A PRACTICE SPIRIT, DO JUSTICE TOOLKIT

FAITHFULLY RESPONDING TO ANTI-LGBTQ LEGISLATION
CONTENTS

4 Welcome
5 Introduction to the Toolkit

PART I: ADVOCACY
7 Introduction
7 Loving as God Loves: How We Can Respond to HB2
7 Letter Writing
8 How to Walk a Constituent through Writing a Compelling Letter to Their Decision Maker
10 Mapping Your Stories
12 Legislative Office Visits
14 Twitter 101
16 Scripts: Talking to People You Know
16 NC HB2 Phone Bank Script
17 Leaving a Message Script
18 Talking to a Legislative Staff Member Script

PART II: CHANGING HEARTS AND MINDS
20 GRACEFUL ENGAGEMENT
22 WORSHIP
22 Sermons and Theological Reflections
22 “Revisiting the Tomb” by Jamie Lee Sprague-Ballou
25 “The Syrophoenician Woman” by Nancy Wichmann
27 “Trans Visibility: For Every Eye to See” by Eli’jah Carroll
30 “I’m a Transgender Christian in North Carolina. My Faith Should Not Stop at the Bathroom Door.” by Adam Plant
32 “Rethinking ‘Religious Freedom’ Laws” by Vivian Taylor
33 “The ‘Beloved Community’ Includes Transgender People” by Rev. Dr. Terence K. Leathers
34 “Where Would Jesus Go to the Bathroom?” by Rev. Dr. Dan De Leon
36 “A Trans Ally in a Tennessee Pew” by Kate Fields
37 “A Gospel Message for Queer People of Faith” by Leslie Rouser
40  **Music**
40  
Hymn Texts
43  Scores
54  **Liturgy**
54  
Invocations
57  Prayers
63  Affirmations
63  Reflections
64  Benedictions

66  **EDUCATION**
66  
Fulfilling Our Divine Calling to Live Authentically: A Self-Reflection
69  How to Be a Great Ally to Trans People
83  **Additional Readings**
83  Trans Day of Remembrance is Over: Is Your Church Still Trans-Inclusive?
85  How to Be a Trans* Ally
87  **Other Congregational Curricula**
89  **Other Congregational Efforts**
89  Host or Attend a Building an Inclusive Church Training
90  Host an Exhibit of the Shower of Stoles Project
93  Does Your Church Congregation Want to Believe Out Loud?

**APPENDIX**
94  More Worship, Educational and Organizational Resources
F

aith and Religious Freedom are words that should be used proudly and loudly to describe the liberation and affirmation of all people. For me, faith was the very thing that supported me in understanding that my blackness, my queerness and all that I am, are gifts from God.

Instead, in today’s toxic social and cultural environment, these terms are used by many to stigmatize, isolate and harm large segments of our society: people of color, the poor, the differently abled, refugees and immigrants - and those whose sexual orientation or gender identity/expression differ from their own.

Sadly, this discrimination has found nurturing ground in the words and actions of individuals and organizations that claim to be people of faith—but only accept a limited scope of what faithfulness should include.

Today we find that fear, hatred and ignorance fueling legislative actions that aim to impose and legitimize discrimination against the “other” by wrapping such laws in terms of religious exemptions and religious refusals—not the common good. That’s not faith: that’s discrimination.

North Carolina is now burdened with such a law, hastily conceived and executed to strike down local initiatives that offered freedom and affirmation to LGBTQ people and block any future efforts to be places of welcome for marginalized people.

This tool kit is designed as a resource to help you as people of faith transform this limited, stifling description of faith—rigidly framed in judgment and condemnation—into a conversation that reflects and engages the world; a world that is filled with differences that need to be celebrated and affirmed instead of shunned and threatened.

We hope you will use these resources to help your faith communities respond to these attacks against our rights and to celebrate the dignity and integrity of our lives and our relationships.

Rev. Rodney McKenzie, Jr.
Director of the Academy for Leadership and Action
National LGBTQ Task Force

#FaithFamilyLGBTQ
As we come together as people of faith to work against the forces who are so gravely misusing faith as a way of demonizing and punishing those whom they deem the “Other,” our faith demands that we respond. We must reach out—to our faith leaders, to our fellow congregants, to our friends and family, and to our elected representatives—to say that this misuse of faith is simply evil. In both the faith and political realms, there is so much that YOU can do to make a difference! We hope and pray that this Toolkit will give you the skills, attitudes, and knowledge to get involved in meaningful ways. And we hope that this expands how you think it looks like to get involved as a person of faith.

Our approach is two-fold. The first is the most urgent and immediate—that being ADVOCACY in the public square. People’s lives are being harmed right now by laws like HB2 in North Carolina and HB1523 in Mississippi. Faith should never inflict harm. Ever. We must do all we can—particularly as people of faith—to counter these mean-spirited, discriminatory laws. This Toolkit is chock-full of ways that you and your community of faith can get involved—both inside and outside of your walls.

The second approach is working to CHANGE HEARTS AND MINDS. If we are to ultimately succeed in bringing about the world as we so strongly believe it ought to be, we must engage in the long-term work of helping people on their individual journeys towards acceptance and welcome of LGBTQ people. This work is done through relationship-building, graceful engagement, getting to know the stories of LGBTQ people.

This journey of the heart also happens through the experience of worship. Hearing, speaking and singing the message of the radical inclusiveness of God’s love can change, and indeed save lives. It is vital that this beautiful and healing theology be on our tongues during worship. So we have included sermons, theological reflections, music and liturgy to help your community experience this message with their full selves.

Education is a key component in this journey of the mind. In a Christian context, part of this educational work is done through the study of scripture. Across many denominations, we all have different ways of looking at and interpreting scripture. But we can agree that the Bible grounds us, and informs and inspires our faith. Many of our opponents claim that we who support LGBTQ people do not take scripture seriously. On the contrary, we take it very seriously. We support LGBTQ people - not in spite of—but precisely because of our faith and what the Bible calls us to do!

As we examine scripture, we cannot simply address the “clobber passages,” the small handful of biblical verses that some say condemn the LGBTQ community. Research is clear that, in and of itself, this is not effective in changing peoples’ beliefs. Rather, we believe that they must be encouraged to look at scripture in its entirety. The overwhelming, over-arching message of the Bible is that of God’s limitless love. Time and again, when the people of God think that they understand who is In and who is Out, God steps in and challenges them to draw the circle ever wider. It happened in ancient times, and its taking place today. Understanding scripture in this holistic way help to put those few problematic verses into their proper context. We highly recommend that your community use Hearts Unbound: Engaging Biblical Texts of God’s Radical Love through Reader’s Theater. There are ten sessions to choose from in this engaging and popular resource. (Like all of our faith publications, it’s available for free download! Details on this later in the Toolkit.)

Education needs to take other forms as well. We have included a number of options for your community of faith to learn about gender. For those of us who are not transgender or gender non-conforming, gender is something we thought we had all figured out. Either/or. Male/female. Right? However, there are two important things going on in our culture right now. One is that we are beginning to understand that gender is so much more complex than that simple either/or system in which most of us were raised. The other thing happening in this moment is that transgender and gender-conforming people are under attack like never before. This moment calls us as people of faith to act, to stand up and say, “No more!” So we invite you onto this journey of heart and mind.
May the combined efforts of all us be blessed.
May we stand up together and say, “No more harm done in the name of faith!”
May political change happen in the here and now.
And may we, with God’s help, bring into being the world as it ought to be.

Let the people say, “Amen!”

David Lohman, editor
Faith Organizer
National LGBTQ Task Force

Liberty and Justice for All God’s People: A Toolkit for the Faithful in Response to Anti-LGBTQ Legislation is a joint publication from the National LGBTQ Task Force and Believe Out Loud.

Editor: David Lohman, National LGBTQ Task Force
Editorial Team: Alison Amyx, Believe Out Loud
Kathleen Campisano, National LGBTQ Task Force
Reese Rathjen, Believe Out Loud
James Rowe, Believe Out Loud
Bri Sanders, National LGBTQ Task Force
Barbara Satin, National LGBTQ Task Force
Victoria Kirby York, National LGBTQ Task Force
INTRODUCTION

How terrible it will be for those who make unfair laws, and those who write laws that make life hard for people. They are not fair to the poor, and they rob my people of their rights. They allow people to steal from widows and to take from orphans what really belongs to them. (Isaiah 10:1-2 NCV)

Loving as God Loves: How We Can Respond to HB2
By Reese Rathjen, Believe Out Loud

In March, North Carolina lawmakers fast-tracked an extremely harmful law that aggressively targets transgender people, blocks local non-discrimination protections for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex, and Same Gender Loving (LGBTQI/SGL) people, weakens state-wide policies that offer protection from discrimination based on race, religion, color, national origin, age, “biological sex,” or disability, and even attacks the minimum wage.

We know this law as House Bill 2 or HB2.

Most of the conversation around HB2 is about bathrooms, even though this law impacts so much more. Lawmakers are using public fear and unfamiliarity with transgender and gender nonconforming people to uphold HB2, a law that makes life harder for many North Carolinians.

HB2 intensifies the existing hostility and violence transgender and gender nonconforming people face. It leaves people of color, LBGTQI/SGL people, women, and people with disabilities few legal options when they face discrimination. As if that isn’t enough, HB2 also makes sure poor people stay poor—no matter how hard they work.

As people of faith, it is our responsibility to love one another as God loves—wholly, unconditionally, and mercifully. This includes taking action when lawmakers create unjust laws that make life hard for people (Isaiah 10:1-2 NCV).

Across the country faith and religion are being misused to stomp out difference and cement harmful theology into law—all in the name of “religious liberty.” This framework erases LBGTQI/SGL people of faith and allies.

Because of this, it is more important than ever before to be visible as LBGTQI/SGL people of faith and allies. As we work to repeal HB2, we must speak from our hearts to share the faith values that compel us to do this work and live our lives authentically.

In this section of the toolkit, we’ll provide you with resources to help you respond to HB2 as an LBGTQI/SGL-affirming person of faith.

Keep reading to learn how you can take action to ensure that all of God’s children are treated with dignity and respect!
LETTER WRITING

How to Walk a Constituent Through Writing a Compelling Letter to Their Decision Maker
By Kathleen Campisano, Bri Sanders, Victoria Kirby York, National LGBTQ Task Force

Individuals need to stay in written contact with their state officials (for example state legislators and the Governor). These officials use letters as a way to measure public opinion in their district/state. Their offices count the pieces of mail FOR and AGAINST every issue. Many decision makers decide their vote based on this count.

Talking With Your Congregants
This section is where you are able to discuss the context of the legislation and introduce the action of letter writing to your congregants.

For example: In North Carolina, Governor McCrory and state legislators have passed legislation that is harmful for LGBTQ members of our community and we NEED your help! We are asking our supporters to write letters to their legislators demanding the repeal of HB2. A lot of legislators are still on the fence. Your letter can be the KEY difference in whether your state legislators and the Governor will repeal the bill. Can you do this?

[If able to write a letter, see below]

The Importance of Letter-Writing
We’ve gotten positive feedback from legislators here in North Carolina when they’ve received just a handful of letters. Right now, we’re more focused on quality stories from individual people who care about this issue. It is an opportunity to tell our legislators and Governor McCrory why we care and to share our testimony of how HB2 affects us. If your faith community is organizing or participating in a Week of Action, letter writing gives you an opportunity to set up meetings with legislative staff.

Say as you hand them the template:
Here’s a template, which will help you to write a letter that will leave a lasting impression.

Introduction:
We start off, of course, with an introduction. It’s so important to grab the reader’s attention in the first few sentences, so that they feel compelled to read your entire letter. I want you to take a moment to think about why you care so much about this issue, whether it be because of family, an event, your faith or even yourself.

Body/Personal Story:
The personal story makes up the body of the letter. Legislators receive a lot of letters, and we can really increase the quality of our letters by personalizing them. We want your legislators to remember your story when they vote on this issue. Your testimony is critical to changing the narrative around people of faith that misrepresents congregants like yours. When your legislators and Governor McCrory learn that congregations like yours don’t support HB2 and learn about the negative impact HB2 has on their constituents, like you, they can’t ignore the truth. We need your voices and your stories to win! It is often much more impactful to have a legislator or legislative staffer hear your story. When you write a compelling, personalized letter, you are connecting the dots, so to speak, of how policies actually cause harm to you and the people you love.

Build Relationships with Your State Officials:
If you want a response from your legislators or the Governor, that specifically addresses their stance, you can ask the following questions of your legislators and the Governor.
Did you know that this bill will _____________________________?

How do you feel about this bill? How are you making up your mind on how you will vote?

This last question can help you get sense of whether your legislators or the Governor are voting from their own interest or from the interests of their constituents. Lastly, ask to schedule a time to talk. This question opens the opportunity to schedule a constituent meeting with your legislators to talk through issues and what is going on.

**Closing:**
In the closing, we want you to summarize your key points, and make sure to state that we NEED their HELP!

**Best Practices:**
- Be specific, and use actual names.
- Tell a personal story.
- Make it memorable
- Write FEELINGS rather than FACTS
- End with a BANG!

**Time to Write:**
This is where you will engage your congregants and encourage them to practice writing a letter. Make sure to state that you are there for support, to answer any questions about the process, and that everyone has a story to share that matters!

For example, “Now it’s time to get out your paper and pen! Together, we’re going to take time to practice our messages to our legislators and Governor McCrory, and if you have the technology to send it, will send them together. So, on the count of three, we’re all going to dive in and put pen to paper! Remember, that I am here if you have any questions or need help with your message. Your stories matter and I am glad to talk through the process if you are having challenges sharing your story. Everybody ready? Here we go! 1.2.3....”

**Thank you:**
It is always meaningful when we express appreciation for the work that members of our congregation and community are doing. Writing your legislators is a powerful and an important skill to learn and use. So, we want you to show your appreciation for members of your congregation taking time and having a willingness to learn, practice, and engage with you! Let people know that their actions can make a difference and spark significant change around the issues that move them, especially regarding HB2 and discrimination against LGBTQ people in North Carolina.
Mapping Your Stories

Use this worksheet as a jumping off point to map out the variety of perspectives you could bring to your letter writing. Based on the research you’ve done about your decision maker, you can pick and choose what you think will resonate most. Tailoring is strategic—feel free to highlight different aspects of your identity and story with each individual decision maker.

**Your Identity**
Write 3 different ways you could introduce yourself – think of how you can bring the depth and breadth of your identity to your introduction

For example: “As a… Straight, married mother of 3, and 4th generation North Carolinian…

- Latina lesbian business woman…
- Rotary Club President and member of the UCC in Charlotte…

As a…

As a…

As a…

**Your Work**
I work at ______________________________ and have for ____ years.

**Your Union**
I belong to

There are ___________ number of people in my union.

I hold a leadership position in my union, it’s ________________________________.

**Your Faith Community**
I am a member of ________________________________.

I hold a volunteer leadership role; it’s ________________________________.

I work at my faith community as a ________________________________.
THE ISSUE in Your Life
- I am affected by THE ISSUE.
- I know someone who is affected by THE ISSUE.

THE ISSUE became important to me when __________________________________________________________
because __________________________________________________________________________________________

Non-Discrimination Protections
For example, sex, race, citizenship/immigration status, etc. can be discussed to address the many ways discriminatory policies, like HB2, affect people across identity.

As a woman or as a [member of a minority group/protected class] in this state/in the South, HB2 affects me by/because
_________________________________________________________________________________________________.

As a LGBT/straight-identified constituent/member of the community, I am affected when non-discriminatory protections are not upheld in the law because
_________________________________________________________________________________________________.

Repealing HB2 became important to me when I learned/ when I experienced
_________________________________________________________________________________________________.
because __________________________________________________________________________________________

Your Children
Share your experiences as the parent, relative, or caretaker of a Transgender or LGBQ child. For example,
I have ______ (# of kids) whose ages are _______________________________________________________________.
I have 1/2/3/4 LGBT child(ren).

Repealing HB2 matters to me and my family because
_________________________________________________________________________________________________.

Where You’ve Lived and Voted
I lived and voted in _______________________________ (city in the state you’re working in) for _____ (years).
I lived and voted in ______________________________________________________________________________ for ________ (years).
I lived and voted in ______________________________________________________________________________ for ________ (years).

You have so much you could share!!

For sample letters, please visit: www.believeoutloud.com/heres-how/write-letter
LEGISLATIVE OFFICE VISITS 101
By Victoria Kirby York, National LGBTQ Task Force

What to expect in your legislative visit:
• You may meet with your legislator or the legislator’s staffer;
• Visits are typically 15–30 mins if you have made an appointment, 5-10 mins if you are just dropping by;
• Legislative staffers have the ear of their bosses and, because legislators are so busy, the legislative staff plays an important role of filtering information to their bosses.

Your introduction should include:
• Your name and where you live
• The name of the bill you are in support of:
• Your connection to the district (where you live/work/vote/go to school/worship)

Use your time with the legislator or their staff to tell your personal story about why this legislation is important to you.
• Why does this issue matter to you? (Do you care about equal rights, do you know transgender people who have been discriminated against or harassed, etc.)
• Have you experienced discrimination or violence because of your gender identity or gender expression? If so, use your most compelling story to exemplify why this legislation’s passage is crucial.
• Which people in your life does this legislation directly affect? (Parent, son or daughter, sibling, friend, co-worker, teacher, etc.)

Script
“Hi my name is _____________I am a constituent of Representative/Senator______. I have an appointment with ________

Or if you are dropping by:
“Is the Representative/Senator in today?” (If no, ask if there is someone you can talk with)

IF THE LEGISLATOR HAS NOT SIGNED ON AS A CO-SPONSOR:
I stopped by because I would like him/her to support/oppose “Insert name of bill and bill number” which has been filed in the (insert House and/or Senate) by lead sponsors Rep._____________ and Rep._____________ and in the Senate by lead sponsors Senator ______________and Senator_________________.

Let me tell you a little about why this bill is important to me–give a short story or example....

Then ASK: “I would like to know if you/your boss would support/oppose “insert name of bill”

IF THE AIDE AGREES WITH YOUR POSITION ON THE BILL:
“Thank you! That’s great! I really appreciate Representative/Senator ___________’s supporting this bill.”
IF THE AIDE SAYS THAT THEY ARE UNSURE OF THEIR BOSS’S POSITION ON THE BILL:

“I have a fact sheet that I would like to leave with you about the bill. I would like to be contacted about my legislator’s position on the bill. I can be reached at....”

• Thank the legislator or their staffer for their attention to this matter.

IF THE AIDE SAYS THEIR BOSS DOESN’T AGREE WITH YOU ON THE BILL:

“Thank you for your time. I would like to leave this fact sheet with you today and I would like to meet with my legislator to talk about the bill or at least have a phone call directly with my legislator about the bill. I can be reached at....”

THE BIG FINISH:

Thank them for taking the time out of their busy schedules to meet with you!

• Remember: You may only have 15 minutes for the meeting and you want to leave time for questions—so plan ahead as to what are the most important things you need to get across in five minutes.

AND REMEMBER

Always be polite! This is a marathon, not a sprint; it takes time to cultivate allies. Even if they say “no” now, they may still come around eventually!

Other Tips

• You do not need to go into the details of the bill—keep it to your personal story.

• If a legislator or their staff asks you a question and you are not sure of the answer that is ok. Let them know that you will look into it and get back to them.
SOCIAL MEDIA—TWITTER 101

Social media is a beacon of light for organizing and building community with like-minded individuals. It is also a powerful way to stay in constant, dynamic communication with decision makers!

We invite you to join us on Twitter to help show @PatMcCroryNC and other members of the #NCGA that we are LGBTQI/SGL people of faith and allies demanding the repeal of #HB2! #Time2Escalate

Check out the tips below to learn how to connect with other justice seekers on Twitter, then use our sample tweet to put these tips in action!

- The “#” symbol is a hashtag—using a hashtag connects you to a conversation, like #RepealHB2!
- The “@” symbol is a mention—mentioning another Twitter user opens a conversation with that individual or organization.

There are many ways you can use Twitter as a tool for your work. Here are just a few ideas:

- Connect with other LGBTQI/ SGL people of faith and allies who are working to #RepealHB2!
- Promote your events and actions!
- Give live updates at actions, events, and legislative meetings!
- Tell your story about how #HB2 affects you in a series of tweets—don’t forget to tag decision makers!
- Share why you are doing this work with the rest of the world!
- Tweet us @BelieveOutLoud or @TheTaskForce with any questions or concerns!

Make sure to use these tools until we’ve repealed #HB2 to stay connected with our growing community.

Remember—everything you post on Twitter is public. This means Twitter is a powerful tool to connect with our friends and with people we need to bring along. Be sure to use it wisely!

Sample Tweets

Using hashtags and mentions will connect you to a growing community of LGBTQ people of faith & allies.

Don’t miss out on this growing conversation!

“I’m a gay Christian working to #RepealHB2! Who else is going to the rally this weekend? #WeCame2SlayHB2”

“I just sent a letter to @PatMcCroryNC demanding that he #RepealHB2! Send yours today: bit.ly/FaithfullyRepealHB2”

In the Know

Here are some hashtags folks are using to talk about #HB2:

#WeAreNotThis
#RepealHB2
#WeCame2SlayHB2
#Time2Escalate
#FreeFromFear

Here are some organizations and leaders you should follow:

@bishoptrawls
@RevDrBarber
@melhartsell
@loeyjopez07
@helenryde
@HSBuckles
@equalitync
@ignitekindred
@MoralMondays
@NC_Ignite
@ACLU_NC
@ncnaacp
@CSElive
MESSAGES IN YOUR BULLETIN

Putting our faith into action is exactly what God is calling us to do. And as communities of faith, it is entirely appropriate and legal for you to do issue advocacy within your congregation without risking your 501(c)3 status!

Here’s an example of what a Tennessee church put in their bulletin regarding an equal protection ballot measure:

**Vote for Fairness on August 7**

Chattanooga is one of the fastest rising mid-sized cities in the country. The nation is watching to see what kind of city Chattanooga will be.

All Chattanooga City workers deserve equal protections for equal work and should be able to go to work without fear of being fired without cause.

Chattanooga must be a city that stands for Fairness and equal opportunity for all people.

Discrimination against anyone because of sexual orientation dishonors the fundamental values at the heart of our nation.

Biblical justice demands that we stand in solidarity with all of God’s children, with no exception for our gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender brothers and sisters.

It is immoral to deprive anyone the means to feed, clothe and care for themselves and their families. This applies to LGBT families as much as any other.

As Chattanoogans and as Christians we have the opportunity to vote for fairness on Thursday, August 7.
SCRIPTS: TALKING TO PEOPLE YOU KNOW

North Carolina HB2 Phone Bank Script
By Bri Sanders, National LGBTQ Task Force

For people in other states, please feel free to use this as a template for phone banking people you know in your state around other anti-LGBTQ bills and laws.

INTRO
Hi, is _____ there? This is _______, how are you today? It was so great to see you/talk with you ___________________ (or "I know it has been awhile since we last spoke"). I am calling you because I have something important to discuss with you and need your help!

THE BILL
Have you heard of House Bill 2, or HB2, which was signed into law by Governor McCrory?

[If NO] Well, a few weeks ago, during a special session, North Carolina legislators passed a law that Governor McCrory signed into law which discriminates against LGBTQ people in our community. Using faith as their justification, legislators in North Carolina and Governor McCrory are denying Transgender and Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual folks constitutionally protected rights including limiting access to public bathrooms. North Carolina's HB2 law also disproportionately harms working people by stripping locally passed minimum wage and paid sick leave laws, and guts the process among other communities for fighting discrimination on the basis of race, sex, and age.

[IF YES] Great, well, as you know, it is very important that we, as people of faith, speak out against this unjust legislation. Let me tell you about what my congregation is/I am doing right now. It'll just take a few minutes. How does that sound? Wonderful!

UPDATE & ASK
We are seeing an increase across the South of legislators using faith as an excuse to exercise their own biases against LGBTQ people. North Carolina, then Mississippi, and now Tennessee have all been moving discrimination bills through their legislature. Governor McCrory isn’t the first and, unless we take action to let them know that we disagree with this, state officials will continue to chip away at the constitutionally upheld rights that all people are entitled to across the country.

[Talk about why, you personally, are affected and passionate about HB2. Why does this matter to you so much that you’d call someone to encourage them to take action with you?]

[Then, ask them to share] I’ve told you about why this matters to me. Now, I want to learn about why you care/ are passionate about this as well.

For example, you can ask “Do you care/are you passionate about HB2 and discriminatory laws?” “Why is it important to you to take action?” “Is it important to you to take action against discrimination/HB2?”

Thank you for sharing!

HB2 is a slippery slope because LGBTQ people are not the only people negatively impacted by these bills. Did you know that HB2 also jeopardizes the right of working people, single parents, the children of same-sex families, and others? There are some representatives who haven’t committed to repealing the bill yet. However, we know that they will be very influenced by calls from people in their districts, like you and me, telling them to vote for a repeal of HB2, especially when we emphasize why it matters to us.
It is easy to leave a voicemail or talk to a staff member if someone answers the phone. Are you willing to call your legislator today/tonight after we get off the phone? Excellent!

[IF YES] If calling during day, go to “TALKING TO A STAFF MEMBER SCRIPT”

If calling at night, go to “LEAVING A MESSAGE SCRIPT”

[IF NO] Can you call tomorrow if you can’t call today/tonight?

[IF YES] Go to talk to staff person page

[IF still NO] Okay, well, can you go to their website and send an email? All you do is go to openstates.org/find_your_legislator/, enter your church/home address where it says “Find your Legislator - enter your address,” and click on your legislators’ names when they come up. There you will find your House and Senate legislators’ office phone numbers and email addresses.

[If NO again] Okay, well, thank you for your time. Have a good rest of your evening.

Leaving a Message Script

REPRESENTATIVE CONTACT INFORMATION
Great! Do you have a pen and paper so you can write down all the details? [wait until they are ready, then] Go to http://openstates.org/find_your_legislator/, enter your church/home address where it says “Find your Legislator - enter your address,” and click on your legislators’ names when they come up. There you will find your House and Senate legislators’ office phone numbers and email addresses.

MESSAGE DETAILS
Because you’re calling now, you’ll probably leave a voicemail. When you get to the voicemail box:

- Give your name and either your or your church’s street address, city, and phone number
- Say you oppose HB2 and want Representative ______ to support efforts to repeal the bill.
- Then say that it is important that all lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people be able to live in North Carolina without discrimination or fear that they will be treated as second class citizens.

Make sure to say transgender as well as lesbian, gay and bisexual because they need to hear that you support the rights of everyone.

It is incredibly important to leave your or your church’s street address, so that they know you really do live in their district. People who leave messages without a street address don’t get written down as leaving a message. If you forget, call right back and leave it in a second message.

Timing/Political FAQS

I heard that there may be a repeal of HB2 in the legislature this year, can you tell me what is going on?

There is a lot of pressure coming from faith and business leaders and NC residents to repeal HB2. In order for this to happen we must send phone calls into Representatives’ offices. If Representatives are hearing from constituents that the law needs to be repealed, then they are more likely to press the committee chair and the speaker to bring a repeal bill to a vote.

What is the prospect for a repeal bill to pass?

Lots of people make predictions on this, but a lot will depend on whether or not we are able to put on enough public pressure on state leadership and win the battle of public opinion.

Will the bathroom components of the law be a part of repeal efforts?

Absolutely. We will leave no one behind. The goal will be to repeal the entire law and replace it with a non discrimination bill that protects all North Carolinians from discrimination in housing, employment, education, and public accommodations.
If you have personally experienced job discrimination or any other form of discrimination, or know someone who has, it is also great to leave that in your message as well.

So, that is all you need to leave on your message!

[If they volunteer that they have experienced job discrimination or any other form of discrimination, or know someone who has, jot that down so that they might be contacted again for meetings with their legislators.]

We can practice what you are going to say together right now, if you’d like! I’ll pretend to be the voicemail of your legislator’s office. I’ll say, “Hi, you’ve reached the office of your legislator. Please leave a message after the beep.” Then, you join in with your message. Ready?

Don’t forget to give your name, street address and city, and phone number before saying that you oppose HB2 and want Representative ______ to support efforts to repeal the bill.

Let’s practice! 3, 2, 1….

CLOSING
Great! Do you have any last questions? [See FAQ Box on first page of script]

Thank you so much for agreeing to contact your legislators. Representatives hearing from people like you and me is what is going to make us win! Have a great night/rest of your day!

Talking to a Legislative Staff Member Script

REPRESENTATIVE CONTACT INFORMATION
Great! Do you have a pen and paper so you can write down all the details? [wait until they are ready, then] Go to http://openstates.org/find_your_legislator/, enter your church/home address where it says “Find your Legislator - enter your address,” and click on your legislators’ names when they come up. There you will find your House and Senate legislators’ office phone numbers and email addresses.

CONVERSATION DETAILS
If you call during regular business hours, you will probably talk to a staff person. Here are the details on how to do that --

• Hello, may I speak with the staff person who handles HB2 or Non-discrimination issues? [You will be transferred to the person, or to their voicemail]
• Give your name, city, phone number, and say that you live in their district
• Say you oppose HB2 and want Representative _________________________ to support efforts to repeal the bill.
• Then say that it is important that all lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people be able to work to live in North Carolina without discrimination or fear that they will be treated as second class citizens.
• Make sure to say transgender as well as lesbian, gay and bisexual because they need to hear that you support the rights of everyone.
• If talking to a staff person, ask if they know whether or not Representative ___________________ has taken a stance against HB2. If the answer isn’t “yes”, feel free to ask why or tell them why repealing the bill is important to you.
• Ask them if they would like your street address
• It is incredibly important to offer to leave your street address, so that they know you really do live in their district. People who aren’t in the district don’t get counted at all.
• If you have personally experienced job discrimination or any other form of discrimination, or know someone who has, it is also great to mention that in your conversation as well.
• So, that is all you need to say when you talk to a staff person! If you end up leaving a message, make sure you give your street address.
• If a staff member says that the legislators support the repeal of HB2, or says a specific reason why they haven’t made up their mind about repealing the bill, please let us know about that.
• [If they volunteer that they have experienced job discrimination or any other form of discrimination, or know someone who has, jot that down so that they might be contacted again for meetings with their legislators.]
• We can practice what you are going to say together right now, if you’d like! I’ll pretend to be your legislator’s staffer. I’ll say, “Hi, you’ve reached the office of Representative _______________” Then, you join in with your message. Ready?
• Don’t forget to give your name, street address and city, and phone number before saying that you oppose HB2 and want Representative _______________ to support efforts to repeal the bill.
• Let’s practice! 3, 2, 1....

CLOSING
• Great! Do you have any last questions? [See FAQ Box on first page of script]
• Thank you so much for agreeing to contact your legislators. Representatives hearing from people like you and me is what is going to make us win! Have a great night/rest of your day!
GRACEFUL ENGAGEMENT
By Rev. Debra Peevey and David Lohman, National LGBTQ Task Force

As you enter into the work of changing hearts and minds, sit back and get comfortable, because this is going to take some time. This work, this long-term movement-building work, requires patience. Apart from the rare On-the-Road-to-Damascus kind of transformational moments, people do not change overnight. Rather, for most of us most of the time, our thinking and beliefs evolve. So this changing-hearts-and-minds work is really about inviting people to embark upon, and our willingness to accompany them, on a journey.

However, we will not get far on this journey unless we make it clear that we are not out to debate, to insist upon our own point of view, or to judge anyone. We want to bring our experience and knowledge of grace into every conversation, trusting that our sense of grace will inspire grace within our conversation partner. For it is through conversation, using genuine, deep curiosity about the other person—who they are and how they came to believe what they believe—that people can be helped along their journey of transformation. We meet them where they are without judgment, and do our best to create genuine, authentic relationships.

This relationship-based approach is what we have come to call Graceful Engagement.

This is not easy work to do. Accompanying someone with whom we perhaps deeply disagree can be a challenging task. But that task is made so much easier when we are grounded in the deep grace of God. This grounding settles our nerves, which allows a clarity about the importance of this work to arise. It helps us feel the power of God working through us, and to know that we are God’s hands, feet and heart at work in the world.

Grace underlies our relationship with God. It gets us through the hardest moments and lifts us unexpectedly and refreshingly when we least expect. We can also cultivate grace in our living. And living from a place of graceful engagement will help us to build more inclusive faith communities, a more positive political reality, and will help us be the change we want to see in the world.

Graceful Engagement is…
• living together in relationship and empathy,
• agreeing to disagree,
• valuing fully other people and their beliefs, even when they differ from our own,
• meeting people where they are, not where we want them to be;
• and it is a tool we return to again and again!
**Grounding Yourself in Grace**

So... easier said than done, right? How can we enter into an interaction of grace when what we’re really feeling is fear or anger or defensiveness or...? We do this by being intentional. We invite you, right now, as you are reading this, to connect with grace within you. Close your eyes, breathe deeply, and remember a time when you felt deeply the grace of God. Remember that moment, and allow yourself to step back into that experience. Sense the fullness of grace from the inside out. Rest in this grace for two to three minutes (yes, take that much time!) and notice how you feel. Generally people name that they fill joyful, loved, peaceful, and accepted. What other words would you add to that list?

This is the place to begin your advocacy work from! When you are grounded in this sense of connection to God, self and other, you can respond rather than react. From this place, you can feel your feet on solid ground to support your shaking knees and wildly beating heart! You can listen for shared understanding and common values even with those with whom you most deeply disagree.

**How can you remember to stay gracefully engaged?**

- **Grace in and grace out**—grounded in the grace you receive, you can offer it to others.
- **Relationship is the highest priority.**
- **Approach** people and situations with the intent to bring people together.
- **Conversation** is the bridge to respecting each other, even when we disagree.
- **Exemplify**—as Gandhi said, “Be the change you are trying to create.”

Whether we are working to build inclusive congregations or reaching out to a public official, this grace-filled relationship-building will benefit all of the work you are trying to do. Before you start the day. Before you write a letter. Before you speak to a member of your congregation or a member of the City Council or State Legislature, breathe and allow that moment of recalled grace to arise within you so that you will reach out calmly, effectively and with the heart of God in your relationship-building work.
WORSHIP

Hearing, speaking and singing the message of the radical inclusiveness of God’s love can change lives. It is vital that this beautiful and healing theology be on our tongues during worship. So we have included sermons, theological reflections, music and liturgy to help your community experience this message with all of their senses.

SERMONS AND THEOLOGICAL REFLECTIONS

Revisiting the Tomb: What image of God was Resurrected from the Tomb on that Glorious Day?
By Jamie Lee Sprague-Ballou, Member, Trans Seminarian Cohort

Luke 24:1-12
But on the first day of the week, at early dawn, they came to the tomb, taking the spices that they had prepared. They found the stone rolled away from the tomb, but when they went in, they did not find the body. While they were perplexed about this, suddenly two men in dazzling clothes stood beside them. The women were terrified and bowed their faces to the ground, but the men said to them, “Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here, but has risen. Remember how he told you, while he was still in Galilee, that the Son of Man must be handed over to sinners, and be crucified, and on the third day rise again.” Then they remembered his words, and returning from the tomb, they told all this to the eleven and to all the rest. Now it was Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and the other women with them who told this to the apostles. But these words seemed to them an idle tale, and they did not believe them. But Peter got up and ran to the tomb; stooping and looking in, he saw the linen cloths by themselves; then he went home, amazed at what had happened.

I found it amazing that on Holy week, one of the holiest week of the year, the Governor of North Carolina would rescind the city of Charlotte’s anti-discrimination bill that was passed by the city council.

It would overturn the nondiscrimination laws in Charlotte and allow discrimination to occur from any business against the LGBTQ community.

It now places Trans-woman at risk as they are not allowed to use the restroom according their gender-identity. They are now forced to use the restroom according to their gender assigned to them on their birth certificate, based upon their genitalia.

All laws of progress for total equality for the LGBTQ community has been stripped and set backwards in motion.

The state of Kansas passed a bill that would pay a bounty to anyone who reports a trans-identified individual using the restroom according to their gender-identity.

In other words -Kansas is paying individuals to stalk other individuals while using the restroom, in order to catch trans-identified individuals.

So as I think about this set back and legislation of such hatred and injustice as lawmakers strip away the fundamental equality from the lives of people; I feel as though I need to go back to the tomb which laid empty on Easter Sunday as Jesus was resurrected as the sacrificial lamb for humanity.
If Jesus was truly the image of God in human flesh, then what image of God was truly resurrected on Easter Sunday?

I have always envisioned the resurrected Jesus, who is portrayed in the Bible. The Jesus that reaches out to the least of us, the outcast, the lame, the sick, anyone who has been shunned or cast out from society.

But because this may be mine or others vision as the one who we see as being resurrected on that Glorious day, does not mean this is the same vision of those who have leadership and power in our country or of the leaders of churches that preach the message of judgement from behind the pulpit.

They have seemingly resurrected a God who is one of hate, condemnation, waiting anxiously with pointed fingers to send people into a pit of fire, where the gnashing of teeth will be sung in perfect harmony.

They have a Jesus that tells them to stand in the streets with a resurrected billboard, that gives them the power and the authority to do the pre-casting and judgment upon society, thus helping God to judge accordingly to man's own dislike.

They have a Jesus that tells them it is okay to hate, as they love the sinner but hate the sin.

Hate in its purest form.

A Jesus that gives them the permission and authority to take away another's equality, and dignity as a human living in God's creation in which all creation is to be known as good.

They believe in a Jesus that whispers in their ears that if someone is not just like you, then they are the others, who can be evil, an abomination and unworthy of their Creator's love.

They believe in a Jesus who has been painted with the whitest of pastels and the bluest eyes like that of the ocean.

They believe in a Jesus that is okay with the homeless wandering the streets, as long as they have all the comfort that is necessary for themselves. A Jesus that assures them that it is all about you.

They believe in a Jesus that mistakenly said, “do unto others, but don’t let them do it back to you.”

So you see, I am struggling right now, with the country I am living in, a country which we say is founded upon God.

But according to our lawmakers and conservative Christian churches, our God whom we pledge allegiance to has evolved into a God that promotes dehumanization of young black men, as the law protects white privileged law enforcement wearing a badge to be able to shoot unarmed black men.

We pledge allegiance to a God who speaks through our political system in erecting walls, to further segregate and divide God’s creation.

We pledge allegiance to a country founded upon God to help promote the us-versus-them mentality.

A country founded upon God who keeps the oppressed divided in individual oppression of racism, sexism, genderism, ageism, ableism, classism, colorism, homelessnessism, lookism, nativism and sizeism and the continuance of building walls of segregationism.

A country who has mastered in creating an expansive list of “isms” all in the name of God.

So I have to ask myself, did they not understand the God within Jesus who was resurrected from the tomb or is this really the true image of the God who is governing us.

Did they miss reading the Gospel of Luke where Jesus heals the man with the unclean spirit?

What about the healing of Simon’s mother-in-law; could they have really forgotten about that?
I don’t think Jesus was showing hatred when he reached out to cleanse the leper; amazingly I see this as an act of love.

Jesus ministry does not end here, He continues as some men lowered a bed down through the roof, where Jesus was passionately teaching. Jesus again shows his incredible love by healing this paralytic man, by simply telling him to, “Stand up and take your bed and go to your home.”

This is the God that I thought our country worshipped or believed in when we cite the Pledge of Allegiance, but now the lawmakers and law enforcement are beginning to show me otherwise.

Don’t get me wrong:

I used to get upset when I heard people say that we should pull prayer out of schools and public places, so it would separate church from state. It bothered me that we kept putting God further out of our everyday lives, but now after what has transpired within the past several months of progress being stripped backwards in the name of God and religion, I am beginning to see the hurt of leaving God being used in distorted ways to benefit a select few.

I am no longer comfortable with pledging allegiance to the God of our lawmakers, law enforcement and the mainline conservative Christians; this image of their God, is not the image of a God, who Jesus showed us when reading the Gospels according to Luke, Matthew, Mark and John.

The God that I understand and envision is that of Jesus who was criticized for working on the Sabbath, because he saw the man with a withered hand, and out of the compassionate love of God, Jesus makes this man whole by healing his withered hand.

Amazingly Jesus will reach out to anyone who has compassion for others, just as he went with the Centurion to heal his sickly servant.

Jesus also demonstrated his compassion for others when he arrived into the town of Nain and raised up the dead son of a widow.

Jesus is the one that will clam the storms if we keep our eyes upon him, just as he did when the disciples panicked and woke him from his sleep.

He even controlled the demons while here on earth, just like he did with the Gerasene Demonic man that approached him as he stepped out of a boat when crossing a lake as he preached and healed across the land of Judea.

We witness a Jesus having great love for those who have faith in him and trust in the God who resides within him.

As the Woman who was suffering from hemorrhages for twelve years, who was insistent on touching the hem of Jesus’ garment. It was her faith that made her whole.

Then there was the synagogue leader Jairus, who demonstrates faith and patience as his daughter lays dying, but Jesus arrives to wake her from her state of unconsciousness.

It is this Jesus also that we read about which feeds the multitudes as they come out to hear him teach and preach the message of hope and salvation. The message of a loving Heavenly Creator who takes great delight in their creation.

A Jesus that can help someone in desperation, when his disciples were not able to cast a demon out of a man’s son.

Yet again, Jesus is criticized for healing someone on the Sabbath as he demonstrates the love and compassion of a God who cares for all their sheep. As he cures a woman with a spirit that had crippled her for eighteen years. She was bent over and was quite unable to stand up straight.
This is continuous in the Gospels as they show Jesus touching, healing and curing those who put their faith in him. But, one of the most profound stories in the Gospel comes from the Gospel of John as Jesus engages the Samaritan woman at the well. In this story it shows Jesus as the image of God, crossing boundaries and embracing all of their creation, regardless of our faults, gender or who we are. Jesus demonstrated the love and kindness of a nonjudgmental God, and a God that will reach into the lives of those willing to open spiritual doors and invite the spirit in. Through this story Jesus demonstrates “that there is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus.”

So what is happening with those who are in leadership roles in our country and find it in their hearts to keep oppression in play? What is the image of God who resurrected through Jesus, as we look into the tomb on Easter Sunday?

Is it the loving compassionate image shown to us in the bible through the narratives of Jesus and his ministry while here on earth; or is it the image that the leaders of our country portray as they continually cause systematic oppression through laws of the land, allowing law enforcement to be judge, jury and executioner as they continually take the lives of young black men? Is the image that Church leaders portray when they deliver messages of judgement, hate, and damnation from behind a pulpit in a building erected known as the church, in which God is supposed to dwell? What image of God was truly resurrected on the day as we celebrated resurrection Sunday?

Today I serve and honor a God that transcends the god any lawmaker or conservative Christian can even imagine. I am living the life that Jesus truly taught us, and that is to love one another and pray for your enemies. So I stand and love everyone who enters into my path - I no longer see male and female, Jew and Gentile, rich or poor, but everyone as a beautiful creation in the image of my God who transcends the boundary’s we impose. I even stand and pray for my enemies, such as these legislators, who do not understand the hurt they bring to the Body of Christ. I pray to God and ask forgiveness for them, because they stand just as the Sadducee's and Pharisees did over 2000 years ago as they crucified Jesus to the old rugged cross. Today they are still crucifying Jesus to the same cross as they pass legislation, in which they discriminate and harm those who may be different from them.

So I challenge you today; to go and re-look in the tomb and find the image of God that was resurrected on that glorious day, which image do you see? This is a question I truly cannot answer for you, but I pray that you will see the image that will bring you liberation in your life’s journey, if it is not, I will still lift you in prayer, praying that God will transform the love of Jesus into your life.

So go forth from here liberated, knowing that the narratives of Jesus is most definitely the true image of God and the image our leaders impose upon us, is the image of a God they use to keep people like you and I enslaved in their corrupt systematic oppressive empire.

The Syrophoenician Woman
By Nancy Wichmann, Member, Trans Seminarian Cohort

A little over 1600 years ago, the early church had to struggle with what Jesus was. They finally decided that Christ was fully human and fully divine. That’s been our belief since then.

Many of us focus more on the divine nature of Jesus and, most of the time, forget that he is human. This passage reminds of his humanity. Being fully human means that Jesus had good days and bad days, just like the rest of us. I think this was one of the bad days.

The text does tell us that Jesus wanted to get away from everyone, so he went to Tyre, which as best as I can find on a map is at least a day north of Galilee, so I doubt the location is accurate. He didn’t want anyone to know he was there. Clearly Jesus needed a day of rest.

Remember, Jesus didn’t have a chauffeur driven limousine to get him around. He waked everywhere. His
ministry took place in an area roughly the size of New Jersey. How would you like to walk the whole state—several times?

And after his public ministry started, Jesus no longer had a home. Matthew and Luke have Jesus complaining, “Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head.” (Mat. 8:20, Luk. 9:58)

Jesus had a very hard job with a pretty bad reward at the end. So I’m inclined to cut Jesus a little slack here and allow him a day to rest.

But that was not to be. This woman found him. And not just a woman—this is a Gentile woman. This is a woman who looks and sounds different from Jesus because she’s a racial mix from another country. And she has the audacity to approach this miracle worker she’s heard about. Or is it possible that the Spirit sent her?

Now we teach our children, “Jesus loves the little children of the world—red and yellow, black and white; they are precious in his sight.” And here’s a woman with a real problem: her daughter is very sick. And what does Jesus do?

He insults her. He calls her by an ethnic slur.

Jesus is human. The gospel writer goes to great lengths to let us know that Jesus is a Jew. He was raised in a culture that not only emphasized purity, but even forbade hanging out with gentiles. No matter how divine he is, this was what his human nature was exposed to. This was what we might call today “Jewish privilege.”

This is not how we want to think of Christ. Don’t we sing that he doesn’t see what color our skin is? Isn’t he supposed to be “color-blind?” Doesn’t he tell us not to be judgmental—and what does he do here?

Yes, he was tired. Yes he needed some rest. But I’m not going to soft-peddle this: Jesus screwed up!

But the woman can’t give up. She tells him the reality of her life. Just like we women have to do with men. Just like Black Americans have to do with us whites. Just like we LGBTQ folks have to do with straights, and still have to do with the church. Minorities must have the audacity to approach the majority.

Minorities have to tell the majority what their reality is. The majority cannot have a real picture of that reality unless the minority tries to explain it. This takes time and effort. This involves risk—especially for the minority.

The majority I mentioned didn’t react to the stories being related by the minorities. Well, yes, a few did. Then a few more. Eventually enough allies developed that laws got changed or the courts were forced to act.

Unlike the majority I mentioned, Jesus reacts differently.

Jesus listens. The divine 2x4 lands upside his head. He is fundamentally changed. If you want further evidence of Jesus’ change, look at the very next story: right after saying that his message is only for the Jews, Jesus specifically goes into the Decapolis—an area of ten Greek (Gentile) cities—and heals a man who is deaf and mute.

Perhaps he hears from this woman an echo of the Ruth story, “Your God will be my God.” Or perhaps he realizes, like Paul, that she is a letter from God.

When Jesus listens to the Syrophoenician woman, he hears not only the truth of her reality. He also hears the brokenness of his own reality. Both must happen in order to confront prejudice – and, yes, even racism or gender norming in our time. We must be able to hear the reality of the oppressed and outcast as true.

It can be really difficult for those of us who are members of a privileged race or gender, to accept an alternate reality without qualification, to listen without interrupting, to hear without trying to fit their experiences into the majority cultural models that are inside us.
We must also be able to hear the brokenness of our own reality and of our own narratives. We must hear our own incompleteness.

This is hard. This is uncomfortable. We come face-to-face with the oppression that our majority culture has imposed on us. It forces us to stare our prejudice right in the eye.

This passage offers us a powerful story about standing against oppression. But it also gives us a simple tool: listen to the other reality, be open to the Other.

In a few minutes, we will enact the sacrament of Baptism—the adoption by God of one of God’s children. So I want to mention something else Paul said.

If you’ve never read Paul’s letter to the Galatians, I highly recommend it. It was a life-saver for me.

“As many of you as were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus.” (Gal. 3:27-28) Back in Paul’s time, the person being baptized was naked. When they came up out of the water, they were wrapped in a clean, white robe. Paul tells us that is putting on Christ; being wrapped in the divine.

And that simple act takes away all ethnic or racial differences. It takes away all economic differences. It even takes away gender differences.

In Christ, we are all the same. If we discriminate against someone else, we discriminate against ourselves and Christ.

I want you to listen to the baptismal liturgy. But not for what you hear. Pay attention to what you don’t hear.

We will not ask what color of skin Emily has. We will not ask what nation her parents come from. We will not ask what sexual orientation Emily might have. We won’t even ask if she will ever commit a crime.

We simply ask if her parents renounce the devil and believe in God, Christ, and the Spirit. And then Pastor Lisa will ask the rest of us to stand ready to support Emily in her growth—both physically and spiritually. My great hope is that we can honestly do that.

Prejudice is everywhere. Privilege is invisible to the privileged until someone else points it out. None of us is immune.

Don’t try to tell me you aren’t prejudiced and that you don’t exercise your position of privilege through the lens of your prejudice.

Even Jesus did that. Is the student greater than the master?

---

**Trans Visibility: For Every Eye to See**

*By Eli’jah Carroll, Member, Trans Seminarian Cohort*

(Introductory notes for further use of this text: The narration included in this sermon is a first person account of the original author of this text, and was embellished in the moment. It would be wise to delete this section and create a new narrative to best fit the community gathered.)

**Text**

Revelation 1: 4- 8

John to the seven churches that are in Asia:

Grace to you and peace from him who is and who was and who is to come, and from the seven spirits who are before his throne, and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead, and the ruler of the
kings of the earth. To him who loves us and freed us from our sins by his blood, and made us to be a kingdom, priests serving his God and Father, to him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.

Look! He is coming with the clouds; every eye will see him, even those who pierced him; and on his account all the tribes of the earth will wail. So it is to be. Amen.

“I am the Alpha and the Omega,” says the Lord God, who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty.

Prayer:
Please join me in a posture of prayer.

Holy God,
You made yourself into a human. You craved a closer relationship with your creation. You desire to be closer to all of the beautiful images and likenesses of you each moment. Each moment that passes is an opportunity for us to accept your invitation to continue to fall in love with you. Help us God, to see that falling more in love with you means falling more in love with each other. Help us to hear your Word today, God. Help us feel your Word today, God. Let that Word permeate our hearts—create a change in our hearts today God. God of desire and longing for a deeper Communion with creation, help us to live that out, too—in our waking—in our walking around—in our working for social change—in our academics—in our relationships— Let these things be living devotionals to you—the one who made yourself into flesh to show us how we work toward the Realm of God on earth, we pray—and the church says, Amen.

Hermeneutical Lens/Exegesis
The scripture today is an introduction to one of the most obscure books in the Canon. It’s a book about the Empire—a political book about the bringing about of an apocalypse. Apocalypse— as a hopeful end. The way I understand Revelation is not the kind of fire and brimstone apocalypse that my Seventh Day Adventist Grandmother used to scare the crap out of me with, when I was a little person. Although, that kind of faith filled my grandmother with a sense of hope all throughout her 89 years of life.

One of my favorite Bible Commentaries is called the Queer Bible Commentary. In it, Tina Pippin and J. Michael Clark offer a word about the book of Revelation. Here’s what they say: “Once upon a time there was world full of imperialism and war. And in this world the majority of people experienced economic deprivation, gender and sexual inequality and violence, and the invention of an all-powerful heteromasculine religion. This is the world of the Revelation of Apocalypse of John, revealing the underside of the first-century CE Pax Romana.”

Pax Romana—meaning Roman Peace, which apparently lasted for around 200 years, when the Roman Empire flourished, the economy was doing well, and the Roman population was at an all time high. Now, I’m no historian. But, things couldn’t have been that great if, out of that time period, a guy presumably named John felt inspired to write this book called Revelation. Pax Romana—according to who?

I would say, according to the Roman Empire—this Empire—the leaders of this Empire, namely the 7 leaders of the Empire, with Domitian being the last, assumed the role of God.

In our scripture today, we heard the words of John’s introduction to his revelatory text. There were two pieces of this text that really popped out to me. John begins and ends this short intro with essentially the same phrase: who is, who was, and who is to come.

“Grace and peace to you, from the one who is, who was, and who is to come.” And then the end, “‘I am the Alpha and the Omega,’ says our God, ‘who is, who was and who is to come.”

Why do we think John feels the need to do that? Did he forget that he already wrote it? Maybe a scribe got lost when this book was being copied, and accidentally wrote this phrase twice? I’m doubtful that either of these things are true. I’m doubtful, because of the variation of how John begins with a simple phrase, “who is, who was, and who is to come,” and then embellishes on it. I think John is pointing us to what the rest of the Book of Revelation will be about.
And, what’s that? Let’s talk money for a moment. During the time that Revelation was written, a guy named Domitian was Emperor. One of Domitian’s claims to fame as Emperor was strengthening the value of Roman coinage. In one of my favorite text books (because I’m that nerd), Bart Ehrman offers an image of one of the coins that circulated during Domitian’s rule. The coin depicts the son of Emperor Domitian seated on a globe and reaching out to seven stars. The coin said, “To the Divine Caesar.”

Now, Ehrman wants us to see the similarities found in the rest of the book of Revelation, where Christ is also a divine being—the Son of God—the ruler of the earth—whose hand is also on the seven stars. Domitian’s coin highlights something super important. The Roman Empire was playing God—John’s book of revelation—was a cry for a hopeful end—an end to the Empire playing God.

Another piece of this scripture that really spoke to me is this: “Look! Christ is coming on the clouds for every eye to see. Even those who pierced Jesus will mourn over Christ. So be it!”

Now, what are these clouds that John is talking about? Are they the clouds that are bringing us the blessed El Nino, that are quenching the thirst of our drought filled, California land? Maybe. Or, maybe Jesus is coming on the clouds that I remember so fondly of my childhood in Wisconsin. These big, thick, powerful clouds that brought with them a fireworks display of lightning. This lightning that reminds me that nature’s energy is more powerful—more awe inspiring that any energy that humans can manufacture. That’s a possibility. Just like I am no historian. I’m also no meteorologist.

But, I want to offer a third cloud possibility. In the letter to the Hebrew’s, the author urges these house churches in Rome—these house churches filled with unlikely Jesus followers to be courageous. The author says, “Therefore, since we are surrounded by a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside everything that impedes us and the sin that so easily entangles us. Let us run with perseverance the race laid out for us. Let us not lose sight of Jesus, who leads us in our faith and brings it to perfection.” What a cloud. A cloud of witnesses. A cloud of witnesses ushering Jesus in—for every eye to see.

Narration
I wonder what kind of world you would rather thrive in—the Pax Romana, or the cloud that ushers Jesus in?

Let me tell you a little of what it is like to be a trans person trying to be visible in what feels an awful lot like our own current day Pax Romana.

A friend shared with me a couple weeks ago that her sister was pregnant. Her sister had a sonogram done on her belly. My friend’s sister was brimming over with joy to see her child’s first portrait. This portrait also revealed the sex of her child. Before my friend’s sister circulated the picture of her child, she drew an arrow on the sonogram that pointed to her child, and wrote the word “girl.”

A loving gesture. This gesture feels right. And yet, this gesture is a dangerous pitfall. It’s a pitfall of the Pax Romana. This gendered world—a world that sees boy, or girl—black or white—rich or poor. And, lays judgment on those categories. This kind of judgment—this Pax Romana judgment—our modern day Pax Romana Judgment creates opposition. If you are different from me, then that means you must be against me. When people see me—know that I am trans—it subconsciously places an opposition on the heart of the one who is doing the othering. This happens because the modern day Pax Romana that we live in says that in order to keep the peace, we can’t have people out there “acting” different.

So, I make a life time out of trying to fit in. When I was 18, I came out to my best friend. I said, “Jamie, I think I may be a boy.” After that time, I spent approximately the next 10 years drunk. Alcohol served as my great escape from not fitting into this world that just doesn’t know what to do with people who are different. This Pax Romana world that makes invisible anything that does not fit into the nice neat categories that have been manufactured to create “peace” and “order.”
I nearly gave my life over to our modern day Pax Romana. Until the day of my last drink when I was 27. I got sober. Lost 90 lbs. I found a God of my own understanding. And, I got a bit more educated on what it means to be me in a world that just doesn’t quite know what to do with me.

And then, rather than hiding behind alcohol to make me invisible, I hid behind things that could help me blend in more. Have any of you ever seen a binder? It looks kind of like a big sports bra. Except, it is designed to hide breasts. I wore a binder for 6 years. For 6 years, I wore this device that nearly strangled me. There were times I couldn’t breath. This binder bruised me. Cut me. It limited my bodily movements. I wore this so that I could be more visible. So that I could blend in. So that I could look “like a man”. So I could look like the kind of man that could be recognized in our modern day Pax Romana world— because boys don’t have breasts. If boys have breasts, that somehow threatens women who have breasts. Breasts somehow subconsciously sends a message to our brains that breasts = girl.

I’m a feminine boy. People that know me might call me high maintenance. I love clothes. I love to smell nice—have soft skin—sometimes I’ll wear nail polish. Pax Romana doesn’t get this. During the first few years of trying to pass—wearing that binder—making myself invisible—I did all I could to smell like a boy—dress down—become harder—so that people would recognize me as boy. But somehow, I was still girled all the time.

Then, hormones. Maybe if I inject testosterone into my muscles once a week, I can be invisible enough to be seen. Maybe then, I can fit in. Even today, I still get mispronounced. Even with a mustache. Even after almost 5 years on T. Even after surgery. Pax Romana wants no trace of the fact that I may not be like the rest. And, I’ve worked hard to erase any trace of girl in me.

And, I don’t want to do that. I want all of my beauty visible. I want to tell you about Cheryl. And, I am sharing this at the risk that you may accidentally call me Cheryl after I tell you this. Because, that’s what happens. A trans person shares their “other identity”, and somehow we become that identity instead of the one that we actually are. All of a sudden, you see girl written on my sonogram. Which is why, I think, lots of trans people work at completely erasing their past selves. I’m going to tell you about Cheryl anyway. (Adlib here. Here, I talked about how Cheryl is still alive and well within me. I never want to forget Cheryl, because without her strength and heart, Eli’jah would not have been possible. Basically, when you see an old picture of yourself, see who you are now in that picture too, as well as the person it took to get to where you went with your growth.)

Don’t erase me. Have you ever noticed how, the only time trans people are visible is when we are murdered—or, terrible bills get passed that restrict our freedom? Don’t erase each other. Let’s make that cloud together—That cloud of witnesses that carry the faithful witness, Jesus into the Pax Romana to totally turn it upside down. This is how I think we can become that beautiful cloud of witnesses. In that prayer I shared a few minutes ago, I prayed that we fall more in love with God through falling more in love with each other. Let’s do that. Let’s fall in love with each other. In order to do that, we have to be fearless—we have to be courageous in really getting to know one another on a heart level. Getting to know one another’s hearts is the ultimate weapon against the Pax Romana. When we get to know one another on that heart level, we are rejecting categories, and accepting each other fully. In order for Jesus to come in on that beautiful cloud, for every eye to see, those eyes have to fully see each other. Because that’s when we’ll truly see Jesus. May it be so.
This truth gave me constant comfort as a child, when I would whisper that name and let the sound of it wash over me. Other names enticed me. I tried in vain to get my family and friends to call me Jack, or Tony. The names never stuck, but my deep sense of knowing, my felt sense of identity—that I was a boy—that never went away.

North Carolina has always been my home. My soul thrills at the sight of these wide-open Carolina skies. But the law which North Carolina passed last week—the first in the country that requires students like me and others to use bathrooms that match the gender on their birth certificate—sends angry storm clouds churning above my head, masking the beauty of my home state from view.

Public bathrooms, you see, are a place of fear and anxiety for many trans people, myself included. It was when I reached school age that I began to associate bathrooms with fear. It was no longer a simple act of going into a bathroom in the privacy of one’s home. Now, for the first time, I had to use public, gendered restrooms without the protection of my parents. I soon learned to feel shame about the boyish way I looked and dressed. I learned that being different was a sin, something to be punished. If I was a heretic then my peers were my confessors, intent on seeking me out and revealing just how different I was. I learned to hide, waiting in the stall with my feet pulled up until the bathroom was empty; preferring a reprimand from my teacher to the unpredictable punishments doled out in that cold, ceramic box.

Even today, as a trans person who is privileged to be able to pass as male, public bathrooms are still one of the scariest places I frequent on a daily basis. I open the door, praying not only for an unoccupied stall, but for a completely empty bathroom. Better to not be seen here at all. If I’m out of town or in an unfamiliar place and someone enters while I am in the stall, I wait until they leave.

I’ve seen the news stories, the police reports. Trans people - and overwhelmingly trans women—are assaulted and harassed in public bathrooms on a regular basis. I have no desire to become one of those news stories. And so I wait. I hide. And as I wait, I tell my school age self that one day he won’t have to hide anymore. One day, he will remember who he is. One day, he won’t have to be afraid anymore. Except in the bathroom.

I believe that we are all on a journey of becoming—a journey to find our true name. For many of our Biblical forebears, that name is different from the name we have been called our entire lives. Abram and Sarai were on a journey to become our patriarch and matriarch Abraham and Sarah. Jacob became Israel once he wrestled with God. In the New Testament, Simon made a journey to become Peter, and Saul to become Paul.

And I at last realized my own true name: not the name I was assigned two weeks after birth, and not Tony or Jack. But the name I had been hearing all my life, woven into the tale of my birth. Adam. Adam. Adam.

In my journey, the voices of support have been mixed with a few powerful voices of condemnation. Early on in my transition, a pastor told me that his heart was breaking for me, and for the apparent step I had taken away from God’s plan for my life.

As he was talking, all I could think was, “I’m sorry that your heart is breaking for me, but my heart is just beginning to heal. Those fragile pieces which I feared had crumbled to dust, leaving me as empty as I felt, were being brought to life again by a God I had never felt was this real or this close until she breathed life into a body that I never thought was mine.

As it turns out, this is my body. It’s gone through some changes—it has a few more scars than it used to—but they tell a story. My body tells the story of a God who formed me and saw that I was good. Not perfect, not a finished product, but good.

I and my trans siblings will hold onto that goodness we know is within us, as we continue this lifelong journey of becoming who we truly are. We will do this with or without the support of Gov. Pat McCrory and the state legislature.
But wouldn’t it be better if we no longer had to hide? If we no longer needed to feel fear? If we learned to embrace those we don’t understand and find that we are all human after all?

I am trans. I am a student. I am a Christian. I am a North Carolinian. My faith is my own and the God that I know is vast enough to include every single one of us.

And my faith does not stop at the bathroom door.

**Rethinking “Religious Freedom” Laws**

*By Vivian Taylor, Writer & Advocate*

*Originally published by Believe Out Loud*

I have been horrified to see the new wave anti-LGBT laws across the country that have been put forward under the guise of “religious freedom,” the idea that freedom of religion requires us to allow people to be mistreated. These laws give a wide range of businesses and services providers the right to deny service to LGBT people if they feel serving LGBT people would somehow come into conflict with their “deeply held beliefs.”

**This sort of bill is incredibly dangerous.**

It creates situations where LGBT people can be denied everything from service at a lunch counter to medical care.

Transgender people are already regularly denied health care. Same-sex couples are already denied housing. LGBT individuals are already denied employment and access to public accommodations. These are real and urgent problems. How much worse could it be when there are legal protections for that sort of discrimination?

It is never a virtue to mistreat or exclude people who are not harming you in any way, and to raise that action to the level of needing the most protection, well, something has gone very wrong there.

**I am reminded of the story of Saint Peter and Cornelius the Centurion in the Book of Acts.**

Here we have a Roman centurion have a vision of an angel and call for Peter’s help. This would require Peter to associate with an unclean person, to make himself unclean, by doing so.

Before the centurion’s messengers arrive, Peter has a dream. In his dream, a sheet comes down from Heaven covered in all the unclean animals from the Law. In the dream a voice form Heaven says, “Get up Peter, kill and eat.”

Peter, being a good, righteous man, says, “I have never eaten anything impure or unclean.”

Peter has this same dream three times. He woke up just as the Centurion’s messengers arrived. Peter went with them to the Centurion’s house, and when he arrived there he says one of the finest lines in all of scripture: “You are well aware that it is against our law for a Jew to associate with or visit a Gentile. But God has shown me that I should not call anyone impure or unclean.”

What we see here is that Peter’s dreams, that God’s message, wasn’t about keeping kosher, but rather about the simple fact that there are no unclean people, that God calls us to treat all people right, to associate with all people, to love all people.

The danger for Christians is never that we will be good to the wrong person, or that we will treat too many people well, fairly, and justly. There is no risk of loving people too well.
The danger comes when we decide that there are some people more deserving of right treatment than others.

The danger comes when we think that there are some people who, because of their skin, or sexuality, or religion deserve to be treated unfairly, who deserve to be mistreated.

One point that Christ makes over and over is that everyone has value, that everyone deserves love. Christ specifically aligns himself with the most hated and dismissed in society. Jesus demands that Christians love all people, even those that are considered their enemies.

The idea that LGBT people are the enemies of Christians is, of course, ridiculous. I’m a trans woman who’s a Christian. I’m blessed to know many gay and bi men and women, many transgender and gender nonconforming people who are Christians.

The Church is full of LGBT people, and always has been.

According to the Book of Acts, the first non-Jewish Christian was the Ethiopian Eunuch. This was a person who was very different from Jesus’ first followers. The Ethiopian Eunuch was of a different race, a different class, and was in a different place with gender and sexuality. Still, Saint Philip welcomed him into the faith.

Difference should not be an invitation to discrimination against anyone for Christians. These “religious freedom” laws are antithetical to the Gospel and to the life and work of Jesus Christ.

As Christians, we need to come together to do what we can to stop these laws. As Christians, we need to show love and do justice for all people.

The “Beloved Community” Includes Transgender People
by Rev. Dr. Terence K. Leathers
Originally published by Believe Out Loud

There is a disturbing trend rapidly moving across this nation at an unparalleled and fevered pitch. It is based on hatred, soaked in prejudice and clothed in intolerance.

At rallies and other political gatherings, people are encouraged to act on their fears and ignorance regarding others who are different. Certainly, the current political climate fuels the spewing of mean-spirited rhetoric, and sadly, even physical attacks as we engage in what is intended to be a democratic process.

At rallies and other political gatherings, people are encouraged to act on their fears and ignorance regarding others who are different. Certainly, the current political climate fuels the spewing of mean-spirited rhetoric, and sadly, even physical attacks as we engage in what is intended to be a democratic process.

As a straight African American minister and pastor, I am concerned by what I consider a crisis.

When did we become so uncomfortable and even hostile to difference? I’m sure that many in the straight community are unaware of and some perhaps unconcerned about the plight of those considered different and non-conformist, those whose sexuality and gender identity or expression isn’t what we’re used to or even acknowledge.

While many of us are living our daily lives and expressing our sexuality, at least 22 transgender women were killed in this place we call land of the free and home of the brave. Globally, Transgender Europe’s (TGEU) Trans Murder Monitoring project reports 77 murders of trans and gender diverse people in the first 70 days of 2016—that’s one trans person murdered every 21 hours.

Certainly, those of us of color, specifically African Americans, should understand the pain of prejudice and the devastation of discrimination. Our proud and beautiful ancestors were lynched, drowned, burned and murdered because of their color. It is a fact that color, sexuality and gender aren’t the same; however, each make up our identity and sense of self.
And no one should be harmed, hated, or murdered for being who they are.

I believe, like Dr. Martin Luther King, we must work towards the creation of the “Beloved Community.” The Beloved Community, as I understand, is based on an awareness that in order for there to be peace and harmony, racism and all forms of prejudice and discrimination must be replaced by the spirit of brotherhood, sisterhood, and community.

Whatever our beliefs, we cannot sit or stand by and allow these horrific killings to go unnoticed or unaddressed.

We must articulate in one voice the need for a non-gender biased, non-racially biased justice system that protects the rights and dignity of everyone. Additionally, we must have a justice system that closely examines these attacks and when appropriate deem them hate crimes. At the same time, the church must not be silent.

**Our faith communities must not be silent as specifically transgender persons of color are murdered in our streets.**

We must press our pastors and church leaders to make available this sacred space called the church for frank, honest and informed discussions about sex and sexuality and gender. We must not hide behind certain scriptures without seeking to understand the historical context, the audience it addresses and its implicit value to our quest to make room at the table of humanity for everybody.

We must know no harm.

---

**Where Would Jesus Go to the Bathroom?**

*By Rev. Dr. Dan De Leon, Pastor, Friends Congregational Church
Originally published by Believe Out Loud*

Rev. Dr. Justin Tanis is an ordained Christian minister in the Metropolitan Community Church. He is also transgender, and he is the author of a book titled *Transgendered: Theology, Ministry, and Communities of Faith.*

In it Rev. Tanis writes: “We tend to create God in our own image. If we ourselves are uncomfortable with gender variation, then we say that God is uncomfortable with it.”

**Rev. Tanis’ words are sadly prophetic after what transpired in Houston last week.**

The Houston Equal Rights Ordinance, better known as HERO, would have provided legal protections for people against discrimination. HERO offered protections not just for LGBT people, but also for 13 different categories of people already protected under federal law, including race, disability, military status, and national origin.

But somehow, HERO was overturned by popular vote. This popular vote was mostly informed by Christian pulpits and motivated by Christian churches.

Mayor Annise Parker said in what was deemed a concession speech: “This isn’t misinformation. This is a calculated campaign of lies designed to demonize a little understood minority.”

**Do you know what the lie was?**

The lie was that transgender persons are criminal men wearing dresses, and that if HERO were not overturned, these men in women’s dresses would be free to go into women’s restrooms and commit crimes of sexual assault and pedophilia against our women.

Signs against HERO read, “No men in women’s bathrooms;” and suddenly that was what an ordinance to protect people from discrimination became all about.
Well, if a few Christian churches felt it necessary to talk about that from their pulpits and to make that their mission, then maybe we should be concerned about bathrooms, too. So, the title of this blog is: “Where would Jesus go to the bathroom?”

This is important apparently. Where would Jesus use the bathroom?

I did some research—consulted books and blogs on biblical archeology; spoke with a colleague who is now a professor of religious studies—and here’s what I discovered.

The Israelites who followed the guidelines for a war camp found in the 23rd chapter of Deuteronomy could not use the bathroom on the premises of their camp. The idea was that Yahweh–God–walks through your camp, and you don’t want God to step in what you leave behind; so, leave the residence to use the bathroom.

This also applies to the Temple. According to the Talmud, you don’t go to the bathroom in the Temple. Instead, you are to go outside the Temple and face away from the Temple to go number one, and face toward the Temple to go number two.

But where would Jesus actually go to the bathroom?

When I traveled to Turkey and went to Ephesus, I saw Greek-designed marble-top toilets that were used in ancient times. Authority figures could even have servants go warm the marble seat up for them before they themselves would use it, and then the elites all went to the bathroom together.

However, these toilets were not available to the commoner. And Jesus was not elite. Jesus was homeless. So, we’re still unclear about where he and his disciples would go for a bathroom break.

Unfortunately, we can only speculate about the answer to this question because the gospels mention Jesus using the bathroom the same amount of times as they mention Jesus laughing or talking about homosexuality: none.

So, where is a devoted person of faith to go in order to find Christian instruction for bathroom use?

Justin Tanis writes, “The bathroom issue is one of the most frequent questions that congregations ask me to address when they are seeking to be inclusive of transgender persons. Some in the transgender community have joked that our rallying cry should be, ‘Let my people pee.’”

Maybe this sounds kind of funny, but have you ever thought about what it would be like if every time you went out in public you didn’t have a place to use the bathroom, or that every time you did go into a bathroom you were uncomfortable or even afraid for your safety?

This is the experience of so many of our transgender neighbors, and in Houston, that experience is worsened because a campaign informed by Christian pulpits and motivated by Christian churches demonized transgender people.

The orphan, the widow, and the stranger were the overlooked, vulnerable, marginalized ones that the society of God’s people were mandated to care for, to protect, to not discriminate against.

Who are the overlooked, vulnerable, marginalized ones in our midst today?

According to Time Magazine, Transgender people are four times more likely than the general population to report living in extreme poverty, making less than $10,000 per year, a situation that sometimes pushes these dear ones to enter the dangerous trade of sex work.

Nearly 80% of transgender people report experiencing harassment at school when they were young. As adults, some report being physically assaulted on trains and buses, and in retail stores and restaurants.

The largest study on trans people in the U.S. surveyed more than 6,400 individuals and found that 15% of black trans people and 16% of Latino/Latina trans people have been physically assaulted at work. One in five trans people experience homelessness—and 38% of black trans people and 29% of Latino/Latina trans people have been refused a home or apartment due to bias.
And then there’s hate crimes motivated by transphobia.

According to the National Coalition of Anti-Violence Programs, 16 of at least 20 LGBT people murdered in 2014 in the U.S. were people of color; 11 were transgender women, and 10 were transgender women of color. And as of this month, 23 trans women have been killed in the United States.

Meanwhile, Christian churches, the ones who are mandated by the law of God’s love to protect those most overlooked, vulnerable, and marginalized in society, are making it their mission to make a little understood minority that much more misunderstood.

As a follower of Christ and a witness to the Gospel, I’m tired of Christian churches and our pulpits being known for stirring hate campaigns and marginalizing the most vulnerable children of God in the society we all share.

As Christians, we need to be less about protecting our supposed values and more about protecting the most vulnerable neighbors in our midst.

We Christians need to make the news not for spearheading a campaign that overturns protections for those most discriminated against in our society, but for building a plowshares movement that holds the institutional powers that be accountable any time they forget or refuse to acknowledge our marginalized neighbor.

As Christians we need to show up on social media newsfeeds not for being offended at Starbucks introducing a design for their cups that includes various religious holidays, but for standing up with and for our Muslim neighbors and our Jewish neighbors who are overlooked, misunderstood, and ostracized for practicing their sacred traditions and just being who they are during the holiday season.

As Christians we need to not sit idly by when anyone’s human rights come up for a popular vote, but instead we need to give all that we have to assuring that the daily intimidation of psychological violence toward our transgender neighbor ends.

So, where would Jesus go to the bathroom?

Turns out, this is a very important question.

Amen.

A Trans Ally in a Tennessee Pew

by Kate Fields. Life-long Baptist & Seminarian
Originally published by Believe Out Loud

Five years ago, I was a member of a Southern Baptist Church in Mt. Juliet, Tennessee, listening to the same sermons as my Old Hickory Representative Susan Lynn.

One Sunday, as our preacher dug deeper into Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount, I was struck by the message of counter-cultural love.

We read that day that those who mourn are actually blessed, and so are those who are poor in spirit, and those who are merciful, and those who are meek—you know, the kind of folks who do not use their power to lord over another. We learned that those who work for peace would be blessed, and even those who hunger and thirst for justice.

I remember thinking that these seemed so counter to the flow of our everyday ideology and culture. Even further, our pastor reminded us that Christ taught that it was not enough for these things to remain in our hearts, rather they must become practice—everyday counter-cultural practice.

On went the sermon: we should not just love our neighbors, but our enemies too. We should pray for our persecutors, we should reconcile ourselves with others, and if someone asks for our shirts, we should give them our cloaks as well.
Though years have passed, my captivation with these scriptures led me to study them more deeply in divinity school.

I became compelled to learn more about this counter-cultural way of life, this blessed-are-the-meek-and-those-who-grieve-and-those-who-work-for-justice kind of living. I began to learn how interconnected we all are, and I learned that if a group of folks are marginalized because of how they identify, then all of us are affected. We are lesser when this happens—we are not our best selves.

Even though I find myself in different Baptist pews today, I think back to the time where I worshipped in the same community as Representative Lynn.

I wonder if my grief about her role in writing and sponsoring one of Tennessee’s harmful, anti-transgender bills is explained by our proximity then to one another. The bill, HB 2414, would require students in Tennessee’s public schools and universities to use bathrooms and locker rooms according to the sex “indicated on the student’s original birth certificate.”

The bill claims to protect all students, but I know this is not true, because it would actually put trans and gender non-conforming students at risk.

Rather than being treated like everyone else, trans students would be made to feel that who they are is wrong.

How could someone who worships the same loving God as me believe that anyone should be treated this way? This bill does not sound much like the teachings of Jesus that Representative Lynn and I learned together those years ago. I think that is why this hurts me so deeply.

I know that all students, not just cisgender students, are made in the image of God and deserve to be loved and protected in school. This bill sounds like fear, exclusion, and discrimination rather than love.

Representative Lynn, you may be my district representative from Old Hickory in name, but if you continue to sponsor a bill that harms people I love—then you do not represent me.

If you seek to pass a bill that allows our schools to harm children of God—then you do not represent me.

I believe we can do better, Representative Lynn, as a fellow Baptist, and as a fellow Tennessean.

I believe we can spend our time working to care for all God’s children in Tennessee in much more faithful ways than this.

A Gospel Message for Queer People of Faith

By Leslie Rouser, Writer, Consultant
Originally published by Believe Out Loud

This is for everyone who’s been kicked out.

If you have lost your home, your loved ones, your faith community—this is for you.

If standing in your truth is a sin, we’ve all made the fatal error. When waking up, living, breathing are de facto outside of your community’s moral bounds, and you are screwed by your own honesty, you are in the best company.

I thought about this often in the years after I left the Church. I nourished my faith in saints that faced both the persecution of their own time and the shadow of later generations’ discomfort and judgment.

When Pope Gregory the Great proclaimed that the three Marys mentioned in the gospels were all the one Mary Magdalene, it was easy for believers to reduce the rich image of Jesus’ closest disciple and model of
a gentle loving heart to nothing other than a reformed prostitute. In the hands of Renaissance masters, she shrunk into a destitute penitent, tortured by her own history and sexuality.

And if it weren’t for St. Joseph’s patience, the Virgin Mary would have been a destitute divorcée in a culture that had a legal case to stone her to death.

**Growing up, I took refuge in those ancient stories.**

I had been sexually abused from a young age and identified with the early women whose character was automatically questioned and smeared by thinkers, theologians, and artists.

Nobody but Jesus had one nice thing to say about the woman who anointed Jesus’ feet. Everyone was too concerned that when she sat at his feet and listened, yearning for his teaching, that it proved her laziness and poor work ethic.

Jesus was the only man who advocated for her and saw her worth. When she broke down and washed his feet with her tears, the male disciples crowded around complaining she was wasteful with her money.

As I became an adult and transitioned medically and socially from boyhood to womanhood, I also confronted growing instances of discrimination and marginalization.

**A college graduate that speaks four languages, I suddenly became unemployable.**

My housing was no longer stable. I had to sell my body in order to put food in my own mouth and keep my place of living for just a little longer. I, too, found myself in a culture that only valued my sexuality, at the expense of a rich life yearning for value and human connection.

In those dark moments, I knelt before icons of the Blessed Virgin and asked for her protection. I sought out the comfort of Jesus’ words, and like Mary Magdalene I tried to follow his passion through the mysteries of the rosary.

While the male disciples had mostly already fled, Magdalene found herself under the cross, and wept after Jesus when they placed the body in the tomb. When the other women ran to tell the community of faith that Jesus had conquered death at the resurrection, St. Mary Magdalene lingered in the garden, weeping for the man she loved so much, wondering where he could be. I wanted to follow with her, and I wondered at the hole I felt in my heart, asking why God wasn’t with me.

**Even in those dark places of poverty, unemployment, and hunger, I was looking for Jesus.**

I sought him in the faces of everyone entering my home and saw his hands in the hands that paid me so I could eat, and his face in my nightly visitors clouded with shame and loneliness. I saw that if God is in all of us, then God is not much different from me, and God can certainly find something to love in everyone.

St. Mary Magdalene was the first witness of Christ’s resurrection, the first to see his transformed face. She turned from tears to joy in moments, crying, “Master!” and reaching to grasp the one she loved. But in that moment, God called her to something higher. Jesus said, “Stop touching me.”

Strange words from the one that loved her so much he defended her to his closest friends and followers. Strange for the man who only wept at his friend Lazarus’s death once he saw Magdalene’s tears.

**Why would Jesus come back to his loved one only to refrain from physical connection?**

And here is the answer that arrived to me through meditation: St. Magdalene loved Jesus in a close, physical way. She dared touch him and minister to him, considered him her teacher and friend. She was attached to his manifestation as a living, breathing, human being. And that was good.

But Jesus died. And when he came back to life, things were different. He had overcome his life so far that he had also overcome death, and so on back to his Father. It was time to make room for a deeper communion, a deeper connection to God than the previous manifestation allowed.
Because she had loved so deeply, it was St. Mary Magdalene who first received this message. Everything she knew had changed. By releasing one form of her maker, her teacher, and the man who loved her, she prepared for the greater communion that would occur at Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit entered each disciple and created a deeper community of love and faith.

**She could not cling to what passed away. Instead, Jesus called her to look forward to something greater.**

God asks the same of us when we lose everything we have. The physical is a wonderful vehicle to enjoy the good things of life, but the real challenge is to recognize them as such and look forward to an even deeper unity with God. With that unity, bitterness, shame, anger, and hurt can fall away, making way for a new life. This is the special secret of Magdalene's life—not unrelenting remorse for her womanhood, not disgrace for her past.

No, the real message of St. Mary Magdalene is this: To love deeply is to ultimately release, so that a greater love may take its place.

Those of us who have been kicked out, shamed, and hurt, receive this special blessing from God. Our inheritance is strength, unity, acceptance and love.

**This inheritance lasts forever, no matter if anyone else can recognize it.**

We all have an intimate place for us in God's love, and no matter the people who stand aside and denounce us, we are welcome at Christ's feet and—ultimately—into a family that stretches back as far as our faith.
MUSIC

Let the people of God raise their voices and proclaim the love of God!

“All Are Welcome”  
by Mary Haugen
Published in:  Church Hymnary (4th edition) #198
Evangelical Lutheran Worship #641
Gather (3rd edition) #850
Gather Comprehensive #753
Gather Comprehensive (2nd edition) #741
Glory to God: The Presbyterian Hymnal #301
Hymns for a Pilgrim People #550
Hymns Old and New #432
Lead Me, Guide Me (2nd edition) #683
Lift Up Your Hearts #269
Oramos Cantando/We Pray in Song #681
Singing Our Faith #185
Singing the Faith #409
Obtain: www.giamusic.com/search_details.cfm?title_id=209

“Believe Out Loud”  
by David Lohman
Bulletin insert and piano score are included on following pages
Listen & Obtain PowerPoint version and instrumental parts: www.WelcomeSongMusic.com

“Dazzling Bouquet”  
by Bret Hesla
Listen & Obtain: www.brethesla.com/downloads/dazzling-bouquet/

“Draw the Circle Wide”  
by Gordon Light
Published in:  Common Praise #418
Sing! Prayer and Praise #123
Worship and Song #3154
Obtain: www.commoncup.com/sheet-music/

“Draw the Circle Wide”  
by Mark Miller & Gordon Light
Obtain: www.sheetmusicplus.com/title/draw-the-circle-wide-sheet-music/18717433

“For All the Children” by David Lohman
Published in:  Community of Christ Sings #274
Bulletin insert and piano score are included on following pages
Listen & Obtain PowerPoint version and instrumental parts: www.WelcomeSongMusic.com

“For the Goodness of Our Bodies”  
by Ruth Duck
Obtain: www.hymnary.org/text/for_the_goodness_of_our_bodies_made_for

“How Could Anyone”  
by Libby Roderick
Obtain: www.libbyroderick.com/requests.html

“I Am Welcome”  
by Bryan Sirchio
Obtain: sirchio.com/cds/songbooks/Songbooks/343

“I Need You to Survive”  
by David Frazier
Published in:  Lead Me, Guide Me (2nd edition) #668
Sing! Prayer and Praise #184
Zion Still Sings #219
Listen: www.youtube.com/watch?v=LUUHPDUsLJ0

“The Last, the Lost, the Least”  
by David Lohman
Obtain: www.WelcomeSongMusic.com

“Light My Step”  
by Thomas W. Nichols & Daniel Chadburn
Listen & Obtain: www.manyvoices.org/blog/resource/light-my-step/
“Make Way”
by Richard Bruxvoort Colligan
Listen: www.worldmaking.net/make-way.php
Obtain: www.riversvoice.com/shop.php

“More Light”
by Christopher Grundy | ChristopherGrundy.org
Listen: www.youtube.com/watch?v=aBx5MSmCDk0
Obtain: www.scoreexchange.com/scores/95003.html
Obtain: sites.fastspring.com/christophergrundy/product/catalog

“The Open Invitation”
by Bret Hesla
Listen & Obtain: www.brethesla.com/downloads/open-invitation/

“Praise the Source of All Creation”
by Jann Aldredge-Clanton
Obtain: www.religiousinstitute.org/worship-resources-hymns/

“There Is Room for All”
by Bruce Harding
Published in: More Voices #62
Sing! Prayer and Praise #76
Listen & Obtain: www.evensong.ca/index.php/blogs/music/283-there-is-room-for-all-a-song-of-inclusion

“Transfigure Me”
by Christopher Grundy
Dedicated to the transgender community
Listen: www.youtube.com/watch?v=7BTA1xEJO4o
Obtain: sites.fastspring.com/christophergrundy/product/catalog

“We Are the Church Alive”
by Jack Hoggatt-St. John & David Pelletier
Obtain: conjubilant.blogspot.com/2008/08/gods-all-inclusive-love_6667.html

“We Too”
by Bret Hesla
Listen & Obtain: www.brethesla.com/downloads/we-too/

“When Bodies Join and Souls Combine”
by Patrick Evans
Obtain: www.religiousinstitute.org/worship-resources-hymns/

“You Are Welcome Here”
by Richard Bruxvoort Colligan
Listen: www.worldmaking.net/you-are-welcome-here.php
Obtain: www.riversvoice.com/shop.php
HYMN TEXTS

“We Limit Not the Truth of God”

1. We limit not the truth of God to our poor reach of mind
   by notions of our day and sect, crude, partial, and confined.
   No, let a new and better hope within our hearts be stirred;
   for there is yet more light and truth to break forth from God’s Word.

2. Who dares to bind to their dull sense the oracles of heaven,
   for all the nations, tongues and climes, and all the ages given?
   That universe, how much unknown! That ocean unexplored!
   For there is yet more light and truth to break forth from God’s Word.

3. Creator, Christ and Spirit, send us increase from above;
   enlarge, expand all faithful souls to comprehend thy love.
   And make us all go on to know with nobler powers conferred,
   for there is yet more light and truth to break forth from God’s Word.

Text: George Rawson, based on John Robinson’s farewell sermon to the Pilgrims, 1620; alt.
Music: Suggested hymn tune: KINGSFOLD, 8 6 8 6 D
Public domain

“Lazarus, Come Out!”

1. As from the tomb stepped Lazarus and drew a ragged breath,
   You opened up fear’s fortress and drew me out of death.
   O God of truth and wisdom, of holy dignity,
   I think you for the opening through which you set me free.

2. When I was hid in secrets, I could not find the day;
   Enclosed in self-deception, my spirit slipped away.
   In pain I sought to slumber, bone weary, still, alone,
   Until at last you found me, and called me through the stone.

3. I pray for all God’s children whose lives stay cloaked in shame,
   And pray for all whose hatred drives them to pointless blame.
   I pray for greater courage to stand and face the crowd,
   An heir to sacred promise, who names your love aloud.

4. No longer shut in anger, nor sealed in desperate fear,
   No longer forced in anguish a stranger to appear;
   No longer wrapped in secrets in death’s dishonest game,
   I praise you, sweet redeemer, and rise to bear your name.

Text: Peter J.B. Carman
Music: Suggested hymn tunes: LANCASHIRE, LLANGLOFFAN, ANGEL’S STORY, ST. CHRISTOPHER, AURELIA,
7 6 7 6 D
Text © 1997 Association of Welcoming and Affirming Baptists
For All the Children

1. God, we gather as your people to raise our song above, and we dare to claim the promise of Your love.
2. Oh, we sing for all the children, that one day they be free; and we sing for generations yet to be,
3. Oh, we pray for all the young lives cut short by fear and shame so afraid of who they are and whom they love.
4. God, we’re working for the future when children far and wide, can live their lives with dignity and pride.

Though the day may not yet be here, we trust it soon will be, when your children will be free.
May they, in Your love, find rest.
May the message now be banished that Your love is for the blest. May they, in Your love, find rest.
As they grow in strength and stature, may they join us hand in hand, against all hate we stand.

Refrain

O, may our hearts and minds be opened, fling the church doors open wide. May there be room enough for every one inside.
For in God there is a welcome, in God we all belong. May that welcome be our song.

Text: David Lohman
Music: David Lohman
For All the Children  

Words and Music by David Lohman

God, we gather as your people to
Oh, we sing for all the children, that
Oh, we pray for all the young lives cut
God, we're working for the future when

raise our song above, and we dare to claim the
one day they be free; and we sing for genera-
short by fear and shame so afraid of who they
children far and wide can live their lives with

promise of Your love, though they
actions yet to be, May the
are and whom they love. As they

dignity and pride.
Dedicated to

REV. ANN B. DAY & DONNA ENBERG
in honor and celebration for their twenty years as leaders of the Open and Affirming Program of the United Church of Christ Coalition for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Concerns, and for their founding and ongoing spirit in the ecumenical Welcoming Church Movement.
June 2007
Believe Out Loud

[Music notation]

Refrain

It's time to believe out loud

no more staying silent! It's time to proclaim aloud

the faith that we hold dear. It's time to reach out

to the rejected. It's time to stand up and say, "No more!"

It's time to declare a word of welcome, bring everyone through

the open door. It's time to believe

out loud. It's time to be strong and proud,

It's time to believe, believe out loud.

Text: David Lohrman
Music: David Lohrman

© 2006 Welcome Song Music www.WelcomeSongMusic.com
"Believe Out Loud" - Bulletin Insert, page 2

Believe Out Loud

VERSES

1. Our God remains unchanging,
   Yet in so many ways, we'll
   Love, more than hollow words,
   We're never turned away.

2. Holy One's still speaking,
   Listen for the Spirit,
   Out of this abundance, this gift.
   Offer praise.

3. Yet God's all-loving guidance,
   We'll learn to think in new ways,
   We've got to stand with millions who've
   Often gone unheard.

But there is yet more wisdom,
The table's set and read,
Heard the Spirit's call,
And shout it from the mount.

Refrain
- Bring every one inside!
- "God's love is meant for all!"
Believe Out Loud

Words and Music by David Lohman

Bright \( \text{\textcopyright} \) 132

REFRAIN

It's time to believing out loud

A D D\( ^\Delta \)

no more staying silent! It's time to proclaim aloud

G Asus D

the faith that we hold dear. It's time to reach out

D\( ^\Delta \) Em7 Asus

Text: David Lohman
Music: David Lohman

© 2020 Welcome Song Music www.WelcomeSongMusic.com
to the rejected. It's time to stand up and say, "No more!"

It's time to declare a word of welcome, bring ev'ryone through the open door. It's time to believe
out loud, It's time to be strong, and proud,

It's time to believe, 

...
God remains unchanging, yet
thoughts like love and justice are
love of God is boundless, we’re

in so many ways the Holy One's still speaking
more than hollow words, we'll listen for the Spirit
never turned away. And out of this abundance

- ing, for this we offer praise. Yet
- it and let our hearts be stirred. We'll
- dance this gift we must repay. We've

(last time)
A Practice Spirit, Do Justice Toolkit: Faithfully Responding to Anti-LGBTQ Legislation

But there is yet more wisdom to bring
The table's set and ready, bring
And shout it from the mountains: “God's

Break forth from God's Word!
Every one inside!
Love is meant for all!”

Refrain
LITURGY

These resources are an offering to all who are creating worship services in support of the full dignity of LGBTQ persons. You are welcome to copy and use them in worship bulletins, newsletters, online or in print.

Two excellent collections of LGBTQ-Affirming Christian Worship Resources:

*Shaping Sanctuary: Proclaiming God’s Grace in an Inclusive Church*
Essays, sermons, liturgies and hymns from the welcoming movement
Download here: rmnetwork.org/shapingsanctuary.pdf

*A Place in God’s Heart, A Place at Christ’s Table*
Worship Resources for the Welcoming Church Movement
Download here: welcomingresources.org/worship.xml

More worship resources can be found on many of the websites listed at the back of this toolkit.
May every word be a sanctuary and a gift for the journey.

Calls to Worship

One: We gather as God’s people to sing,
to pray, and to praise your name,
to become this day a tapestry of grace stitched in love.

All: Open our hearts that the threads of community
might embrace the fullness of your intentions for all people.

One: We ask that your reconciling love would gather us in,
that each of us might find a home,
that every family will find a place of honor.

All: Let your Holy Spirit weave in, among and through us
and show us the power of love found within your new community of grace.

One: Creating God, blessed are You and blessed is this time and place.
Thank You for Your people gathered here.

All: We are here! Being the Church! We have not retreated!

One: Reconciling Redeemer, You are the mender of our souls and the healer of our broken bodies.
You lift us up, strengthen and sustain, nurture and nourish, heal and help.

All: Holy Fire, ignite a new spark in the heart of each one gathered here.

One: Light our way. Warm our bodies. Inspire our tongues to speak a new word, to shout another praise,
and to sing an amazing song that will bring to us life and to You, glory!

One:  God has shown us what is good, and what then is required of us?

All:  To act justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with our God.

One:  Jesus says: Anyone who welcomes you welcomes me, and anyone who welcomes me welcomes the One who sent me.

All:  The Spirit says, “Come.” Let each one who hears the Spirit say, “Come,” for all are welcome here.

One:  Let us worship God!

— From St. Andrews Presbyterian Church, Oklahoma City, OK More Light Sunday, 2005

One:  We are part of the Church universal—faithful people of every color, gender, class, sexual orientation, age, and ability, gathered to love and serve God.

One:  We are a welcoming church.*

Together, let us worship God, rejoicing in the good news which we celebrate this day!

All:  There is a place in God's heart, there is a place at Christ’s table, there is a place here and in every welcoming church for all people—Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer and Straight!

One:  Christ who gathers us, bids us follow in the ways of love and justice.

All:  May our hearts be open to Christ’s leading in our worship and our living, this day and always.

*if appropriate, use the particular denominational designation


One:  We are the body of Christ!

Left:  The hand clapping, toe tapping, heart pumping, mouth tasting, arms embracing,

Right:  Justice seeing, hymn singing, love making, bread breaking, risk taking

All:  Body of Christ!

Left:  Baptized in one Spirit, we are members of one body.

Right:  Many and varied in gender, color, sexuality, age, class, and ability,

All:  We are members of Christ's beautiful body.

Left:  None of us can say to another, “I have no need of you.”

All:  For only together can we find wholeness.

Right:  None of us can say to another, “I will not care for you.”

All:  For we are connected like muscle and bone. If one suffers, we all suffer. If one rejoices, we all rejoice!

One:  Thanks be to God who, in Christ, has made us one.

All:  Let us worship God!

One: The heavens are telling the glory of God!
All: Day to day and night to night, unending is their silent speech of beauty and wonder.
One: How shall we join their joyful witness?
All: With words that proclaim God’s inclusive love, 
with works that bring forth God’s powerful justice, 
with worship that rejoices in God’s wondrous presence, now and always. Amen!
– By the Rev. Ann B. Day, originally published in ‘Shaping Sanctuary’

One: What right have we to invoke God’s name on what we say and do here together?
All: In Christ we have been called to be God’s people, and given God’s Spirit and Word.
One: Have we the courage to worship in spirit and in truth, knowing that it may change us?
All: We have come to seek, to find, and to be found.
– From the More Light Presbyterians Retreat & Mission Weekend, New Orleans, LA, 2006

Invocations

One: Gathered in this sacred space, O Creator Spirit, 
in the multicolored company of Your Church on earth and in heaven, 
we celebrate Your creation and invite Your presence into our midst. 
We know, Creator Spirit, 
that eternity cannot hold You, 
nor can our little words describe the breadth of Your faithfulness to us. 
Yet in the space of our small heart and in silence, come close and repair us.
(Silence)
One: Creator Spirit, bring new life
All: Where we are worn and tired,
One: New love
All: Where we have turned hard-hearted,
One: Forgiveness
All: Where we feel hurt and are wounded,
One: And the joy and freedom of Your holy presence
All: Where we are prisoners of ourselves.
One: Creator Spirit,
All: In the space of our small heart and in silence, come close that we may dream.
– By the Rev. Dr. Sally Harris, Former Co-Chair, Affirm United, United Church of Canada

All: God, who made me in Your image, teach me to love myself as You love me.
God, who made me in Your image, allow me to show that image to the world.
God, who made me in Your image, help me to see Your image in all those I meet.
God, who made me in Your image, teach me to conserve and protect all Your creation.
God, who made me in Your image, bless, protect, and keep me and all Your children safe.
One: The One who breathed life into our lungs continues to be present with us. God, who has made us reflective of God’s own image, has forgiven us all and made us new creations.
Therefore, since our sins are forgiven, let us go forth with love and peace, honoring and upholding the dignity of all we meet, knowing we see reflections of God’s image all around.

All: Thanks be to God.


Prayers

As a community of LGBTQ people and people who love LGBTQ people we have experienced the wounds—we’ve had to sing songs to ourselves—we’ve had to create institutions that would give us life. And we did this—Right in the midst of being called abominations, right in the midst of faith being used to deny us basic rights, right in the midst of being mis-gendered over and over again and using faith as an excuse, right in the midst of conversion therapies, right in the midst of denying our families, right in the midst of being fired from pulpits for speaking what is right—we have survived.

But now that we have survived, now that we have been through the wilderness and the storms—it’s time to tell the truth; it’s time to tell our story. We have never been wrong—we have been lied to. Faith has been stolen from LGBTQ/SGL peoples.

We get to reclaim faith as for us and as ours!

Today, rejoice in this simple truth: They may have attempted to push you to the bottom of the bowl, but like Cheerios, you rise—we rise to the top!

by Rev. Rodney McKenzie, Jr., Director of the Academy for Leadership and Action, National LGBTQ Task Force

——

God of love, mercy and grace, we gather to first say thank you. We thank you for life and the hope that is always available as we turn to You. In this world that is so filled with pain, suffering and lack, we stand together as one, no longer afraid of the points of intersection that connect us to both friend and foe. Help us grow in our comfort with discomfort, as we find our way to the “other” among us. May love reign supreme in all that we say and do. Amen.

Bishop Tonyia M. Rawls, Executive Director of the Freedom Center for Social Justice

——

Holy One, whom we know by many names, we pray today. We are connected in the power of creative love and we find we are not alone in our efforts. Thank you for this love that binds us together. Affirming LGBTQ people is a family value and we thank you for the many ways families are made together in your creative care. Where there is doubt, increase our confidence. Where there are wounds, heal us with tender mercy. Where there is anger, direct our efforts to influence change. Bless the holy trouble makers in the name of love and justice. Direct our steps today in the power of love. Through your goodness and justice, we pray. Amen.

The Reverend Jes Kast-Keat, Associate Minister, West End Collegiate Church

——

Spirit of love who unites us, you bind us together in families of our birth and families of our choosing. Open our hearts and minds and spirits to the fullness of our life together. Where family is fractured, bring your healing. Where family is a burden, bring your patience. Where family has built walls, bring the power of your reconciling grace. Where family is a joy, tune our praise with thanksgiving, and inspire us to reach out to others who are family-less. Infuse your love into all families that the world may know anew your presence and your peace. Amen.

The Rev. Mark E. Erson, Pastor, St. John’s Evangelical Lutheran Church
God of transformative power, we remember those who heeded the words of the Apostle Paul by not conforming to the things of this world: the gender non-conforming women who would sooner live out their authentic trans identity with holy courage than cower in conformity to this world’s finite gender assignments. We thank you for the trans women whose beautiful voices and gender expressions showed us the infinite image of Your love, Holy One; and we lament that so many of their unmistakable lives were cut short by murderous hostilities that are scared to death of Your magnificent strength being revealed through transgender human beings. Remembering these lives lost to senseless violence, we confess our accountability to transphobia and our complicity to transphobic systems. In honor of trans women who did not conform to the patterns of this world, we pray that we all would be transformed by the renewing of our minds in order that our communities of faith would stand up against transphobic violence as witness to Your love that knows no boundaries. God bless all transgender women today and every day. Amen.

Rev. Dr. Dan De Leon, Friends Congregational Church

Great God our liberator, healer and redeemer, thank you for freeing us from the bondage that kept us from allowing the world to experience our truth and our power. Thank you God for the power of the Holy Spirit to loose us, our minds, our hearts, and our spirits from untruths of the world and the church.

Our Savior died so that we all might be free, and he whom the Son sets free is free indeed. God we ask that you in your liberation power, free those congregations that have yet to understand you, your power, and your Word. We pray that you might free them in their hearts, minds, souls and spirits, and not allow them to continue to cause harm or hurt to anyone else. We declare healing for those sisters and brothers in Christ who have been hurt or wounded by religious dogma and the pious error of those who want to uphold tradition and ritual in true ignorance and illegitimacy.

I command them to come out of error, come out of ignorance, come out of tradition, come out of confusion, come out of fear, and experience the power and love of the Almighty Healer who stands with open arms and a forgiving heart.

Thank you God that as LGBTQ people of faith, our faith intersects our sexuality. Our faith demands that we express our truth and live in authenticity. Our faith demands that we serve you in spirit and in truth. Our faith demands that we honor you with our entire being and allow the world to see your wonderful creation. Thank you for breaking the chains, destroying the yokes, and removing the boxes that had us bound.

For where the spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty! Amen.

Bishop Allyson Nelson Abrams, Ph.D., Pastor, Empowerment Liberation Cathedral, Presiding Bishop, Pneuma Christian Fellowship

Spirit of wholeness that ever continues to reconcile all into your love and unity, remove from us the illusion of separateness, separateness from you, separateness from one another, separateness from difference. May we learn to celebrate each particularity, each uniqueness within the wholeness of your creation. May we be made whole in knowing your love. May we be made whole by embracing the other. May we be made whole by honoring our own vulnerability that breaks us open to know the vulnerability of all. May we be made whole by enveloping fear with the trust of love that never ends. May illusion of separateness fall away into loving relationship that makes us whole.

May we act in the reality of your great love. Amen.

Rev. Troy Plummer Treash, Resurrection Metropolitan Community Church, Houston, Texas

If we are to live into the conviction that every person has worth and dignity and the capacity to be part of shaping the future, we are called to not only vote ourselves but ensure that every citizen exercise their right to do the same. I suggest that we consider the practice of engaging in voter registration to be a spiritual and religious practice. By doing so we are inviting others into the process of discerning their own deepest values, loves and cares, and joining in greater community to give voice and power to them. It is “holy work” to ensure...
that each and every citizen can participate in shaping their’s, their communities’ and the nation’s destiny.

Rev. Neal Anderson, Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Northern Nevada, Reno, NV

God, In your wisdom you call us into communion with you and with one another—over and over again. In the eyes, voices, stories and experiences of one another we come to understand our common and unique needs for justice. We affirm our LGBTQ family, friends and all of your children out of the abundance of your love and grace. Draw us into a deeper commitment to seek the beloved community here on earth. Source of our strength, invigorate us afresh now and in the days ahead. We lift this prayer in faith, Amen.

Rev. Cedric A. Harmon, Executive Director, Many Voices

Most loving God, you have made yourself known to us through the inspiring stories of so many. Give us the courage to tell our story. Make it your loving word to the world, we pray. Amen.

Rev. Janet Edwards, Presbyterian Minister, More Light Presbyterians

If the line between good and evil cuts through each of our hearts... If we live amidst systems which tempt us to choose complicity with power-over every day—and I believe we do—then the gift of God comes this way: God loves us, not because we are only good. God has a deep, deep love for us which is rooted in a true knowing that the line of good and evil cuts through our hearts. God knows we are capable of complicity and perpetration of evil. But God also knows that we can choose vulnerability... we can choose the foolish, wasteful, patient revolution of love. And God is constantly, persistently calling us to practice this revolutionary love. It is for this relationship with God...it is for these gifts that we ought be grateful.

By Rev. Dr. Rebecca Voelkel, Director, Center for Sustainable Justice

We give thanks, merciful God, that in Christ, You seek to unite all things in heaven and in earth, and to reconcile all people to one another and to You. We confess that the new creation is not yet complete in us, and that we feel everywhere the barriers that separate humankind. Forgive us, and fill us with Your Spirit of oneness. Reveal to us those places where pride and selfishness rebuild the walls once torn down in Christ; through the power of Your Spirit. Amen.

— From St. Andrews Presbyterian Church More Light Sunday, 2005

O persistent God, deliver me from assuming your mercy is gentle. Pressure me that I may grow more human, not through the lessening of my struggles, but through an expansion of them that will undamn me and unbury my gifts. Deepen my hurt until I learn to share it and myself openly, and my needs honestly. Sharpen my fears until I name them and release the power I have locked in them and they in me.Accentuate my confusion until I shed those grandiose expectations that divert me from the small, glad gifts of the now and
the here and the me. Expose my shame where it shivers, crouched behind the curtains of propriety, until I can laugh at last through my common frailties and failures, laugh my way toward becoming whole.

Deliver me from just going through the motions and wasting everything I have which is today, a chance, a choice, my creativity, your call. O persistent God, let how much it all matters pry me off dead center so if I am moved inside to tears, or sighs, or screams, or smiles, or dreams, they will be real and I will be in touch with who I am and who you are and who my sisters and brothers are.

Amen

By Ted Loder, from Guerillas of Grace: Prayers for the Battle, published by Innisfree Press

Creative Conversationalist,

You speak to us through Scripture, even today; You cry to us through the oppressed, even today; You rejoice with us through the uplifted, even today; you pray with us through the church, even today. Remind us through your incessant chattering that we do not need to stop talking among ourselves, no matter what conclusion we seem to arrive at. Keep us talking. Keep us listening. Speak to us through us: Cry, rejoice and pray with us, even now. In Christ. In Spirit.

Amen

By Geoffrey Duncan, from Courage to Love: Liturgies for the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Community, published by The Pilgrim Press

Unless otherwise attributed, the following resources were written by the Rev. Joan Dennehy, pastor of Findlay Street Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and Laurie is Rev. Laurie Rudel, pastor of Queen Anne Christian Church (Disciples of Christ.) Both congregations are in Seattle, WA.

God who speaks,

It is by your voice that we are. It was your voice that spoke the will of your heart, and from the vast chaos of nothingness, all was formed. You speak and new life appears. You speak and love flows. You speak and justice is given to those who long to be seen.

May our voice be one that is a reflection of yours. When we speak let us speak words of life. Breathe in us the breath of your spirits so when we are moved from the core of our being that we would use your breath to speak of love, mercy, compassion, and justice. In this moment, in this time, in this place, may we use our words for love, for creating something new, and saying that it is good.

Speaker of Life may we be wise in our speaking. For all we are, for all we pray, and for all we hold, we trust in your promise of new life.

Amen

Beloved God, who makes all things new:
when fear and chaos, doubt and anger threaten to overwhelm or separate us, root the sacred deeply within us that your gifts of grace define us.

Holy One, through love we will bring freedom to the world.
Through your grace and peace may our faith be a little more daring, our words a little louder for justice, our hopes a little more ambitious for your realm,
our thoughts a little more global for your world,
our actions a little more local for your community,
our loving a little broader for the gospel,
our vision a little more challenging—
living open to you a little more each day.

Power of Life, free us when we insist that your word
is a literal word or a liberal word,
a masculine word or a feminine word,
a word only for the poor or only for the rich,
or only for those who speak our language.
You are a lively word, breaking through the walls we build,
inventing new worlds and new human beings to live in them.
Let us believe in your promise of abundance and the possibility of our own transformations.

Wind of the Universe,
who knows the full measure of our labors,
who around our tiny selves pours a mighty spirit,
keep us steady in your call upon our lives,
that all people, everywhere, have freedom to fully love.

God of many names,
whose presence is as close as our breath,
show us where we have made idols of religious words,
that freed from our limited view
we might encounter you in deeper ways—
power calling us forth into inclusive life.

Our Helper and Guide,
who hovers over the thoughts of our heart,
give us the courage to hear your word
and to read our living into it,
that the power of our faith story take hold of us—
that we take up our lives and walk.

Our Promise,
who teaches us how to live in the present moment
with our mind no longer divided,
remind us when we despair of good in the world
that prayer has its beginning when we are ready to be part of the answer.

God, our help in ages past,
our hope for time to come,
deliver us from making the same mistakes again and again.
Deliver us from narrow thinking,
that we may be a force for change in the world.
Open our minds and hearts
to the mighty works born of faith—
when gentleness will come to a world that is harsh and unkind.

God, our help in times of trouble,
quicken our breath with the vision of your justice,
that refreshed in soul,
we might harness the power of those who dedicate their lives to love.
May dissent to destructive practices be voiced by your people.

Beloved God,
creator of a vast variety of feathers,
of Technicolor petals,
of the smallest atom,
and the furthest star—
you created us in your image—
in variety you created us to sing your praise.
May we, your people, return your song of love
in gratitude for our diversity.

God, Our Vision,
who holds all things in balance
and sees beyond our capacity,
grant us clarity of thought
and depth of feeling in all we do,
that the work of equality become our vocation,
and hope be renewed for the good of all.

Loving God,
in a world of fear and self-interest,
may your dream of community awaken us.
In a world of judgment and recrimination,
may we be the sign of your welcome and openness.
In a world of exploitation and oppression,
may others see in us your justice and liberation.
In a world of brokenness and hurt,
may we be your sign of healing and wholeness.

**Prayers for Personal Reflection: Breath Prayer**

(As you breathe in and out let these words form in your mind)
I breathe in the love of God. I breathe out my fears.
I breathe in hope for the future. I breathe out despair.
I breathe in courage to change.
I breathe out the need to be right.

(as you breathe in) Jesus, help me to see myself (as you breathe out) as you see me.
(as you breathe in) Jesus, help me to see others, (as you breathe out) as you see them.
(as you breathe in) Open my eyes, (as you breathe out) help me see you. Amen.
Breathing in, I calm my body. Breathing out, I smile.
Breathing in, I dwell in the present moment. Breathing out, I know this is a wonderful moment.
Breathing in, I see myself as a flower. Breathing out, I feel fresh.
Breathing in, I see myself as a mountain. Breathing out, I feel solid.
Breathing in, I see myself as still water. Breathing out, I reflect things as they are.
Breathing in, I see myself as space. Breathing out, I feel free.

You in me, (as you breathe in), I in you (as you breathe out). You in me, I in you.

**Affirmation**

We stand together in the sacred circle of life—
the circle of rings that mark the life of a tree;
the circle of light that comes to us as the sun;
the circle of the wheel that gives us mobility;
the circle of the ball that calls out our playfulness;
the circle of the ring that signals our commitments.
May all God's people stand inside the circle of life—
All of us bearing the One Spark.
We have only begun to imagine the fullness of life.
How could we tire of hope?
So much is in the bud.
We have only begun to imagine justice and mercy.
We have only begun to know the power that is in us if we would join our solitudes,
if in communion, we struggle.
There is no easy road to freedom...
None of us acting alone can achieve success.
We must therefore act together as a united people, for reconciliation,
for nation-building, for the birth of a new world.
- Nelson Mandela

**Reflection**

Alone, you can fight, but they roll over you.
But two people fighting back to back can cut through a mob...
Two people can keep each other sane, can give support...
Three people are a delegation, a wedge.
With four you can start an organization.
With six you can hold a fund-raising party.
A dozen make a demonstration.
A hundred fill a hall.
A thousand have solidarity, ten thousand, power...
a hundred thousand, your own media, ten million, your own country.
It goes on one at a time.
It starts when you care to act,
it starts when you do it again after they said no,
it starts when you say We and know who you mean,
and each day you mean one more.
– Adapted from Marge Piercy
**Benedictions**

May God give you grace never to sell yourself short,  
grace to risk something big for something good,  
grace to remember that the world is now too dangerous for anything but truth  
and too small for anything but love.  
So may God take your minds and think through them.  
May God take your lips and speak through them.  
May God take your hearts and set them on fire.  
— *William Sloane Coffin*

---

May God bless you with discomfort  
at easy answers, half-truths,  
and superficial relationships,  
so that you may live  
deep within your heart.

May God bless you with anger  
at injustice, oppression  
and exploitation of people,  
so that you may work for justice,  
freedom and peace.

May God bless you with tears  
to shed for those who suffer pain,  
rejection, hunger and war,  
so that you may reach out your hand  
to comfort them and  
to turn their pain to joy.

May God bless you  
with enough foolishness  
to believe that you can  
make a difference in this world,  
so that you can do  
what others claim cannot be done.  
— *A Franciscan Blessing*

---

May God, who claims us as partner,  
support us as we dare to be vulnerable and take risks,  
so that, encouraged in our quiet places, we can together transform the world.

Offer to be holy and useful,  
work to repair the world given to you to hand on.  
Lift each other on your shoulders and carry each other along.  
See the light in others and honor that light.  
Let holiness move in you.  
Praise the light that shines before you, through you, after you. Amen.  
— *Adapted from 'We Will Try to Be Holy and Useful,' from the More Light Presbyterians Retreat & Mission Weekend, New Orleans, LA, 2006*
In hope we are born.
In partnership we are called.
In love we live.
In wisdom we are sent.
May this be our living prayer,
to live as partners of Godly change,
blessing it. Go in faith.
May God bless you with enough foolishness to believe
that you can make a difference in this world,
so that you can do what others claim cannot be done.

Go boldly into the new week,
fully expecting opportunities for greater love to be placed squarely in your path.
Breathe and feel deeply.
Pray often. Speak wisely. Act justly.
May Christ inspire and uphold you,
this day and always, Amen.

For all that God can do within us...  Thanks be to God!
for all that God can do without us...  Thanks be to God!
For all in whom Christ lived before us...  Thanks be to God!!
For all in whom Christ lives beyond us...  Thanks be to God!
FULFILLING OUR DIVINE CALLING TO LIVE AUTHENTICALLY: A SELF-REFLECTION

By Reese Rathjen and Timothy DuWhite Jr. of Believe Out Loud, and Evangeline Weiss of the National LGBTQ Task Force

Living authentically is a divine calling. It is only when we each fulfill this calling that we are truly able to experience and honor the divine gift of abundant difference.

When people of color, gender non-conforming and transgender people live out this divine calling, they are often faced with fear-based violence, discrimination, and even murder.

We contribute to this violence when we mask our own difference—when we do not take risks to know our authentic selves and share authentically with others.

It is unholy to allow our siblings who already face stigma and oppression to take on this cost for all of us.

The lifelong journey to live authentically requires each of us to constantly evaluate who we are, what we believe, and how this impacts us and our communities each day.

Below are two exercises to help you think deeply and authentically about your experiences of gender and race and how they have changed throughout your lifetime.

Take some time to use these tools to reflect on your identities, and then join in and open widely the space that others are creating for us all to live our lives in divine abundance.

Understanding Your Gender Journey

Our culture can make it feel like gender non-conforming and transgender people are the only ones who have gender identities and gender expression—the truth is, we all have both!

- **Gender identity** is one’s most inner concept of self as it relates to gender—it is how you most authentically think of yourself.

- **Gender expression** is how we share our own concept of self with the world—through the pronouns we use, the types of clothing we select, how we speak and move in the world, and more.

Ideally, one day we will experience a world where all people are able to express their most authentic gender all of the time—this is called **gender self-determination**.

Right now there are major obstacles to making that our reality—violence against gender non-conforming and trans people, employment discrimination, barriers to necessary health care, lack of family support, a massive lack of compassion and understanding in our culture, and laws like North Carolina’s House Bill 2. All of these are examples of transphobia.

There are many things we can do in our daily lives to change this, but in this exercise, we are going to start by learning how to talk about our own gender journeys, including both our gender identity and our gender expression.

How will this help?

**Cisgender** people—people whose most authentic gender generally matches what they have been told about their gender by family, friends, doctors, and society—don’t really have to think about their gender journeys unless they choose to.
So, today we’re asking you to think about your gender identity, gender expression, and how each impacts your daily life. Next, we ask you to share what you learn with your family, friends, co-workers, and neighbors, and ask them to explore these parts of themselves too.

**Here’s How:**

1. Grab a notebook and something to write with.
2. Everyone’s gender expression changes over time. Think about what you looked like in the 5th grade. How has your gender expression changed? How has it stayed the same?
3. How have you experimented with gender—cut or styled your hair differently, chosen to shave or not shave, dressed in clothes that are associated with a different gender, etc.?
4. Did people in your life react? Was their feedback good or not so good?

As you move through these questions, consider each of these periods of your life:

- Childhood
- Adolescence
- Young Adulthood
- Now

5. Think about what has changed about your gender expression and what has stayed the same.

6. Think about the impact your gender expression has had on your life.
   - How did it or does it impact the way people treat you?
   - How does it impact what others expect you to do or not do in the world?
   - How do people treat you in your daily life?

**Examples:**

“When I was a little boy I liked to try on my grandma’s jewelry. One day my mom saw me doing this—I was excited to show her my outfit! She was not excited, and I could never find grandma’s jewelry after that day.”

“I am a woman in the ranching industry. I enjoy doing my make-up and painting my fingernails. When people see me off of the farm they don’t believe that I am a rancher.”

“I am gender non-conforming. I use they/them pronouns. Everyday people call me he/him almost everywhere I go, even people I know. Last week when I wanted to wear a skirt to a dance party, I didn’t because I was scared I would get beat up going to or from the party.”

**Explore Your Racial Identity**

Transphobia is deeply intertwined with racism in our world.

Overwhelmingly, the women who have been killed in acts of transphobic violence this year are black and Latina. Again and again, reports show that transgender women of color are the most likely to experience transphobic violence, harassment, and discrimination.

We cannot address transphobia without also addressing the racism that is embedded in our culture.

As we work in coalition across lines of difference, it is important to be in touch with who we have been, who we are, and how our racial identities impact the ways we show up in our daily lives.

Below is an exercise that will guide you as you explore your racial identity and the ways it impacts your life.
We challenge you to stay engaged in this conversation. So often, we disengage or disassociate ourselves from conversations around race and racism using one of the many rationale:

**White People:** “Well, I don’t want to ‘take up too much space’ in the conversation.”

**People of Color:** “Well, is anything really going to change just by us talking?”

**Black People:** “Look, isn’t just being black enough? Do I really have to talk about it too?”

We do not wish to throw away these statements and say there is no validity to the concerns behind them—because there is. However, we ask you to challenge yourself to move beyond these frameworks—both for the sake of your own communities, and in light of the intensified race-based conflict we are currently experiencing.

**What is at stake?**
According to a 2013 report by the National Coalition of Anti-Violence Programs, 67% of the victims of LGBTQ or HIV-motivated hate violence homicides in 2013 were transgender women of color. Additionally, transgender people of color were 6 times more likely to experience physical violence from the police, 1.5 times more likely to experience discrimination, 1.5 times more likely to face sexual violence, and 1.8 times more likely to experience bias-based violence in shelters when compared to their non-transgender LGBTQ and HIV-affected peers.

**How will this help?**
We cannot pretend to know the cure to the often violent and ever-present race relations within our country. However, what we at Believe Out Loud can attest to is the transformative nature of dialogue and the power of sharing one’s story.

Sometimes simply opening the conversation is the beginning of the work that must be done—even if that means you must start by opening the conversation to yourself.

**Here’s How:**
1. Grab a notebook and something to write with.
2. Everyone first encounters race or discovers race in different ways. Begin by jotting down some of the earliest childhood memories you have regarding race.
   - Think about the time race first became visible to you.
   - Who or what caused this sudden visibility?
3. What changed about you after you discovered race? How did this discovery affect you?
   - Did you ever feel negative about yourself after discovering race?
   - Did you suddenly become invested in learning more about your heritage?
4. How does your racial identity contribute to the way you interact with and treat others?
5. How does your racial identity contribute to the way other people interact with and treat you?
6. Was there ever a time you wished you were a different race? If so, why? If not, why not?
Introduction and Context
In 2008, the Trans Civil Rights Project at the National LGBTQ Task Force released our groundbreaking organizational inclusion toolkit Opening the Door to Transgender Inclusion while national dialogue about the needs and concerns of transgender people was beginning to unfold. By February of 2011, when the Task Force and the National Center for Transgender Equality released Injustice at Every Turn: A Report of the National Transgender Discrimination Survey, which documents discrimination in every area of life: education, employment, family life, public accommodations, housing, health, police and jails, and ID documents. It became clear that the landscape for genderqueer and transgender people was not inclusive. In fact the survey documents shocking levels of discrimination and ignorance.

Internally, as an organization with trans and genderqueer employees and interns, the Task Force set out to create deeper inclusion and education for our own. We organized a Trans Audit Committee (TAC), composed of non-trans and trans staff to determine what steps should be taken for increasing awareness and trans competency at the Task Force.

After surveying the staff, board, and interns working with us at the time, the Task Force determined that we need to educate non-trans staff on what it means to be a trans ally. Some of the TAC group formed a Trans Ally Training sub-committee and set about designing a training that would shift attention away from some of the medical/technical/language questions so often asked in Trans 101 trainings and really focus on the significance of gender and gender expression, power and oppression and what it mean to be an ally in the LGBTQ movement. How to be a GREAT Trans Ally is that training. This Facilitator Manual offers readers a resource for supporting lesbian, gay, bisexual and straight people to think more deeply about gender and our own beliefs and attitudes and experiences as we all make larger efforts to be effective allies.

This Training was DESIGNED BY Trans and Non-Trans People Together
However, TAC members discussed at length the experience of trans people having to be the experts and teachers of their experience and lives to non-trans people. In addition to the awkward and undesirable experience of having to train one’s own colleagues and supervisors, trans people expressed the need for non-trans people to step up and educate ourselves and each other.

So while this training and the non-trans people who trained if for four years have been accountable to trans people, we have expressly discouraged transgender and genderqueer people from facilitating this training.

This Training Is INTENDED FOR Non-Trans People
Caucus space has long been a tool of anti-oppression educators and we believe that How to be a GREAT Trans Ally is best implemented in a caucus setting. If you are planning to use this training in a group or organization with trans and genderqueer people, we highly recommend that they be given the choice of how to spend their time—a half-day off, a caucus of their own, etc.

We leave this decision to those of you implementing the training. However, we want to stress that this training is designed for non-transgender people and focuses on stories of childhood sex role socialization, gender role expressions and personal reflections about gender identity and expression. We have found that this is an intense set of conversations and that having both trans and non-trans people in the room is complicated. When we offer this training at conferences, we place a trainer at the door to support trans people to make a different choice as the training is not aimed at trans people and we want non-trans people to feel safer to ask questions and speak their confusion without offending or hurting trans and genderqueer people. A trainer might say, “If you identify as genderqueer or transgender, this workshop could be un-fun at best and
triggering at worst. We have designed the workshop to be by cis people for cis people and to talk about how to step up and be better allies to trans folks.” Obviously, when trans people insist on being in the training, we welcome them.

What This Training is NOT: A Vocabulary Lesson
In our experience, many people can get caught up in the language of gender expression and identity, with understandable concern for using the “correct language.” At the Task Force, we believe fundamentally that:

- Every individual should be safe and free to identify as they choose.
- Vocabulary is contextual—different terms carry different meanings across geographic and generational communities.
- Policing language or shaming specific words is not educational and does nothing to advance transgender issues and concerns.
- Safer spaces for talking about questions of language are needed. And, this workshop is not about vocabulary.

This training will not meet the needs of non-trans people to dissect the medical and psychological experiences of transgender people. After determining that Trans 101 trainings are popular and exist in large numbers in many communities, and that the internet is a vast resource for vocabulary questions and medical explanations, TAC members agreed that this training needed to offer content that was deeply personal and supported allies to explore their own deeply held beliefs about gender.

We do not go over vocabulary in this workshop—we don’t distribute a glossary and we don’t examine the pros and cons of specific terms or expressions. We believe that participants can read a glossary on their own (before or after the training) and that this workshop is a rare face-to-face opportunity for non-trans people to have a deep and liberatory dialogue about gender.

Please think about what your audience is expecting and whether or not this training will meet their needs. If your participants want to discuss vocabulary and medical distinctions, we recommend that you add an hour to the workshop and that you cover this information up front. There are several curricula for this available.

Why We Don’t Use Group Guidelines
The role of the trainer or facilitator is to witness the individual and group dynamics in the room, assess for safety and participation, and encourage respectful and compassionate participation at all times. There is no perfect list of attitudes or behaviors that is going to manifest that experience in the room. Creating group guidelines is time consuming, the group knows what you want to hear and the list will look marvelous! However, we have found that much of the time the group guidelines convey to individuals that, first and foremost, they need to keep things polite and at times not speak their truth, all for the sake of harmony. Group guidelines can actually discourage people from being authentic and real.

Instead of relying on group guidelines, here are three things that facilitators can do to help create safer space in the room:

Best Practices for Mixed Trans/Non-Trans Groups
If you decide to offer this workshop to a group of trans and non-trans people together:

- Activities 1, 3, and 4 should be debriefed in caucus fashion, with trans people unpacking their experience together and non-trans people having space to talk with each other.
- We have found that Part III (activities 5 and 6) are easiest to do in rooms with both trans and non-trans people.
- Depending on the physical constraints of the space and the number of people who identify as trans or genderqueer, we recommend allowing for privacy whenever possible.
- Moving non-trans people to another space is ideal.
- A trans facilitator who can support trans participants is also highly recommended.
• Model vulnerability and authenticity from the front of the room. When you tell your stories and reflect back to participants, you have opportunities to model the behavior you want to see in the room. You set the tone when you speak and when you listen.

• When a participant shares something that you perceive is a pinch for someone else or for you—handle it with compassion and truth-speaking, don’t avoid it. You may say something like “Mary, I noticed that when you shared that, there were many reactions in the room. I am curious about how people feel about what Mary just shared?” or “I don’t usually hear that word being used. It has a negative connotation for me. Can you help me understand what you mean by it and why you are choosing to use it?”

• When you debrief the feelings from the introductory activity and you notice all the feelings in the room, you may choose to say something like this: “With all these feelings coming out after only ten minutes, it seems like we are going to have an intense time. I’m counting on us to be generous and compassionate with each other in this space.”

Again, this curriculum is only a map. You know your landscape and feel free to add an activity on group guidelines.

Implementation

As your organization or group moves towards implementing this training, we recommend that you work with transgender and genderqueer people to ensure that you are accountable to the trans community and that the content of this training is clear to all.

Lastly, we recommend two co-facilitators for this training, as three hours is a long time to hold a group alone and it’s always an effective choice to have a diverse team in front of the room.

About this Facilitation Manual

The comprehensive training modules consists of six activities which in total take three hours. Each module builds on the previous work and we highly recommend training all the content in the order that it is presented. If you are breaking the training into multiple days or sections, Part III on institutional oppression is easiest to remove or choose to do on a separate occasion.

Each activity description has a title, a timeframe, the materials you will need and suggestions for setting up the room. We offer these as suggestions and hope you will customize and adjust the training to meet the needs of your audience.

Training Overview

Purpose of This Training
To explore personal relationships to gender and to increase strategic and consistent activity on the part of allies.

Outcomes
By the end of this session, participants will:

• Have shared stories and meaning of sex role socialization, gender expressions and identity, as well as what it means to be an ally.
• Be able to distinguish between healthy and invasive curiosity.
• Understand how transgender and gender justice is about personal, cultural and institutional liberation.
• Recognize the many diverse ways to be a trans ally every day.
• Have at least 1 concrete next step for their particular ally journey.
Training Outline
Part I: Setting the Space
   Activity 1: Welcome and Introductions (40 minutes)
   Activity 2: Outcomes and Agenda (10 minutes)

Part II: Gender Diversity: Personal & Relative
   Activity 3: Gender Story Reflections (30 minutes)
   Activity 4: Spectrum Line Up (30 minutes)

Part III: Systemic Change
   Activity 5: Power Frame & Simulation (30 minutes)
   Activity 6: Trans Ally Actions (30 minutes)

PART I   SETTING THE SPACE

ACTIVITY 1: Welcome and Introductions

TIME: 40 minutes
MATERIALS: Flip chart or 8½ x 11 paper, markers. Select seven to ten statistics about Trans Discrimination from the list below. Copy one statistic per flip chart page or piece of paper and post around the room.

From the National Transgender Discrimination Survey:
- 90% of trans and gender non-confirming people have experienced employment discrimination or have been forced to hide who they are to avoid it.
- 1 in 4 Black trans and gender non-conforming people are HIV+.
- 40% of American Indian and Alaskan Native trans people have experienced homelessness.
- Trans people of color were more likely to be accepted by their families than their white counterparts.
- 41% of trans and gender non-conforming people have attempted suicide, compared to 1.6% of the general US population.
- The highest suicide rates were among those trans people who were physically and sexually assaulted by their teachers in kindergarten through twelfth grade.
- Trans and gender non-conforming people live in extreme poverty. They are four times more likely to live on an annual household income of less than $10,000.
- 1 in 5 trans people who have interacted with the police report harassment and discrimination.
- 1 in 5 trans people have been refused routine medical care simply because of who they are.
- Policies prevent trans people from updating the name and gender marker on their ID documents. Problems with legal identification documents have caused 40% of trans people to be harassed and 3% to be assaulted.
- 1 in 5 trans people have been physically assaulted and 1 in 10 have been sexually assaulted.

SET UP: Chairs in one circle. As people arrive, encourage a Gallery Walk. Allow this to happen for about ten minutes after the start time and then bring folks back to their chairs in order to start the workshop.
Trainer Instructions

1. Welcome

Welcome people to the How to Be a GREAT Trans Ally Workshop and invite them to take a seat. (If people have not had a chance to circulate, give them ten minutes to walk around the room and ask them to do this quietly.)

2. Trainer Introductions

Introduce yourselves briefly to the group with some context for you personally—why and when did you become an ally? Share a story that can illustrate a mess up in order to create a space where it’s ok to be imperfect. We learn from our mistakes!

3. Context

Provide some larger context/frame for doing this workshop: (Below are some examples, and obviously you know better than anyone why you are doing this workshop, here and now.)

   a. Transgender and genderqueer voices get ignored. Tran people face the worst discrimination and violence. Trans leadership voices are missing. Remembering that internalized transphobia hurts us all. Gender policing hurts us all, children, seniors, our friends, us.

   b. Being a great tans ally is part of our leadership responsibility is this movement.

   c. The Task Force is committed to working with and for transgender justice. We believe this work is for all of us—and allies have many roles to play in support of our gender-queer and trans colleagues and friends.

   d. Trans people face more discrimination than any other members of our queer community, allies can make a difference.

   e. Gender-based discrimination impacts all people—and this work is universally needed, it is intersectional and core to sexual and gender liberation.

4. Participant Introductions

Depending upon the size of the group (if less than 10 participants, stay in one circle; if more than ten, split into small groups of fours or fives): Invite the group to share their name, gender pronoun, and an experience from childhood that defined gender or policing about gender. As a trainer, be ready to go first and model. If you have more than one trainer, choose stories that illustrate different things—maybe one about policing and one about breaking the norms with support.

Process Questions

• What was it like to introduce yourself with a gender pronoun?

• What feelings came up as you shared or listened to stories about childhood gender messages?

• What did you learn about yourself?

Process Points

• It’s helpful to remember how personal this conversation is—especially when we wonder why people take things so personally!

• Many of our gender stories from childhood relate to other aspects of our culture, whether it’s our ethnic identity, faith or the family composition we came up in, gender is always experienced intersecting with other aspects of social identity.

• Being vulnerable can look and feel different for each of us. Let’s keep working on our listening and grace as we move through the rest of the workshop.
ACTIVITY 2: Review Outcomes and Agenda

TIME: 10 minutes
MATERIALS: Outcomes and Agenda (below) written on flip chart paper

Outcomes
- Have shared stories and meaning of sex role socialization, gender expressions and identity, as well as what it means to be an ally.
- Be able to distinguish between healthy and invasive curiosity. (more on this in 3 minutes)
- Understand how transgender and gender justice is about personal, cultural and institutional liberation.
- Recognize the many diverse ways to be a trans ally every day.
- Have at least one concrete next step for their particular ally journey.

Agenda: How we arrive at these outcomes:
- Part I: Setting the Space
  - Activity 1: Introductions and Childhood Story
  - Activity 2: Outcomes and Agenda
- Part II: Gender Diversity: Personal & Relative
  - Activity 3: Gender Story Reflections
  - Activity 4: Spectrum Line Up
- Part III: Systemic Change
  - Activity 5: Power Frame & Simulation
  - Activity 6: Trans Ally Actions

SET UP: Large group presentation, with questions

Trainer Instructions
1. Let’s review what this workshop is designed to do!
   - a. Outcomes: By the end of the session, participants will… (on flip chart)
   - b. Agenda: How we arrive at these outcomes:
2. Review what this session will NOT be:
   A technical medical training on surgeries or hormone replacement therapy
   A vocab study—we will not fall down the rabbit hole of words and semantics, all the words under the umbrella—transvestite, transsexual, pre and post op, etc. Language is changing hard and fast—many trans people can’t agree on what terms are offensive or out of date. Context and trust are key—let’s work on developing our skills and comfort.
   Allyship as only interventions. There is a whole range from proactive behavior to reactive interventions.
3. Curiosity: We want to take a minute to speak about curiosity because it seems to us to be a core aspect of trans ally identity development.
   - a. We are going to explore the line between good curious and invasive curiosity: Draw a see-saw on the flip chart and write “healthy” at one end and “yucky” or “invasive” at the other end.
   - b. And, it’s not up to us what crosses the line into invasiveness.
c. What are some examples of questions we have learned over time are not ok to ask? (Capture two to three examples on the flip chart.)

d. Ask the group, “Why isn’t this ok? What’s wrong with asking?”

e. Think to yourself, “Why am I asking? Why do I need to know? Do I really need to know?”

f. Sometimes, part of being an ally is finding ways to be okay being in the dark. Our job is to respect self-identity—how someone currently identifies is how we will address and treat them.

Process Questions

- Are there any questions about the goals and agenda?
- How are people feeling about the curiosity conversation we just had?
- What feelings are coming up for you?

Process Points

- Let’s notice how hard we’re trying to say and do the right thing. And let’s balance that with knowing we will make mistakes.
- I like to encourage people to call in instead of call out. If we feel pinches, we can call someone in, closer, by asking them to explain, by sharing our feelings, and by doing all of this in a way that builds trust and support.
- I am fortunate that I had mentors who cared enough about me to invest in me and point my privilege out to me, and they did so in a way that felt loving and appreciative of my gifts.
- We will have a chance to practice curiosity later in the workshop when we do an interactive activity.

PART II   GENDER DIVERSITY: PERSONAL AND RELATIVE

ACTIVITY 3: Gender Story Reflections

TIME: 30 minutes

MATERIALS: Pieces of paper, crayons, markers and pens for participants to share in their small groups.

Kate Bornstein quote written on flip chart with the numbers written on the bottom:

“Of all the different aspects of identity—religion, political views, only our gender is expected to remain the same throughout our lives.” — Kate Bornstein

9  16  25  40

On the next flip chart page, write these prompts:

- Gender story over time—how has it changed or not?
- Intentionally played with gender—dressed in more masculine or feminine ways?
- Hair styles—experimented?
- Shave? What and why?
- Gender privilege? Have you used your gender expression to give you access or privilege?
- When (at what age) have you been praised or challenged for making choices about your gender expression?

SET UP: There will be a brief introduction, then participants will be asked to write and draw, ultimately processing the activity in their small groups, and then briefly as one large group.
Trainer Instructions

1. Introduce this activity as being about diving into more of our own gender stories. We encourage this because we believe that everyone has gender and that reflecting on our own ideas about our own gender will help us build compassion, empathy and context for the experiences of our genderqueer and trans colleagues, friends, and neighbors.

2. Introduce the Kate Bornstein quote on the flip chart (see above).

3. Ask for reactions from the room, “What do you think about this?”

4. Distribute paper and point out the pens, markers, crayons at the tables. Point out the years at the bottom of the page.

   a. Start this section with a story about your own gender expression—here is an example of how Evangeline Weiss introduces this:

   i. My gender expression has changed dramatically in my life. Before I was 10, my mother kept my hair very short because we fought a lot about brushing it out. I loved the short hair and not having to start each and every day with a fight about brushing my hair. I felt empowered to wear t-shirts and jeans and I climbed every tree I could find. By the time High School came along, I was wearing my hair long, brushed or unbrushed and then ten years later, I shaved my head for graduate school. Each hairstyle brought out different aspects of my gender and sexuality, and I appreciate looking back that I was learning about desire, power and attraction.

   b. Ask the group to think about how much their gender expression has changed: @9 years old, @16 years old, @25 and @40.

   c. Ask the group “Journal about your own gender identity over the course of your life. Some of you may choose to draw in response to these questions or you can write. Here are some helpful prompts.” (on flip chart)

Process Questions
(We are not going to process this activity now—we debrief it with the spectrum activity below.)

Process Points
(We are not going to process this activity now—we debrief it with the spectrum activity below.)

ACTIVITY 4: Gender Spectrum Line Up

TIME: 30 minutes

MATERIALS: Two signs at either end of the room:

![Most Masculine](image1)

![Most Feminine](image2)

SET UP: This activity will require participants to line up in the room. If you need to use a hallway, that is ok. Privacy is more helpful. Sometimes, the line can curve around the corner of a room.
Trainer Instructions

1. Trainer introduces this activity by explaining we will have a chance to practice being curious about one another’s gender identity and expression. Another reason we are doing this activity is that it helps us understand the difference between gender identity and gender expression. And lastly, we are doing this activity in order to develop empathy for transgender and genderqueer people.

2. Ask the group, “Does this sound good to you?” (Ask for consent—a thumbs up or “yes.”)

3. Explain that this activity is going to ask you to lean into the discomfort of a gender binary. We’ve set up a spectrum from that wall to this wall, with Most Masculine at one end and Most Feminine at the other end. This activity can be hard, some people will like it more than others, Thanks for trusting us and going with the flow. Remember the reasons we said we were doing this: practice curiosity, distinguish between identity and expression, and develop empathy.

4. There are some rules:
   - You may only place yourself (do not tell anyone where to stand or physically place anyone anywhere).
   - We want one line, so everyone needs to find their own unique spot (no ties).
   - If you feel stuck, think of some questions to ask the person standing next to you.
   - You have ten minutes

5. Please line up from feminine to masculine. (Trainers hang back and let the group muddle through this. If you want to walk the line, listening to people’s questions, that is helpful. You may have to encourage people to talk to one another.)

6. After 15 minutes, call time. Remain in the line for the first three questions, then you can let folks take their seats. Process in small groups at their tables for the first few minutes and then as a large group, using the questions below.

Process Questions

- “Before we take our seats, let’s hear from the folks at either end of the spectrum. What is it like for you to be standing at the Most Feminine?”
- “At the Most Masculine?”
- Ask, “Does anyone in the middle of the spectrum want to speak to standing here?”
- (In small groups) What are you learning about your own gender identity and expression? What was it like to do this activity? How did you feel doing the journal activity earlier and then the spectrum activity just now?
- (In large group) What was it like to do this activity? (Write up quick feedback—eight to ten comments)
- How does this list relate to being a trans ally?
- How would this activity have been different for you if you had worn different outfit? Or if this was ten years ago?
- How many of us felt completely seen and heard in our experience just now?
- What do think about the difference between gender identity and gender expression now? How is this distinction different now than before we lined up?
- What are some of the ways in which you did not feel seen or heard?

Process Points

- When we observe people’s dress, we make immediate assumptions about their masculinity and femininity. It’s unconscious and immediate.
• Assumptions hurt us. When people rush to judge me because I wear makeup or I don’t like to shave my armpits, my feelings are hurt. And I am not experiencing this judgment 24/7. I am not sure I can imagine what it feels like to be judged like that every minute of the day.

• When we ask why do some trans people choose to pass and not speak up, maybe now we can have a better understanding of why that is such an easy choice to make, to just settle into the normal gender policing that happens and not have to experience the deeper and more invasive levels of curiosity and judgment.

• When we say that gender is “socially constructed,” part of that social construction is us. We contribute to the social construction of gender with our own ideas and assumptions about what is masculine or feminine and how those descriptors relate to male and female.

PART III  SYSTEMIC CHANGE

ACTIVITY 5: Power, Privilege and Oppression

TIME: 30 minutes

MATERIALS: Copies of scenario either printed out for small groups or written up on a flipchart or PPT slide. Draw on flip chart:

PERSONAL

CULTURAL

INSTITUTIONAL

SET UP: Large group presentation and small group activity.

Trainer Instructions

1. Introduce this activity by reminding the room how important it is to remember that transgender people experience transphobia through a system of oppression. Transphobia is part of the system of oppression in our culture that creates racism, classism, homophobia and sexism. Helpful to understand transphobia as related to all forms of oppression.

2. Reveal the Venn diagram with the three overlapping circles.

3. Explain that the circles overlap. It’s not always obvious when oppression is personal or cultural, institutional or personal, etc. After all, systems are made up of people. For example, this can be an opportunity (e.g. when a bureaucrat is willing to bend the rules and help a trans person change their gender marker) or it can be a challenge (e.g. when the policy is in our favor but the bureaucrat has personal bias and refuses to enforce the rule). Feel free to make up or ask for another example.

4. We are going to take some time to understand how transphobia manifests and how it can be dismantled. This will help us recognize opportunities for stepping up and being an ally to trans and genderqueer people.
5. Here are two scenarios of gender discrimination (either distribute the handout at the end of this section or refer to the flipchart):
   A. School Bullying
   B. Bathroom Signs

6. Create three teams (up to eight people in each team, if the group is larger than 24 people, make more teams, not larger groups): Personal, Cultural, and Institutional. In small groups:
   - Using your group’s lens—take five minutes to flush out what transphobia looks like—how is it perpetuated through your area (personal, cultural, or institutional)?
   - After five to seven minutes, ask the groups to spend five to seven minutes thinking of one to two solutions for addressing a problem through the lens of either personal, cultural, or institutional. (Their own lens?)

7. Call time and explain that we will gather the data from their discussion in the final activity for the day—first, we want to explore what this activity was like.

8. Process briefly using the questions below.

**Process Questions**
- What was it like to analyze how transphobia manifests?
- What did you learn about yourself or being an ally to trans or genderqueer people?

**Process Points**
- Because transphobia is so pervasive and complicated, there are many opportunities to work as an ally. We can choose to do the work proactively or responsively, at the personal, cultural or institutional level.
- Our last activity flushes these choices out and will help you identify your strengths as an ally.

**GENDER DISCRIMINATION SCENARIOS**

**School Bullying**
Toni has had a hard time adjusting to 5th grade this year. She has come home three times this month with torn clothes or a bloody lip. Toni is hesitant to tell on her friends or explain to her mother what is going on. Toni’s mom is frustrated with Toni and knew sending her to school with a skirt on would create problems for her. None of the counselors at Toni’s school know about the needs or concerns of transgender people. When Toni’s mom tried to talk to the principal, she told Toni’s mom that the skirt was the problem and that there is nothing the principal can do if Toni refuses to be a normal boy. Toni’s mom is distraught and has turned to you for help.

- **Personal:** Who are the specific people involved in the scenario? How are they intentionally or unintentionally perpetrating gender oppression or discrimination?
- **Cultural:** What do you imagine the characteristics of the school culture are? How are notions about gender perpetrated through the culture of the school—classes, teachers, extra-curricular activities, sports?
- **Institutional:** What are possible school board or school policies that perpetuate unhelpful ideas about gender? (Forms that are filled out, how data is gathered and tracked, rules about participation in sports, bathroom signage for single-stall bathrooms)

**Bathroom Signs**
Your organization is getting ready to put on your annual conference/event and you are so excited because this is going to be the biggest one yet! As your team is talking about the signage for the conference space, you suggest that the single stall bathroom be unisex. You have already printed out a sign for the bathroom.
Several of your colleagues object. They are worried that people will ask a lot of questions, that the hotel staff will refuse to honor the request, and one of your colleagues tells you that recently at another conference, she heard that trans people were complaining about the signs! One trans person said she worked hard for her beautiful good looks and she wants to use the ladies room, not the unisex bathroom. What can you do?

**Personal:** Who are the specific people involved in the scenario? How are they intentionally or unintentionally perpetrating gender oppression or discrimination? What are they scared of?

**Cultural:** What do you imagine the characteristics of the school culture are? How are notions about gender perpetrated through the culture of the school—classes, teachers, extra-curricular activities, sports?

**Institutional:** What are possible school board or school policies that perpetuate unhelpful ideas about gender? (Forms that are filled out, how data is gathered and tracked, rules about participation in sports, bathroom signage for single-stall bathrooms)

---

### ACTIVITY 6: Trans Ally Actions

**TIME:** 30 minutes  
**MATERIALS:** Flip charts prepped:

**ALLY ACTIONS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Proactive</th>
<th>Reactive</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>1.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>2.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>3.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**SET UP:** Large group presentation and large group discussion.

---

**Trainer Instructions**

1. Because transphobia (just like sexism and racism, homophobia and ableism) manifests in such pervasive and complex ways, we must use equally complex and pervasive measures to fight it.

2. Each of us in this room has talents and unique offerings to make as trans allies. Our comfort levels and styles will likely point us personally in one direction more than another:

   a. Some of us are more comfortable working at the interpersonal level. That’s great. Therapists, counselors, teachers, doctors, case managers, ministers, professors—so many people work to improve the lives of people through 1 on 1 interactions.

   b. Some of us like to work with groups and that’s great too! Human resources professionals, therapists, organizers, teachers, ministers—many jobs have the opportunity to work with people in group settings.

   c. And some of us also like to work on policy and changing the rules. That’s great! ENDA, DADT, relationship recognition—all of these policies improve people’s lives.
3. As you think about these tactics of an ally—consider your “flow” or what is easiest for you—please do think about the ways that you most often make change. Where is your learning curve or where would you like to expand your efforts or educate yourself more?

4. Take a minute to review the distinction between PROACTIVE and RESPONSIVE strategies. Let’s begin with proactive solutions and begin to fill the chart in together:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PERSONAL</th>
<th>CULTURAL</th>
<th>INSTITUTIONAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Proactive—creating the conditions for more education and equity without any triggering event.</td>
<td>Share my gender pronouns in a discussion and ask someone what pronouns they prefer.</td>
<td>Change the bathroom signs at the hotel/conference center to help make safer spaces for trans people.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responsive—in reaction to a specific act of discrimination or prejudice or aggression.</td>
<td>Give clear and respectful feedback when misinformation or humor perpetuate transphobic ideas.</td>
<td>An organization, group or a campaign requests that all staff participate in trans ally training to create shared meaning about trans inclusion.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5. Wind down the training by thanking the group for their work and asking if there are 2-3 final thoughts. Invite the group to be in touch with you, to reflect on the resources list in their folders, and to keep up their good work as Trans Allies.

6. Invite participants to take five minutes to complete the evaluation form (on the last page of this training).

7. In closing, we want to leave you with the idea that being a GREAT trans ally is a life-long journey. Ask participants to remember (or repeat after you):
   
   b. Talk to trans folks in your life about what you want to do as an ally.
   c. I will be imperfect. I will keep trying.

8. Thank you and be safe out there!
How to Be a GREAT Trans Ally—Workshop Evaluation

DATE: __________________________

What is your biggest take away from this session?

What would you have liked MORE time for?

What would you have liked LESS time for?

Overall, this Trans Ally workshop was relevant to my leadership. (Circle one)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Comments

The facilitators related to my experience. (Circle one)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Comments

My learning style was accommodated. (Circle one)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Comments

Any other comments about the workshop:
TRANS DAY OF REMEMBRANCE IS OVER: IS YOUR CHURCH STILL TRANS-INCLUSIVE?

Originally published by Believe Out Loud, by J Mase III, Founder, awQward Talent

Being visibly trans or gender non-conforming in the world means you have the privilege of dealing with a lot of people’s feelings about your presence more than you care to. Folks often want to tell you how they feel about your clothing choices, the way you are “successfully” or “unsuccessfully” portraying your gender and more frequently than not, you get to hear all the sticky stuff they’ve internalized about your trans body and their faith.

I used to joke with my mother that Evangelists on the street would see me and be tripping over each other, because converting a visibly queer person into their very conservative brand of Christianity would mean they get an automatic +100 points and a free ticket into heaven. My mother never found those jokes to be funny, and really, neither did I.

The point is, that every day in this body, I have a million and one people trying to convince me that I am going to Hell if I don’t shape up and get with the cis-stem. This is why affirming ministries are so important.

For trans and gender non-conforming people, our very existence in a transphobic world often causes us to be at the mercy of a plethora of spiritual abuse. Unfortunately, when it comes to seeking support, “affirming ministry” can be a very vague term that often means nothing more than a change in signage.

What I want to accomplish today, is to have a look at what it means to be a congregation that is wholly affirming of trans people.

The majority of affirming congregations I have been to have assured me, again and again how loved I was by God. Now, out of the dozens of affirming ministries I have been to that tacked that “T” onto their pro-LGBT mission, how many could back up their support of me with a theology that affirmed me as a trans person? How many of them did that research? How many of them kept hammering away about sexual orientation, gays & lesbians, but never found it in their heart (or vernacular) to talk about gender identity or even knew the difference?

It is these interactions that keep many trans folks from feeling included in their faith communities, finding a church home or even coming out to their congregations. Below, I have constructed a series of things to keep in mind to create a trans inclusive ministry.

Please Don’t:

1. Assume that because your congregation is stellar with LGB issues, that I feel safe as a trans person attending.
2. Trivialize my specific journey as a trans person by simplifying gender into the ways that you as a cis-person are also a bit gender non-conforming, “’Cause you know, gender is a social construct and my best friend was a tomboy growing up and blah blah blah...” I don’t want to be rude and cut you off, but I have seen so many cis people completely pass over the difficulties faced by trans people by watering it down in this way. Please don’t let me have that same experience at church.
3. Ask me for my continued grace when it comes to you learning the right ways to address me as a trans person. I as a trans person am always asked for grace when a wrong pronoun or name is slipped out, or when something transphobic stings across my face. I am asking that in our faith communities, can I have a refuge? Am I welcome to let all of myself into your spiritual space and be filled there? Can I too be allowed that same freedom? If a congregation has intentionally said they seek to be affirming, then we must not be stagnant in our understanding of trans people.
4. Look to defend yourself/your congregation with reasons as to why you are not transphobic. Instead, accept that we live in a society that affirms non-trans bodies and seeks to dismantle your participation in those practices.
Please Do:

1. Critically think about the ways trans identities are affirmed, ignored and/or excluded within your congregation’s shared theology. If someone asked you right now what the Bible says about trans people, could you answer that question? Or does your theology in this regard merely include vague references to God’s all affirming love rather than giving specific examples?

   There are many theologians that have been seeking to answer these questions; take some time to research them.

2. Ensure that trans initiatives are led by trans people. I’ve observed many a Transgender Day of Remembrance (TDOR) event, talk, or conference about trans bodies in which trans people were not trusted enough to be the primary givers of information. We would never accept an all-white leadership educating the congregation about what it means to be black; why are we so okay with cis people being the perceived leaders on this front?

3. Invite trans people to speak from the pulpit and/or take on leadership positions on days when the topic is not trans specific. Instead of waiting until TDOR to talk about including trans people, we could…include trans people.

4. Have the members of your congregation and clergy trained on how to identify and address transphobic language and/or practices.

5. If your congregation has a men’s and/or women’s ministry, ask if it is inclusive of trans folks that identify within those labels. Consider what a space would look like for trans folks within your congregation that do not identify as either men or women. They also need a space. What does that look like for you all?

6. Be intentional with your language in regards to gender. For example, try using the language of “siblings” versus “brothers and sisters.”

7. Examine whether or not the rites of passage ceremonies your congregation participates in are trans inclusive. Consider creating some rites of passage ceremonies that may be trans specific as folks come into their identities. For example, could there be a naming ceremony for folks that want to renew their connection to faith with their chosen name?

8. Make sure your congregation has in place a set of steps to keep yourselves accountable. Have a trans inclusion task force, or invite a group like Trans Faith to come help you figure out what an appropriate evaluation might look like.
HOW TO BE A TRANS* ALLY

Originally published by Believe Out Loud, Chris Paige, Executive Director, Transfaith

My feelings about “allies” to the transgender community are complicated. Sometimes this “ally” concept seems really powerful to me, and other times, it just seems like another shallow label.

Sometimes the way we talk about “allies” feels insightful and important. Sometimes our language feels rigid and inadequate.

In transgender communities, allies are very important—hugely important.

No one transitions alone: we bring along our families (of origin and of choice), our co-workers, and our communities, including our churches. Transition is both intensely personal and profoundly social as we make visible what we know about our innermost selves—often at tremendous risk.

In the face of such vulnerability, we need people who can fiercely journey with us as we come to feel what it’s like to speak in our most authentic voice. That kind of companion is important, not only because of the particular vulnerabilities of gender transition, but because it gets at the heart of our becoming and unfolding as human beings in this world.

I was recently out to dinner with a friend—someone who has known me more than a decade. As we reflected on the length of our relationship, it hit me that my friend is not an “ally” in the political sense of the word. This is not someone who blogs about transgender issues, not someone who remembers to ask about pronouns, not someone who works for inclusive policies, and not someone who has read books or watched films or attended conferences about transgender “issues.”

As a result, my friend is also someone who does not tell a self-congratulatory story about being an ally to trans* folk.

But this is someone who has known me and embraced me and encouraged me for years in my own unfolding as a person, beyond any labels or political aspirations. This is someone who works everyday to understand me better and invites me to be more myself.

There is something profound about that kind of listening, respecting, inviting—something that is at the heart of being an ally to people in transgender communities. In many ways, that openness to hearing someone else’s story, someone else’s truth is so much more important than learning vocabulary or etiquette.

Now, I am very much in favor of education. On the Transfaith website, we have resources like transgender basics, tips for allies, resources on vocabulary and language, study guides, and much more. We also offer an online course in transgender suicide prevention and workshops on pastoral care.

I spend my days (and some of my nights!) trying to figure out how to help people become more knowledgeable about transgender people and the issues we face. But one open heart willing to listen deeply is worth fifty well-educated experts any day.

An ally with an open heart can (and likely will) always learn more and find new ways to be supportive.

Once we think we have the “answers,” it can become much more difficult to challenge ourselves to keep listening deeply for the new truths that present themselves in a relationship.

I don’t think the need to be seen and heard is unique to trans* people. We all need to be recognized. We all need for our personal truth to be respected, even (and especially) if it challenges those around us.

I know that there are lots of ways I need to keep opening myself to the experiences of people with different kinds of bodies—people with fat bodies, people with brown bodies, people whose bodies have physical challenges or chronic illness, and so much more. Certainly survivors of trauma need to be heard when they choose to speak the truth of their experience.

In my own work as a multi-faith organizer, listening deeply beyond my own pre-conceptions and worldview is essential.
There are so many ways we need to be listening deeply to one another—and these are all essential parts of being an ally to transgender communities. Our gender experience is only one part of who we are.

I have wrestled with Christian tradition most of my life. One of my most foundational beliefs from that wrestling is that we are all made in the Image of God. So I understand this kind of deep listening to one another as search for God; this is a search for God as God is uniquely manifest in each one of us.

To step outside of our own experience and worldview to embrace the challenge of the “other” is exactly what it means to embrace Immanuel (God with Us), breaking into our lives in new ways. At its heart, this is a profound call to authenticity in community.

I believe that this invitation to deep, world-changing authenticity is one of the great gifts of transgender communities to the world.

It’s also worth saying that living authentically and inviting others to do likewise is a bit different than the gift of truth-telling—the taboo-breaking, silence-overcoming power of “coming out” stories. Living authentically is less about shouting from the roof-tops and more about quietly integrating our deepest knowledge of ourselves into our daily lives.

When we talk about being allies, sometimes we seem to lose track of how important and basic it is to be present, day after day, listening and building relationships, and honoring someone else’s truth. It is all too easy for being an “ally” to become a performance that is detached from listening, from inviting, from opening. If this happens, then what is the purpose of being an ally?

So, it is important to educate yourself, to become familiar with resources and language and literature. It is important to figure out how to be an advocate for others without letting yourself become the center of the conversation. It’s important to think about where you have power and influence to change perceptions. All of that is key.

But for me, it is most important for allies to be fully present as open-hearted witnesses.

Show up and be open to finding the Spirit moving in the life of someone with different life experience, a different worldview, or a different self-understanding. This ally week, I invite you to set aside your agenda and make a new commitment to listening.

*The asterisk in trans* is used by some advocates and allies to make the term intentionally inclusive.*

- See more at: http://www.believeoutloud.com/latest/how-be-trans-ally#sthash.hMluMH3V.dpuf
OTHER CONGREGATIONAL CURRICULA FROM THE NATIONAL LGBTQ TASK FORCE’S INSTITUTE FOR WELCOMING RESOURCES

Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Module in Building an Inclusive Church: A Welcoming Toolkit 2.0

Found on pages 43-48.

Hearts Unbound: Engaging Biblical Texts of God’s Radical Love through Reader’s Theater

The overwhelming message of the Bible, in story after story, is that of God’s radical love and welcome. Every time we think we know who’s in and who’s out, God does something to challenge those assumptions, to unbind our hearts and minds from old ways of understanding, and to draw the circle ever wider. Hearts Unbound invites you to explore ten of those inspiring stories of radical love and welcome. Entertaining, thought-provoking, and participatory, each session looks in-depth at the story, the historical context out of which it came, and some of the insights to be gained.

transACTION

This three-session curriculum is designed to help churches address the issue of transgender understanding and welcome by providing step-by-step training about the needs, apprehensions and fears of transgender people—as well as the wealth of gifts and graces they bring—while responding to the concerns of the church.
**All in God’s Family: Creating Allies for Our LGBT Families**

Over three sessions, gather with other members of your Christian congregation to pray, to learn, to share, and to work together to transform your lives, your congregation, and your world into a loving place in which God’s LGBT families can thrive.

---

**Kol B’michpachat Elohim: All in God’s Family: Creating Allies for Our LGBT Families**

This Jewish version of All in God’s Family adds the study of Hebrew texts.

---

*All of these resources are available for free download at welcomingresources.org/resources.htm*
OTHER CONGREGATIONAL EFFORTS

Host or Attend a Building an Inclusive Church Training

The product of over twenty years of ecumenical collaboration, Building an Inclusive Church has proved to be the most successful way for congregations to engage in an intentional process to become a congregation that publicly welcomes and affirms LGBTQ people. Building an Inclusive Church has helped change lives, congregations, and positively influenced political decision-makers.

For a schedule of upcoming trainings, please visit welcomingresources.org/communityorg. If you’re interested in hosting a training at your congregation, please contact Kathleen Campisano at kcampisano@thetaskforce.org.

Building an Inclusive Church

What if our welcome to LGBTQ people sparked a renewal in the faith life of our entire community?

The Building an Inclusive Church trainings help you design and implement a process for your congregation to publicly and intentionally welcome people of all gender identities and sexual orientations.

Building an Inclusive Church equips you with ways to create dialogue – deepening relationships throughout the congregation rather than sparking debate and division.

You will have opportunities to engage through a mix of presentation, hands-on practice, and small group discussion. Grounded in scripture and discipleship, this training allows you to explore your own Christian call to hospitality and evangelism.

For a schedule of upcoming trainings, please visit www.WelcomingResources.org

be you, be welcoming.
Host an Exhibit of the Shower of Stoles Project

A cornerstone of the National LGBTQ Task Force’s Faith Program, the Shower of Stoles Project is a collection of more than 1,200 liturgical stoles and other sacred items representing the lives of LGBTQ people of faith. These religious leaders have served in nearly forty faith traditions and come from six countries on three continents.

The collection celebrates the gifts and stories of LGBTQ people who serve God in countless ways, while also lifting up those who have been excluded from service because of their sexual orientation, gender identity or expression. The Shower of Stoles Project bears witness to the loss of leadership that faith traditions have experienced, and will continue to experience, because of unjust policies that deny LGBTQ people the right to be who they are as both people of faith and LGBTQ people. The collection tours around the country, being exhibited in places of worship, galleries, universities and seminaries, and regional and national denominational gatherings.

This exhibit is a dynamic, vibrant way to help people understand the ways in which LGBTQ and allied faith leaders have been discriminated against by their faith traditions. It also shows the brilliant creativity and vitality of this community of faith leaders who share their pain and their glory through the creation of these gorgeous stoles.

If you are an LGBTQ person of faith, tell your sacred story by donating a stole.

To bring part of the collection to your community of faith, please visit welcomingresources.org/sosp
Shower of Stoles Project

Four Experiences of LGBTQ Clergy

REJECTED & BANISHED

"Rejected, he left the church."

LIVING IN HIDING

"For me, the risk is too great."

SELF-IMPOSED EXILE

"She didn’t pursue ordination."

WELCOMED & CELEBRATED

"They invited me back."

Telling the Stories of LGBTQ People of Faith for 20 Years

A Practice Spirit, Do Justice Toolkit: Faithfully Responding to Anti-LGBTQ Legislation
REJECTED & BANISHED

You have been honest about who you are, and for that you have been rejected. You have been encouraged to pursue another path, or you have found it impossible to be hired, or you have been outright removed from the ministry.

Rev. Jim David Little
Jim earned a Masters of Divinity from Union Theological Seminary in New York City. He was ordained as a minister in the Presbyterian Church. He then served in the Richmond Fellowship Foundation in England. He had difficulty obtaining a call when he returned to the U.S. after honestly confessing his homo-sexual orientation. Rejected and disappointed, he eventually left the church. He was an intelligent, kindhearted and gentle man whose gifts are missed. He died of AIDS in 1990.

LIVING IN HIDING

You choose to answer the call to ministry, but in order to do so, you must remain closeted as an LGBTQ person. You do not show all of who you are—who God created you to be—for fear of being rejected, condemned and removed from the ministry.

Anonymous
You know me.
I am your daughter, your pastor.
You nurtured me, encouraged me, ordained me.
For over 20 years I have served at every governing body level.
Yet I cannot tell you my name.
For me the risk is still too great.
I work and pray for the day when I am free to say who I truly am.

SELF-IMPOSED EXILE

You feel a keen sense of being called to the ministry, but you decide not to answer that call due to the denominational and institutional roadblocks in your way as an LGBTQ person. You choose to protect yourself from the homophobia/transphobia you may encounter.

Dr. Sara Jane Little
Sara earned a Doctorate in Human Growth and Development at the University of Maryland and has served as a school psychologist for over 25 years. After her brother Jim’s death, she entered Wesley Theological Seminary and earned a Master of Theological Studies. Sara has served as a Deacon and Elder in the Presbyterian Church. She did not pursue ordination as a Minister due to the hostile climate in the Presbyterian Church toward gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender persons. Sara is a warm and gentle spirit, full of enthusiasm and good works. She still seeks new and challenging ways to serve God’s call to her.

WELCOMED & CELEBRATED

Your ministry and the gifts you bring, along with the fact that you are LGBTQ, are welcomed and celebrated. You are met with respect and encouragement as a leader in your community of faith.

Nicole Garcia
In April of 2003, I was early in my gender transition when I walked into the sanctuary of St. Paul Lutheran Church. I was terrified that the people would just point and laugh at the man in a dress—but they didn’t. They asked me if I wanted coffee and invited me back. The people of St. Paul gave me a place to celebrate my faith in Jesus Christ as my Savior and Lord. The first visit to St. Paul Lutheran Church would be the beginning of a new incredible journey of faith leading toward ordination.
Does Your Church Congregation Want to Believe Out Loud?

If so, Believe Out Loud wants to hear from you! We support congregations across the country to proclaim Christian pride and the good news of God’s expansive love.

Believe Out Loud will send our rainbow cross flags and bumper stickers to churches who want to make their support for LGBTQ people and families visible.

Our flags and stickers are perfect to use at local Pride events and justice rallies, and they offer a powerful witness of Christian love and support for our LGBTQ siblings.

If your church would like to receive a set of flags and stickers, just let us know by emailing team@believeoutloud.com. We’d be delighted to help you and your congregation tell your community that you proudly choose to Believe Out Loud!

Pauley Perrette from NCIS and Hollywood United Methodist Church
MORE WORSHIP, EDUCATIONAL and ORGANIZATIONAL RESOURCES

National LGBTQ Task Force’s Institute for Welcoming Resources
welcomingresources.org/

Resource Topic Pages:
Anti-LGBTQ & “Ex-Gay”
Biblical Interpretation
Bixesuality
Coming Out
Education
Families & Children
How to Become a Welcoming Congregation
HIV & AIDS
Intersectionality
Marriage Equality
Medicine & Psychology
Multi-Faith
Ordination
Pastoral Care
Denominational Policy Statements
Spanish-Language Resources
Theology
Transgender
Worship & Arts
Youth & Young Adults

Believe Out Loud
BelieveOutLoud.com

Brethren Mennonite Council for LGBT Interests
www.bmclgbt.org/#resources/c1kom

Center LGBTQ and Gender Studies in Religion and Ministry (CLGS)
clgs.org/resources/

CLGS’ African-American Roundtable
CLGS’ Umoja Project
clgs.org/gallery-items/umoja-clip-rev-lynice-pinkard-on-intersectionality/

CLGS’ Jewish Roundtable
clgs.org/our-work/roundtable-projects/jewish-roundtable/

CLGS’ Latino/a Roundtable
fe familiai gualdad.org/

CLGS’ Transgender Roundtable
clgs.org/our-work/transgender-religious-roundtable/

Gay Christian Network (Evangelical)
https://www.gaychristian.net/store/

GLAD Alliance–Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)
gladalliance.org/site/resources/

Integrity USA (Episcopal Church)
Integrityusa.org/resources

Many Voices (Black Church)
www.manyvoices.org/

More Light Presbyterians
www.mlp.org/resources/

Open and Affirming Coalition of the United Church of Christ
openandaﬃrming.org/resources/

Reconciling Ministries Network (United Methodist Church)
www.rmnetwork.org/newrmn/resources/

ReconcilingWorks: Lutherans for Full Participation
www.reconcilingworks.org/resources/

Room for All (Reformed Church in America)
roomforall.com/resources/

Welcoming Community Network (Community of Christ)
welcomingcommunitynetwork.org/wcnresources.htm