

LOVING OUR TRANSGENDER NEIGHBORS

Equipping our communities
for mutual relationship



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More Light Presbyterians
September 16, 2023

MAKING THE MOST OF THIS TIME

- Ask me to repeat or rephrase at any point; hold on to content questions
- Ask the questions you need in order to learn and grow towards fuller respect & solidarity
- Saving deep dives for the future

OVERVIEW



• Trans-resonant Bible stories!



• Call to care

Trans etiquette

Panel of stories

yer

s

OPENING PRAYER

God in whose image we all are made,
whose Spirit breathes through all of us,
who became incarnate, sharing embodied life with us,
Inspire and transform us as we learn and ponder.
Let our conversation bear good fruit for your glory
and for the healing of your Body.

Amen.

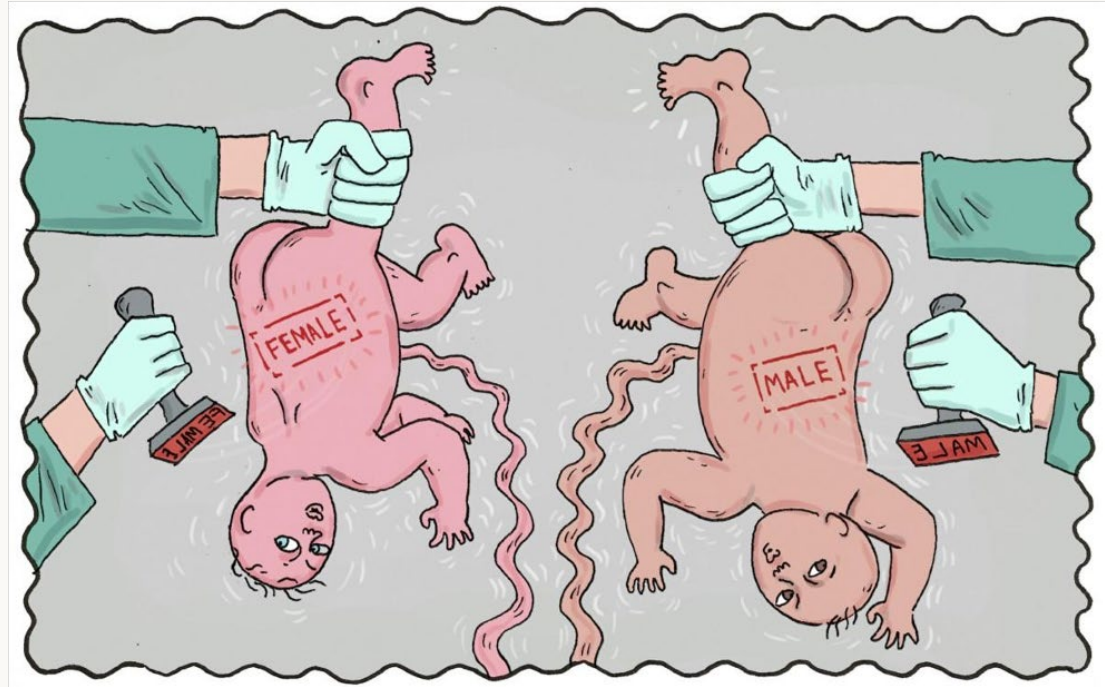
TRANS BASICS



Whom are we talking
about when we say
“transgender”?

DEFINING *TRANS*

- Umbrella term for anyone whose gender identity does not completely match the gender they were **assigned at birth**
- Cisgender
- Distinct from sexuality



Transgender



Non-binary



Genderqueer
Agender
Demi girl
Neutrois

Genderfluid
Bigender
Demi boy
and more!

Trans Men

Trans Women

Cisgender



Cis Men

Cis Women

Which umbrella/s
do you fit under?

ONE MORE DEFINITION: CISSEXISM

- Cisgender = normative; transgender = deviation
- Assuming people are cis as the default

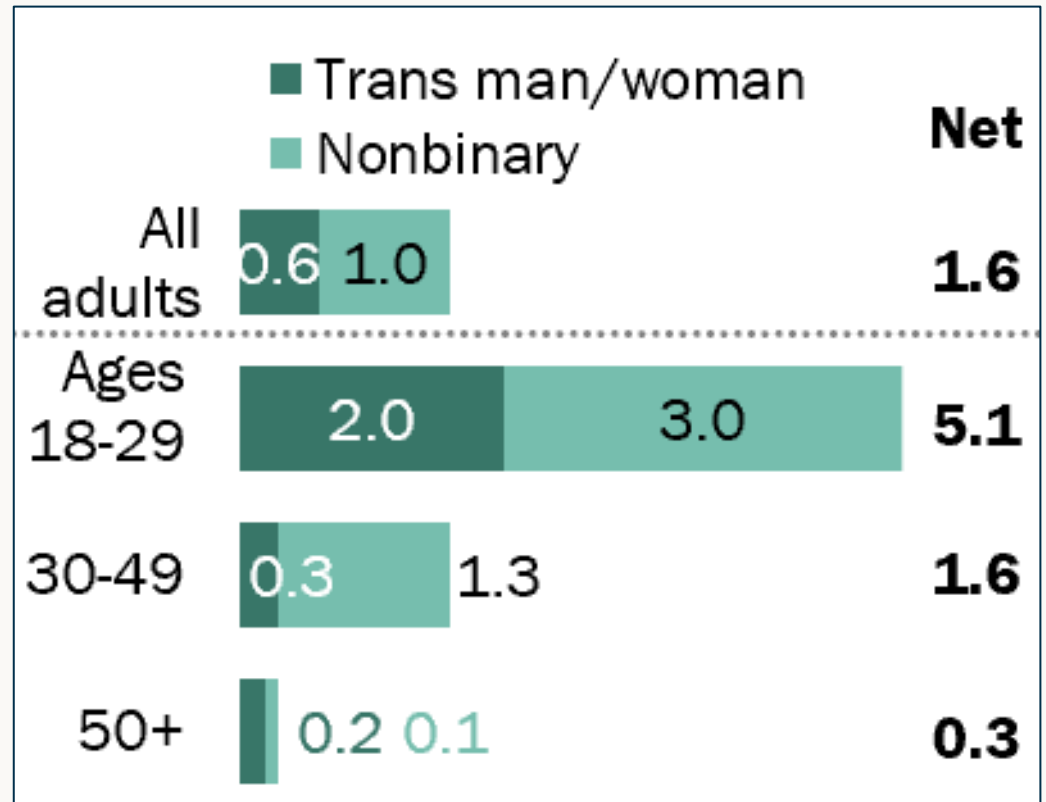
We can look like anything!



We are not a monolith!

OUR NUMBERS

- *At least 1.6 million in USA*
 - Percentage of adults who say they're trans (Pew Research Center, 2022) >
- Our numbers are expected to **grow** — why?



COLONIALISM & THE GENDER BINARY

- Many cultures traditionally exist outside of a binary



- Western colonialism violently enforces its own binary

HELP, THERE'S
TOO MUCH TO
LEARN!



- You don't have to know it all!
- Just keep an open mind and resist assumptions

Any questions?

Thus far: basic terms

*Upcoming: why it matters;
pronouns & etiquette;
practical actions*



Biblical Foray: Blessed from the Beginning



A primary passage used *against* trans folk...

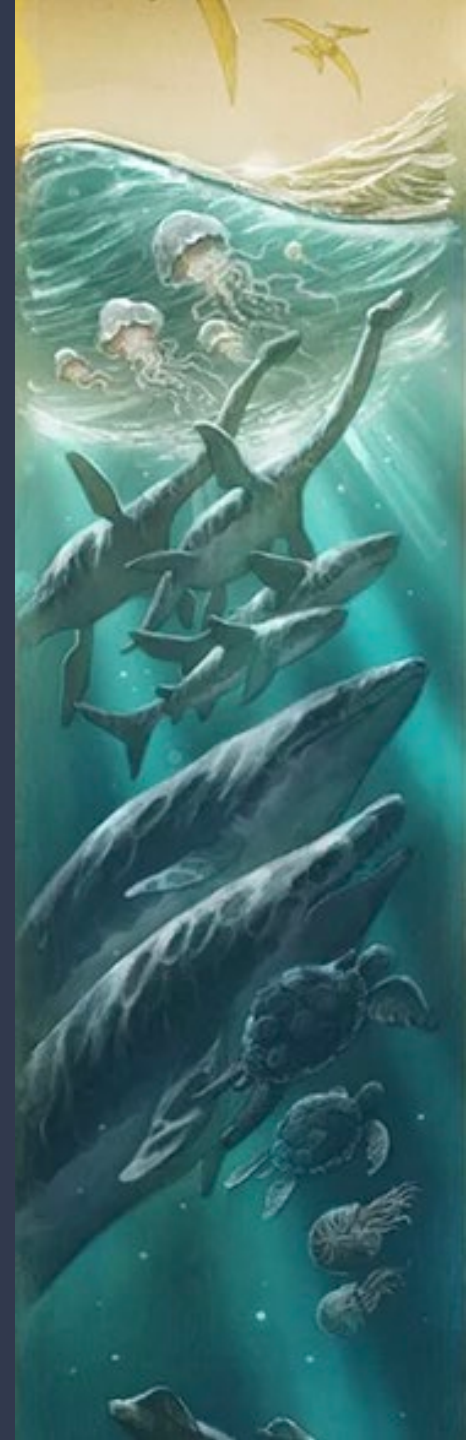
So God created man
in His own image;
in the image of God
He created him;
male and female
He created them.

- Genesis 1:27, NKJV



NOT A BINARY “AND”

- In Hebrew poetry, “___ and ___” phrases can name the two extreme ends of a larger list.
 - God creates day and night, *and...*
 - God creates sea and dry land, *and...*
 - God creates plants and animals, *and...*



THE FIRST HUMAN: GENDERLESS OR GENDERFULL

Then LIVING God formed the **human** from the dust of the ground, and breathed into **their** nostrils the breath of life; and the **man** became a living being.

- Genesis 2:7
- Genesis 2:7

ha-adam, not ha-ish



DISCUSSION



- How does reading the first human as genderless or “genderfull” impact the story for you?
- Do the Creation stories teach us anything about **God’s** gender?

TRANSFORMING OUR HEARTS



Why should Christians seek to become trans-affirming?

TRANS PEOPLE OF FAITH EXIST!



- 19% of US trans people are **actively involved** in a faith community

- 39% have left a faith community out of *fear* of rejection
- 19% have left due to direct rejection
 - Of these, 42% then found fully welcoming communities



Oppression is Intersectional



- Transmisogyny & transmisogynoir
- Other intersections
- Making a space more trans-inclusive tends to help other groups too!

AN “EPIDEMIC OF VIOLENCE”



- Anti-trans murders
- Anti-trans legislation
- Family rejection: 57%
- Harassment/bullying at school & work: ~55%

MINORITY STRESS

- 50% of trans people have depression and/or an anxiety disorder
 - General rate = 6.7% for depression and 18% for anxiety
- 40% of trans persons have attempted suicide
 - General rate = 4.6%

CHOOSE A STATE ▼

CHOOSE AN ISSUE ▼

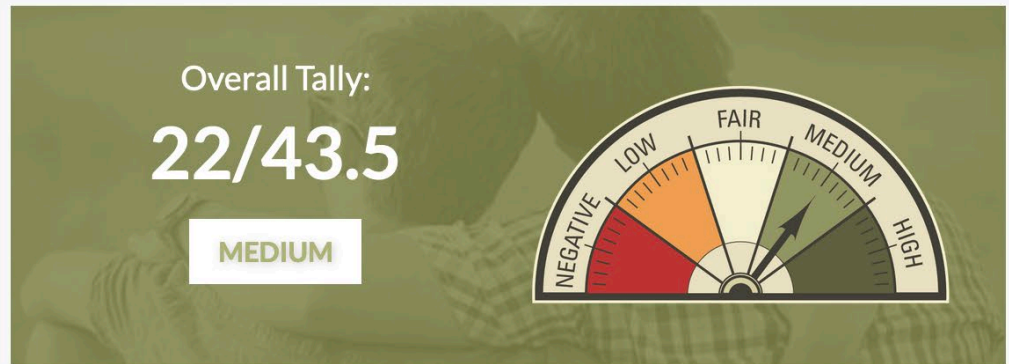
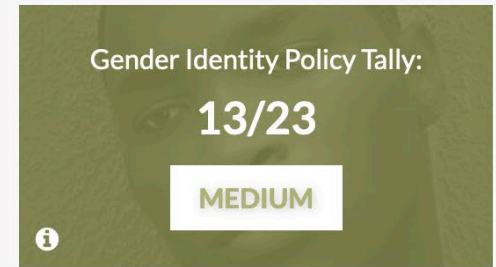
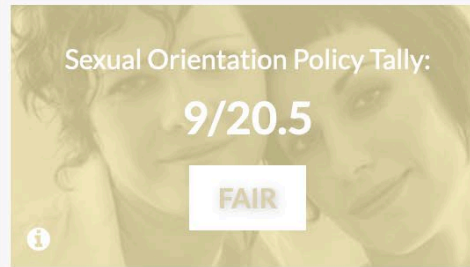
SHARE ↗

EMBED <>

PRINT 🖨

PRINT QUICK FACTS 🖨

Michigan's LGBTQ Policy Tally



VIEW METHODOLOGY/MORE INFORMATION

See how Michigan compares to the rest of the country on the [Snapshot](#) page.

MICHIGAN LEGISLATION

- Housing, employment, and student nondiscrimination laws
- No current bans on bathrooms, on drag performance, etc.
- Conversion therapy ban
- No law forcing teachers to out trans kids
- Gender marker changes — *but* the name change process is burdensome

- No anti-bullying policies that cover LGBTQ+ students
- Hate crime law doesn't cover LGBTQ+ people
- While there is no broad religious exemption law, there is targeted religious exemption for child welfare services
- No "shield" laws protecting access to trans healthcare

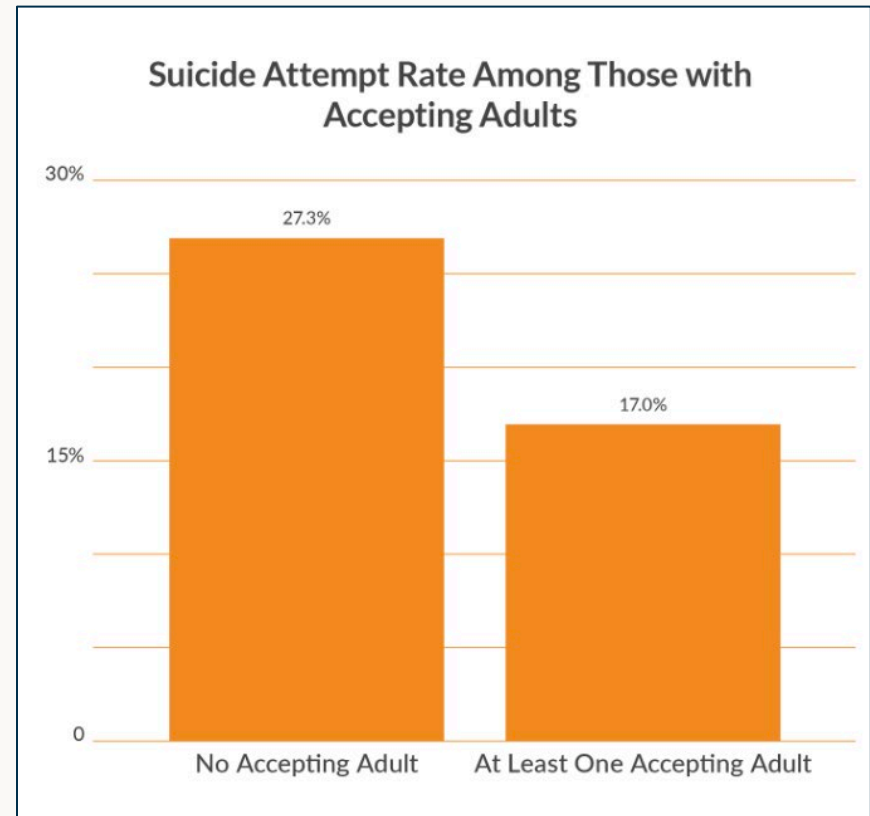
WE CARE ABOUT OUR KIDS

- Less than 25% of trans youth feel like they can definitely be themselves at home and/or at school
- 72% of trans youth report hearing family members make negative comments
- **Only 3% of trans youth are out to their religious community**



COMMUNITY SAVES LIVES

- The more spaces in which youth are able to use their chosen names, the stronger their mental health
 - (2018 study of youth ages 15-21 in areas of school, work, home, and with friends)



Biblical Foray: One Spirit, many gifts



THE BODY OF CHRIST IS NOT WHOLE WITHOUT TRANS PEOPLE

**The eye can't say to the hand, "I don't need you,"
nor can the hand say to the feet, "I don't need you."**

**Rather, the members of the body that seem weakest
are essential,
and those parts we consider less honorable
we drape round with greater honor.**

...

**If one member suffers, all the members suffer with it;
if one member is honored,
all the members celebrate with it.**

– 1 Corinthians 12:19-26

SHOWING US THE WAY

Trans persons help us
imagine liberation from
binaries

- “no male and female”
(Galatians 3:28)

How does exposing the flimsiness of the gender binary
liberate *all* of us?



A CULTIVATED COMPASSION

“Perhaps because of painful experiences in life, [eunuchs] empathize with ‘the other’ alongside them in the text; they relate to the vulnerable...”

– Peterson Toscano



Ebed Melech, Jeremiah 38

EXPANDING OUR GLIMPSES OF DIVINITY



Jesus through
a trans lens!

- God beyond gender is assigned male at birth
- Broken gender norms
- Found family over nuclear family



DISCUSSION

- Have you or your faith community ever reflected on God's gender? What came of it?

Any questions?

Thus far: basic terms; why it matters

*Upcoming: pronouns & etiquette;
practical actions*



TRANSFORMING OUR MINDS



Let's learn some basic
etiquette for respecting
trans people

WHAT ARE PRONOUNS?

- Pronouns are used to refer to a person, place, or thing without naming them.
 - Trans etiquette focuses on **third person singular** pronouns



PRONOUN PRACTICE



PRONOUNS ETIQUETTE

- Normalize sharing *your* pronouns
- Request pronouns one-on-one
- When in group situations...
 - make space, but never require



When you accidentally misgender someone:

DON'T



She - I mean he! **He**. Oh my god...

I am so SO SO sorry!

I didn't mean it you know
I'm the LAST person who-

It's ok.

Don't worry about it.

It's FINE.



WHY?

Your mistake should not turn into a weird self-flagellation 'make me feel better' moment. It's really not about you.

She - sorry, I mean **he** - he and I used to...



DO ✓



CULTIVATING COMPASSION



- A trans person may seem hypersensitive or defensive to you

Biblical Foray: The sacred longing to be *known*



Jesus is concerned with identity, too

[...Jesus] asked his disciples,
“Who do people say that the Son of Humanity is?”
And they said, “Some say John the Baptist, others Elijah,
and still others Jeremiah or one of the prophets.”

He said to them, “But who do *you* say that I am?”
Simon Peter answered, “You are the Messiah,
the Son of the living God.”

And Jesus answered him, “Blessed are you,
Simon son of Jonah! For flesh and blood has not
revealed this to you, but my Father in heaven.”

– Matthew 16:13-17

- Jesus rewards Peter with a new name & role
- ...But Peter doesn't fully understand what *Messiah* means to *Jesus*
- Last thought: Jesus commands his disciples to "tell no one"



MISGENDERING

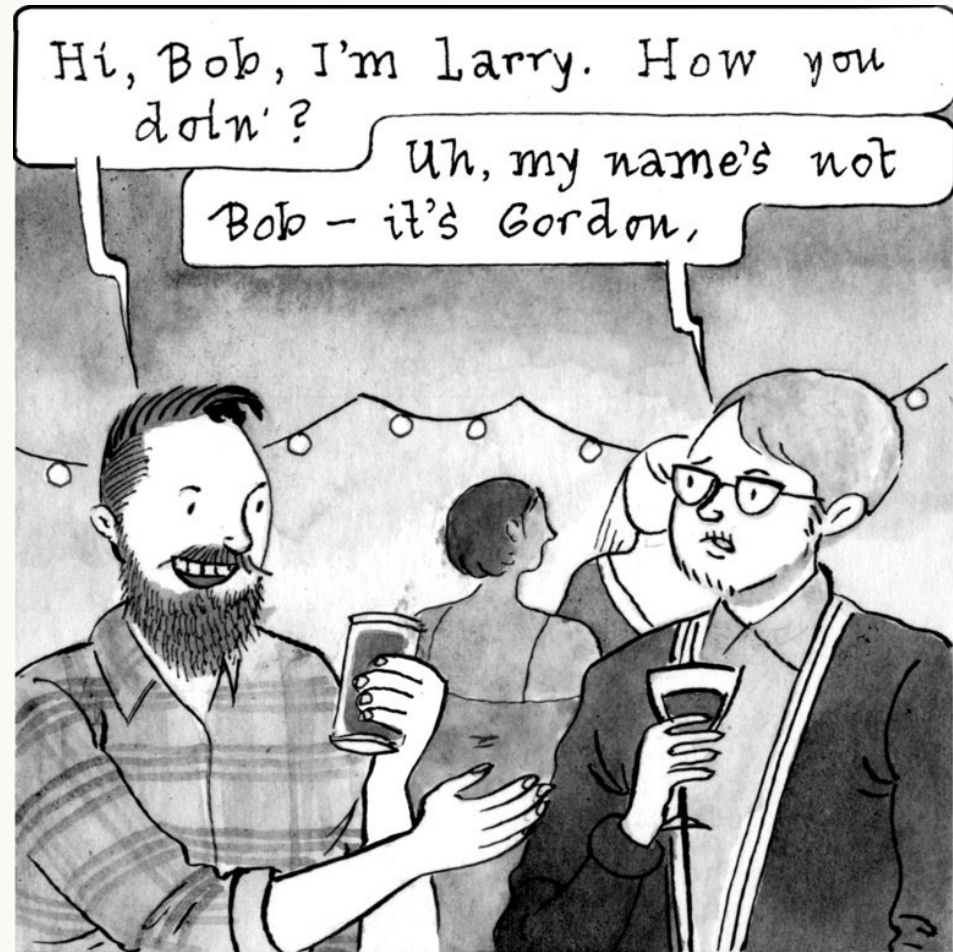


“[Misgendering is] like being slapped on the cheek. If it happens once or twice, it stings for a moment. ... But if you're getting slapped multiple times a day from multiple people – sometimes with random people coming up to you on the street and slapping you in the face – it's going to get more painful and more upsetting as time goes on.”

- Zil Goldstein

MISGENDERING:

an analogy





Oh, ha-ha! That's funny, 'cause you look like a Bob. Anyway, Bob - how do you know Stacey -

Yeah, it's GORDON! Not Bob.



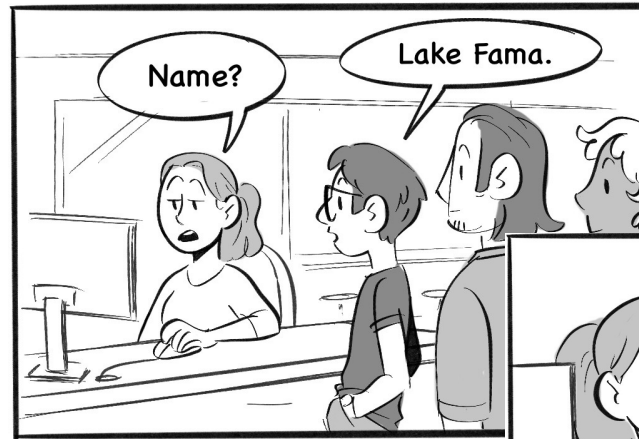
"Gordon," "Bob"... whatever you call yourself, did you meet Stacey at the lab -

Look! I don't "call myself" Gordon! I am ACTUALLY named Gordon! That's my name! So stop calling me Bob!



DEADNAMES

- Don't ask someone what their deadname is!
 - What if you need it?...
- If you know a person's deadname, don't use it
 - Unless they ask you to...



Any questions?

Thus far: basics; why it matters;
etiquette

Upcoming: practical changes



TRANSFORMING OUR SPACES



What needs to change in
our physical spaces to
ensure the safety
& full participation of
trans folk?

Biblical Foray: From exclusion to inclusion



BIBLICAL EUNUCHS

- Foreign powers would castrate people to hold specific roles
- Enslaved, but with status



*What **differences** are there between ancient eunuchs & today's trans people? What about **similarities**?*

FROM REJECTION...

“No one whose testicles are crushed or whose penis is cut off shall be admitted to the assembly of LIVING GOD.”

- Deuteronomy 23:1



Then in the 500s BCE, something happens that changes things...

...TO RECONCILIATION

Do not let the eunuch say, “I am just a dry tree.”
For thus says LIVING GOD:

To the eunuchs who keep my sabbaths,
who choose the things that please me
and hold fast my covenant,
I will give, in my house and within my walls,
a monument and a name
better than sons and daughters;
I will give them an everlasting name
that shall not be cut off.

- Isaiah 56:3b-5



TRANSFORMING OUR LANGUAGE

Does the language used
throughout your space —
in worship,
on signage,
in everyday greetings —
convey welcome or
exclusion?

Brothers and sisters...

**Welcome,
ladies!**

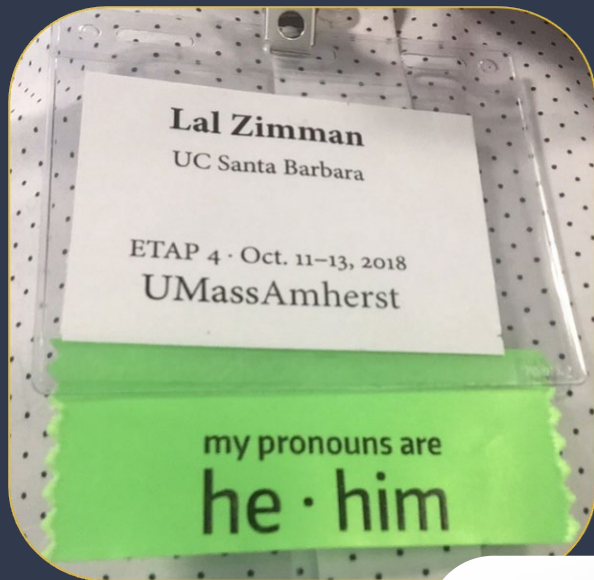
**No sorry, we don't
have a unisex
bathroom.**



- Are there any non-gendered bathrooms?
 - Are they easy to find?
 - Are they disability accessible?
 - Is there only one?

Changing Table Inside

More ideas!



- Visible non-discrimination policy?
- Frequent learning opportunities, mentions in sermons; invite trans preachers
- Training greeters
- Name tags?

BEING AN ADVOCATE

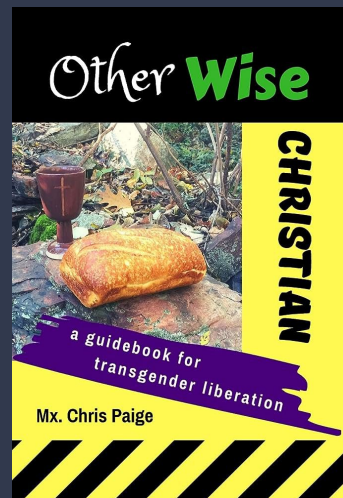
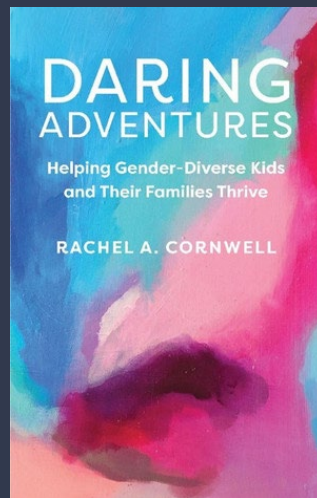
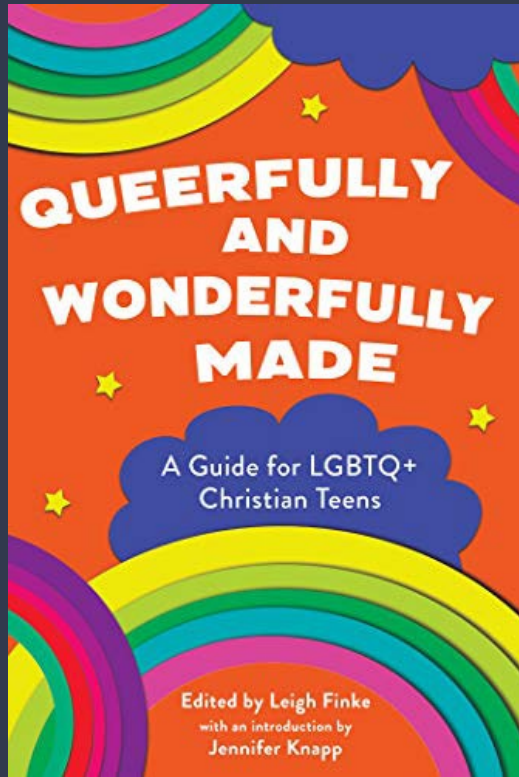
- Keep educating yourself!
- “Would you like me to let other staff members / other church members know?”
- What do you do when you notice transphobia or cissexism in your space?
 - E.g. a nurse complaining about a patient who “insists on being called *they*”
 - E.g. an usher greeting a group of people you know includes a nonbinary person as “ladies”

GET ACTIVE TOGETHER

- Learn about local laws on: hate crimes, name changes, changing legal gender markers, discrimination
 - you can help trans folks fund their name changes, etc.
- Discover what LGBTQA+ advocacy groups exist near you and reach out!
- Campaign, protest, vote
- Have the hard conversations with family & friends



RESOURCES!



<https://tinyurl.com/e2fnsk92>

avery@mlp.org

MAKING IT PERSONAL

*Many thanks to these members of the
Presbytery of Lake Michigan who have
agreed to share some of their families'
stories with us.*

