer at <a href="https://youtu.be/h1718ol50_8">https://youtu.be/h1718ol50_8</a> . Available for purchase at a sliding scale price-point.	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
Call Me Malcolm (Joseph Paragregco, Filmworks Inc., United Church of Christ) <a href="http://www.facebook.com/CallMeMalcolm">www.facebook.com/CallMeMalcolm</a>	The story of Malcolm, a transgender seminary student, and his struggle with faith, love, and gender identity. Study guides are available.	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
No Dumb Questions (Melissa Regan) <a href="http://www.nodumbquestions.com">www.nodumbquestions.com</a>	A film with discussion guides follows three young girls' conversations about gender and acceptance when they learn Uncle Bill will soon be Aunt Barbara.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Transfigurations: Transgressing Gender in the Bible <a href="https://petersontoscana.com/portfolio/transfigurations">https://petersontoscana.com/portfolio/transfigurations</a>	By unearthing the stories of gender-variant people in the Hebrew and Christian scriptures, Toscano's one-person play deepens Bible stories and characters.	✓	✓				✓
<i>Trans-forming the church</i> (Rev. Liam Hooper, Reconciling Ministries Network) <a href="https://rmnetwork.org/trans-forming-church-video-curriculum">https://rmnetwork.org/trans-forming-church-video-curriculum</a>	A 10-part video series (30 min in total) to help faith communities begin the conversation about how to support trans and non-binary people in your church and in society at large.	✓	✓				
Trans in America: A Documentary Series (ACLU and Little by Little Films, 2018) <a href="http://www.aclu.org/issues/lgbt-rights/transgender-rights/trans-america">www.aclu.org/issues/lgbt-rights/transgender-rights/trans-america</a>	A series of three short films (Texas Strong, Elisha Love, and Atlanta Drive) highlighting the discrimination trans people face at school, at work, and within the criminal legal system.	✓	✓	✓ (Texas Strong)	✓	✓	✓
We've Been Around (Rhys Ernst, 2016) <a href="http://rhysemst.com/portfolio/weve-been-around/">http://rhysemst.com/portfolio/weve-been-around/</a>	These five documentary shorts chronicle the lives of trans trailblazers in the USA, each with stories that have, until recently, gone largely unnoticed by mainstream society.	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓

## **MORE FROM THE UNITED CHURCH**

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### **Questions & Feedback**

We welcome your feedback and evaluation of the kit, as well as your questions. E-mail your comments and/or responses to the following questions to [trans@united-church.ca](mailto:trans@united-church.ca).

- What seems important in the kit?
- What are the kit's strengths?
- Was any part of the kit unclear?
- Does anything seem left out?

### **Worship Services**

Worship resources are posted online for two special days. Search [www.united-church.ca](http://www.united-church.ca) for the following:

- International Day against Homophobia, Transphobia, and Biphobia—May 17
- Transgender Day of Remembrance—November 20

### **United Church Website**

For more information and resources on trans and gender identity, search [www.united-church.ca](http://www.united-church.ca) for “gender” or “gender identity.”

### **Networking—Connect with One Another Online**

There are two online places on Facebook for allies and trans people to connect with one another:

- **Trans and Gender Identity, The United Church of Canada** ([www.facebook.com/groups/561099660605534](https://www.facebook.com/groups/561099660605534)) is an open Facebook group for anyone—trans people, family, friends, and allies—to openly engage in discussions on what it's like being trans in The United Church of Canada, share resources and news, and post ideas on how to encourage the full participation of all gender identities in the church.
- **Trans Network [UCCanada]** is a private Facebook group created for trans people in the United Church. It is a safe place to network with, support one another, share links to helpful resources, and more. All who identify as trans are welcome! The list of members will be kept strictly confidential. E-mail [transgender@united-church.ca](mailto:transgender@united-church.ca) for instructions on how to join.

### **Affirm United/S'affirmer Ensemble**

Affirm United/S'affirmer Ensemble (<http://affirmunited.ause.ca>) is an organization of people of all sexual orientations and gender identities within The United Church of Canada. Affirm United works to promote the full inclusion of gay, lesbian, bisexual, and trans people in the church and in society. Each United Church organization that is an Affirming Ministry declares itself to be fully inclusive of people of all sexual orientations and gender identities—and they back up their words with action. The Affirming Ministries Program encourages study of what it means to be publicly welcoming and inclusive. The program also provides support for sexual orientation and gender identity issues, and encourages the study of other United Church resources that promote the inclusion of other marginalized groups.



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Celebrating Gender Diversity  
A Toolkit on Gender Identity and Trans Experiences for Communities of Faith  
2019 Edition



The United Church of Canada/L'Église Unie du Canada