



TRANS 101

A Brief Guide



Brethren Mennonite Council for LGBT Interests
PO Box 3600
Minneapolis, MN 55406
612.343.2060
bmclgbt.org

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Content and design by Hayley Brooks

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INTRODUCTION

Purpose and Intent

This short guide is intended for Mennonite and Brethren communities seeking education and understanding about transgender realities. This booklet will introduce important terms and concepts, statistics about what transgender people face in the current social climate in the United States and Canada, and address some of the misconceptions and dominant narratives about transgender identities and people. This guide is designed for those with little understanding or context about transgender people but may have interest in becoming an ally to trans people.

This guide will also look at the differences between gender identity and sexual orientation and the ways that dominant culture has conflated the two. Also included are a few personal narratives of transgender people in Mennonite and Brethren communities to contextualize the experience of trans people in these faith communities.

Several other “trans 101” guides were consulted for the purpose of creating this booklet. Part of recognizing and including some of the content of other guides is to recognize the multiplicity and complexity of transgender realities.

Consulted Works

Sylvia Rivera Law Project “Trans 101”
Tranarchism “Not Your Mom’s Trans 101”
Southern Arizona Gender Alliance “Gender Identity 101: A Transgender Primer”
Institute for Welcoming Resources, *TransAction*
Everyday Feminism
Transfeminist Perspectives
I AM: Trans People Speak “Trans 101”
UUA: Transgender 101
Julia Serano “Transgender 201”
Intersex Society of North America
TransWhat? Website and Glossary
Our Trans Loved Ones: PFLAG
The Transgender Child: A Handbook for Families and Professionals
Trans Bodies Trans Selves: A Resource for the Transgender Community

Be sure to look at the comprehensive list of resources at the back of this booklet for more information.

DEFINING A COMMON LANGUAGE

Terms and Definitions

Below is a list of terms and their definitions that are relevant to learning about and understanding transgender identities. This is not a comprehensive list and may not reflect all current definitions of each term. For a more comprehensive definition of each of the terms, as well as other relevant terms, visit BMC’s website and download the Encyclopedia of Gender and Sexuality Terms at bmclgbt.org/general-resources.

agender | A gender identity in which a person does not identify with gender at all.

androgynous | Displaying characteristics of both or neither of the two culturally defined genders.

assigned sex | Assigned sex is “the sex one is labeled at birth, generally by a medical or birthing professional, based on a cursory examination of external and/or physical sex characteristics such as genitalia and cultural concepts of male and female sexed bodies.”¹ This is a way to refer to someone’s sex without making assumptions about their current sex, body and identity.

bigender | A gender identity in which a person identifies with two or more genders. Other gender identities that describe the experience of multiple genders are: ambigender, genderfluid, multigender and others.

cisgender | Describes people whose gender identity matches the sex and gender role assigned to them at birth.

cissexism | The term cissexism is used to describe institutional practices and policies that oppress trans people. Cissexism is also used to describe the ways that cisgender identities are normalized at the expense of trans identities.

gender dysphoria | Gender dysphoria is a formal diagnosis “used by psychologists and physicians to describe people who experience significant dysphoria (distress) with the sex and gender they were assigned at birth.”² It was first used in psychiatry in 1973. The term replaced “gender identity disorder” in the American Psychiatric Association’s *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders -V* to “better categorize the experiences of affected children, adolescent and adults.”³

gender expression | Gender expression is the external manifestation of one’s gender identity, usually through masculine, feminine, or gender-variant behavior, clothing, haircut, voice or body characteristics. Gender expression is separate from gender identity.

gender fluid | Also written gender-fluid or gender-fluid. Gender fluid describes an identity in which a person does not have a fixed gender identity.

gender identity | For the most part today, the term “gender” is used to denote the socially constructed attributes of male and female people. Gender identity describes, “one’s innermost concept of self as male, female, a blend of both or neither.”⁴

gender non-conformity or variance | Behavior or gender expression by an individual that does not match masculine and/or feminine gender norms.

genderqueer | A term used by some people who identify outside of the traditional two-gender or gender-binary system. This term refers to gender identity rather than sexual orientation.

heteronormativity | Refers “to biased views that favor heterosexual people and their sexual orientation and encourage prejudice against homosexual, bisexual,”⁵ pansexual and other non-heterosexual people.

intersex | Describes people born with some combination of male and female sex organs. According to the Intersex Society of North America, “Anatomic sex differentiation occurs on a male/female continuum, and there are several dimensions.”⁶ It is estimated that anywhere from 1 in 100 to 1 in 2,000 infants is born intersex, but the most common reaction by the medical establishment is to “fix” these babies immediately through surgical means. In 2013, the United Nations condemned “normalization” surgery.

misgender | The term misgender was coined by American transgender writer and biologist Julia Serano. Serano defines the word as, “the experience

of being labeled by someone as having a gender other than the one you identify with.”⁷

non-binary | Similar to the term genderqueer, non-binary denotes those who identify outside of the gender binary. Often used as an umbrella term to describe all identities that fall outside of the gender binary as well as a specific identity.

queer | Sometimes used as an umbrella term for those who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or intersex. Historically, the term has been used as a slur against those perceived to be lgbtq. For this reason, its use can be controversial. It has been reclaimed by some lgbtq people, especially younger generations. It can be a political statement which advocates breaking binary thinking and seeing both sexual orientation and gender identity as potentially fluid. Some reject the use of this word as an umbrella term. Be sure to ask for consent when using this term to describe people.

trans man | A person who was female assigned at birth and identifies as a man.

trans woman | A person who was assigned male at birth and identifies as a woman.

transgender | An umbrella term for people whose gender identity is different from the sex and gender role they were assigned at birth. Transgender people can be straight/heterosexual, gay, bisexual, pansexual, asexual and may or may not identify as queer. Genderqueer and non-binary people may or may not identify with this term.

transition | The process by which some people strive to more closely align their internal knowledge of gender with their appearance and social life. Some people socially transition, where they begin dressing, using names and pronouns and/or be socially recognized as another gender. Often in addition to this, others undergo physical transitions wherethey modify their bodies through medical treatments, such as hormone replacement therapy (HRT) or gender affirmation or confirmation surgery (also called sex reassignment surgery).

transphobia | The term “transphobia” was first recorded in 1993, defined as “fear or hatred of transsexual or transgender people.”⁸ Like homophobia and biphobia, the term is used to describe oppression against transgender people and the cultural hatred of transgender people as a social group as well as individuals. The term is often used to describe cultural attitudes about transgender people where cissexism is used to describe institutional oppression against

transgender people.
transsexual | A person whose gender identity is different from the sex they were assigned at birth, so they may take hormones or get sex reassignment surgery (SRS). Policies differ from location to location regarding the point in one’s journey when a transsexual individual can legally change their name and other legal documents. Transsexual is often seen as a clinical, dated term.

Two-Spirit | A concept present in some, but not all, indigenous cultures across North America and parts of Central and South America. It is a term of reverence, traditionally referring to people who display both masculine and feminine sex or gender characteristics. Those who are Two-Spirited are highly respected, and are often healers and leaders thought to possess a higher spiritual development.

Pronouns 101

Complete the following sentences with a gender-neutral or non-binary third person pronoun. Try to practice with these sentences or your own to learn to fit gender neutral language into your regular speech and vocabulary. See the gender neutral and non-binary pronouns table on the next page for a list of pronouns.

_____ go/goes to the park every day.

I gave the keys to _____.

_____ books are on the table.

Are these books _____?

Taylor looked at _____ in the mirror.

There are many other gender neutral or non-binary pronouns that others use, but for the sake of brevity, they are not included on this list. Also note that for they/them/theirs, the plural form of the verb is used, but for the other pronouns the singular form of the verb is used. The pronunciation of “hir” is similar to hear or here.

For examples of they/them/theirs and ze/hir/hirs used in a sentence, see the boxes below the table on the following page.

Pronouns 101 (continued)

subject	object	possessive adj.	possessive pronoun	reflexive
[name]	[name]	[name]’s	[name]’s	[name]’s self
they	them	their	theirs	themselves
ze	hir	hir	hirs	hirsself

Taylor has an apple.
(They have an apple.)
I give the apple to Taylor.
(I give the apple to them.)
Taylor’s apple is on the table.
(Their apple is on the table.)





Nico has a book.
(Ze has a book.)
I give the book to Nico.
(I give the book to hir.)
Nico’s book is on the table.
(Hir book is on the table.)

Gender-Neutral Language

Unlike its precedents, Modern English no longer considers gender an inflectional category. The only traces of the Old English gender system are gendered pronouns. There are, however, gendered nouns such as waiter and waitress, mailman, etc. Many non-binary and genderqueer people prefer gender-neutral nouns to be used to describe them. This section will include a list of gendered terms and their gender-neutral synonyms. For more information about gender-neutral language, visit http://nonbinary.org/wiki/Gender_neutral_language.

Category	Gendered Nouns	Gender-Neutral Noun
Titles	Mrs., Ms., Miss, Mr.	Mx. (pronounced mix), M.
Family	mother, father	parent, co-parent, guardian
	son, daughter	child, kid
	aunt, uncle	auncle (no specific term in Standard English)
	niece, nephew	nibling (no specific term in Standard English)
	grandfather, grandmother, grandpa, grandma	grandparent
	sister, brother	sibling
	girlfriend, boyfriend	partner, significant other, companion, fiancée
	wife, husband	spouse (see above)

Category	Gendered Nouns	Gender-Neutral Noun
Professions	mailman	mail carrier, mail person
	businessman, businesswoman	business person
	waiter, waitress	server
	policeman	police officer
	fireman	firefighter
	salesman	sales person
	chairman	chairperson, chair
Religious Language	Lord, Father, etc.	Creator, the Divine, Sovereign
	minister, priest, etc.	clergy member, pastor
	kingdom	kin-dom, sovereignty
Miscellaneous	alumna, alumnus	alum
	mankind	humankind
	actress	actor
	man, woman	person, human
	boy, girl	child
	ladies & gentleman	distinguished guests, honored guests, everyone, everybody

Offensive and Hurtful Vocabulary

Below is a list of terms that are offensive or hurtful for various reasons. Each entry offers an explanation of why not to use each term. It is best to avoid using many of these terms at all, even if you are quoting someone else. It may also be helpful to consult the Gender and Sexuality Encyclopedia available on BMC’s website to understand the histories of some of these terms.

transgendered | Avoid using “transgendered” because the term transgender is not a verb. Others articulate that transgendered suggests a condition, which can be offensive or hurtful to trans people. Instead, use the adjective “transgender,” which suggests an identity, rather than a condition. Katy Steinmetz, writing for *Time* articulates, “Moving away from the ‘ed’—which sounds like a past-tense, completed verb that marks a distinct time before and a time after—helps move away from some common misconceptions about what it means to be transgender.”⁸ This is not universally understood as offensive, however. In

Trans Bodies, Trans Selves, Dallas Denny and Jamison Green articulate, “All people are ‘gendered’ by our own or others’ perception of us in relation to the binary assumptions about sex and gender that surround us. We have gender, and we are gendered by the world around us; and therefore, we can be transgendered... We realize that no one person or group can control the evolution of language, and we think that’s good.”⁹

transgender as a noun | Transgender is an adjective, not a noun. Instead of saying “a transgender,” say “a transgender person.” Steinmetz says of this use, “It

turns a descriptive adjective into a defining noun and can make the subject sound distant and foreign, like they’re something else first and a person second.”¹⁰ In *Trans Bodies, Trans Selves*, Dallas Denny and Jami-son Green articulate, “We feel the word transgender should modify a noun rather than becoming one. Giving it some grammatical context and variability as an adjective helps ensure this. When trans people are described only as ‘transgenders,’ we feel the term easily dehumanizes us.”¹¹

Berdache | Berdache is an anthropological term used to describe gender variant members of First Nations and indigenous American groups. In 1990, the term Two-Spirit was adopted at a gay and lesbian indigenous international gathering as an alternative to berdache. Two-Spirit is preferred because it is self-generated and was created inside of the communities it describes.

real, natural, bio, etc. | Referring to non-transgender or cisgender people using these terms invalidates the gender identities of transgender people. These terms place cisgender identities at the center and marginalize transgender people. Use cisgender or non-transgender instead. Using “biological” or other similar terms to describe people doesn’t account for intersex people and can further reinforce the medicalization of the gender binary.

hermaphrodite | Hermaphrodite is a dated term referring to the humanly impossible phenomenon of hermaphroditism, which is a person that is fully male and female (in the sense of sex, not gender). Today the term intersex is used to describe those with ambiguous genitalia or reproductive or sexual anatomy that don’t seem to fit the typical definitions of female or male.

tranny | This term is an offensive and hurtful slur used against transgender and gender non-conforming people. Some transgender people have reclaimed the slur, but it should only be used by those it has been used to demean.

he-she, she-male | These terms are slurs used against transgender people, especially against trans women. Do not use these terms to describe someone who is trans or someone you perceive to be trans.

it | Some cisgender people use the pronoun or noun “it” to describe transgender people. Because “it” is used for objects, this objectifies transgender people. Instead of using “it,” use “they” or another gender-neutral pronoun until you know what a person’s pronouns are.

asking for birth name | Asking a transgender person for their “real” or “birth” name invalidates their identity and implicitly denies that their current name is their real name. Referring to someone by their birth or given name is often called “deadnaming.”

asking questions about genitalia, sex, etc. | If you have questions about a person’s identity or experiences as a transgender person, ask permission before doing so. Do not ask a trans person about their genitalia, if they are on hormones or other invasive questions; if they want you to know about these aspects of their life, they will tell you. Transgender people are often subjected to invasive questions about their body, medical and sexual history and other aspects of their life that cisgender people are rarely questioned about in the same way. If you have a general question about transgender identities, try looking it up before asking a transgender person.

transvestite, cross-dresser | Many transgender people find it offensive when they are referred to as cross-dressers or transvestites. The term transvestite is also considered dated and cross-dresser or drag is used instead. Furthermore, many cisgender people think that transgender women are cross-dressers or drag queens, which is not true. Cross-dressers typically do not want to permanently change their sex or gender. It is always best to use the term preferred by the individual you are referring to.

DIFFERENCES BETWEEN SEXUALITY AND GENDER

Basic Differences

Sexual orientation describes who you are sexually, spiritually, emotionally, romantically, etc. attracted to on the basis of gender and/or sex, as it relates to your gender and/or sex.

Bisexual, pansexual, heterosexual, gay/lesbian, asexual

Gender identity describes your internal understanding of yourself as a gendered person.

Man, woman (binary identities), non-binary, gender queer, agender, neutrois, genderfluid, cisgender, transgender

A person’s gender identity is **separate** from their sexual orientation, so a person of any gender identity can have any sexual orientation. Heteronormativity (see definition in “Defining a Common Language”) often functions in a way for transgender people that their sexual orientation is invalidated by other people as a result of their gender identity. Historically, when trans people have sought trans-specific health care (related to transitioning), they have had to “prove” that they will be heterosexual after transitioning. This practice invalidates the sexual orientations of bisexual, pansexual, asexual and gay or lesbian trans people. For more information about the gate-keeping medical institutions have used against trans people seeking health care, read Julia Serano’s *Whipping Girl: A Transsexual Woman on Sexism and the Scapegoating of Femininity*.

An important distinction to make is that trans people usually define their sexual orientation **relative to their gender identity** and not their sex assigned at birth. Therefore, a transgender man (who is female assigned at birth) who is exclusively attracted to women is heterosexual. A transgender woman (who is male assigned at birth) who is exclusively attracted to women is lesbian or gay.

Spectrums

Sex | The sex of humans is determined by a large number of factors, which do not all necessarily align along what we designate as “male” and “female.”

The Intersex Society of North America provides a helpful understanding of sex spectrums:

To better explain this, we can liken the sex spectrum to the color spectrum. There’s no question that in nature there are different wavelengths that translate into colors most of us see as red, blue, orange, yellow. But the decision to distinguish, say, between orange and red-orange is made only when we need it—like when we’re asking for a particular paint color. Sometimes social necessity leads us to make color distinctions that otherwise would seem incorrect or irrational, as, for instance, when we call certain people “black” or “white” when they’re not especially black or white as we would otherwise use the terms.

In the same way, nature presents us with sex anatomy spectrums. Breasts, penises, clitorises, scrotums, labia, gonads—all of these vary in size and shape and morphology. So-called “sex” chromosomes can vary quite a bit, too. But in human cultures, sex categories get simplified into male, female, and sometimes intersex, in order to simplify social interactions, express what we know and feel, and maintain order.¹

Human sex can be placed on a spectrum, but how we define where the categories begin and end is a social decision.

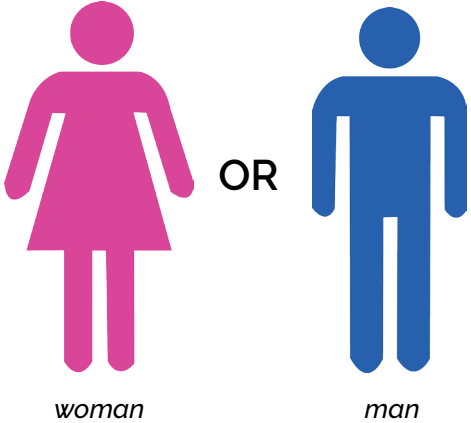
To visualize this, here is a color spectrum. Male and female are both still distinct categories, but this allows us to see that there is ambiguity, overlap and variation between different sexual characteristics.



The different sexual characteristics in humans are: assigned sex (usually based on a cursory exam of the genitals when an infant is born), genes/chromosomes, gonads, hormones, psyche and anatomy.

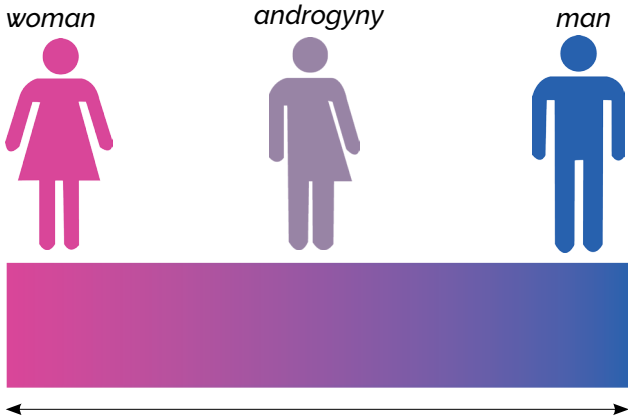
Gender | Gender is more complicated and culturally specific than sex is. To understand gender a little better, we will use some visuals.

Usually, gender is understood as a dichotomy like this:



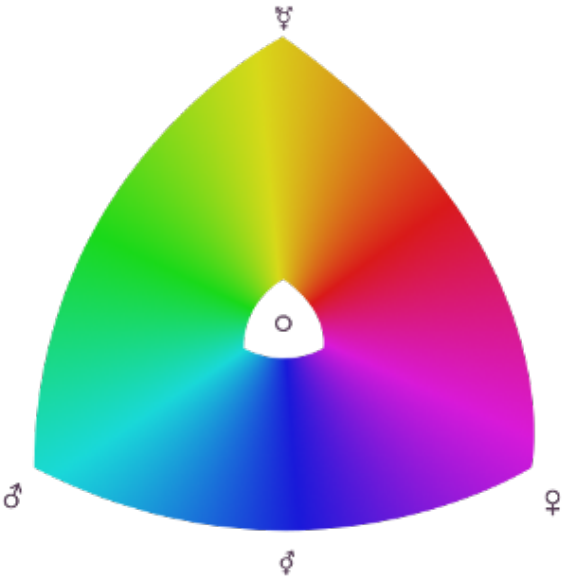
woman man

And occasionally, a spectrum like this:



woman androgyny man

Instead of these dichotomies, try understanding gender in this Reuleaux triangle:



There are many different ways to think about and visualize gender. Often gender is difficult to define or to understand. For the purposes of this booklet, we'll use a Reuleaux triangle. This triangle accommodates a broader range of gender expressions and identities, as well as room for ambiguity, non-conformity and variation between cultures. For the full article explaining this diagram, visit the notes section.²

It is time that we all see gender as a spectrum instead of two sets of opposing ideals.

—EMMA WATSON

Gender Variance or Non-conformity

Gender variance | The expressions **gender variance** or **gender non-conformity** have obscure origins, but are used by scholars of psychology, psychiatry, anthropology and gender studies, as well as advocacy groups. *Wikipedia* defines gender variance as, “behavior or gender expression by an individual that does not match masculine and feminine gender norms.”³ Other terms that are used synonymously with gender non-conformity or variance are: gender diverse, variant or atypical. The *Sylvia Rivera Law Project* defines the expression as an umbrella term used to describe “people who don’t follow other people’s ideas or stereotypes about how they should **look** or **act** based on the female or male sex they were assigned at birth.”⁴ (Emphasis mine).

Therapists and psychiatrists are “currently divided on the proper response to childhood gender non-conformity.”⁵ Many studies have found that the majority of gay and lesbian people self-report gender non-conformity in childhood. *Gender Diversity* notes that, “gender non-conformity is a term not typically applied to children who have only a brief, passing curiosity in trying out these behaviors and interests.”⁶ The expression is often used in LGBTQ and activist communities to discuss the ways gender is constructed in society and the ways those who do not conform to patriarchal gender roles experience gender. Gender non-conformity or gender non-conforming is often abbreviated to GNC.

The terms are often used alongside transgender (in addition to, not as a synonym) to encompass the wide range of experiences of people who do not conform to patriarchal gender roles.

Gender Expression

Gender expression refers to, “A way in which a person acts to communicate gender within a given culture; for example, in terms of clothing, communication, patterns and interests.”⁷ Gender expression is culturally specific. A person of any gender identity can have any gender expression.

Gender expression is largely visual (although voice, mannerisms, speech style, etc. also play into it); the illustration on the next page allows us to visualize a few of the many ways to express gender.

Think about the many ways you express your gender and the vast and varied ways gender expression informs our experiences. How does your gender expression function in the world? How do you relate to other people based on your gender expression?



Illustration by Lisa Bade

COMMON QUESTIONS

Common Questions

Are transgender people the same as gay and lesbian people?

Yes and no. Gay and lesbian describe sexual orientations, where transgender describes gender identity. There is no direct correlation between gender identity and sexual orientation. Trans people may identify as gay, bisexual, pansexual, asexual or heterosexual. Some trans people are gay or lesbian, but many are not, and many gay and lesbian people are cisgender. Historically, the reason trans people and gay, lesbian and bisexual people were grouped together was a result of the sexology theory of “inversion.” The term “invert” was a synonym for “homosexual,” but was often described as a person who retains the “germ” of the other sex or who wants to be the other sex.¹ Today we understand sexual orientation and gender identity to be two separate things. Furthermore, in early twentieth century New York, men considered “homosexual” or “fairies” were men who were effeminate, while their male sexual partners were considered normal, according to *Gay New York* by George Chauncey. This distinction is relevant to us today because the conflation of gender identity and sexual orientation has also been the result of the stigma of gender non-conformity. There is also some ambiguity in definitions and understandings because in many contexts non-heterosexuality is considered gender non-conforming. This complexity is beyond the scope of this booklet, but is something to keep in mind as you have conversations about transgender issues and identities as they relate to gender non-conformity and sexual orientation.

Can I tell if someone is transgender?

No, not always. Trans people reflect a wide variety of races, classes, abilities, sexualities, occupations, gender expressions and more. What may appear to you as a cisgender person may be a transgender person. The only way to actually know if someone is transgender is if they tell you.

Why do transgender people need legal protections?

Transgender people are subject to violence, discrimination and oppression in a variety of ways. Currently, 32 states do not have statewide nondiscrimination

laws that cover gender identity. Transgender people are four times more likely to have a household yearly income of less than \$10,000 compared to the general population. For more information about what trans people face, read the “Narratives” section of this booklet.



What is gender dysphoria?

See the “Defining a Common Language” section for this definition.

Is being transgender considered a mental illness?

No. Historically, transgender identities have been pathologized and “gender identity disorder” was included in the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* until the last edition, where it was replaced by gender dysphoria. Gender dysphoria remains a part of the manual so that insurance companies will cover transition-related health care.

How are trans people different from cross-dressers (and drag queens and kings)?

The main difference between cross-dressers/drag queens and kings is that, generally, cross-dressers only change their gender expression for performances or other specific events, where trans people live and identify as a gender different from the one they were assigned at birth all the time. Trans people are not “performing” when they express their gender in a way that deviates from societal norms.

If a trans person has not had surgery or hormone replacement therapy, are they still trans?

Yes. Trans people are still trans whether or not they want or have access to transition-related health care. Some trans people choose not to have surgery or go on hormones, some are unable to because of their own

health and some do not have access to it. Gender affirmation surgery and hormone replacement therapy are not covered by many insurance companies in the United States (and elsewhere around the world), so they can be difficult for many trans people to access, especially considering widespread discrimination against trans people and the social risks involved in transitioning.

How do I figure out someone’s pronouns and chosen name?

Ask them. If possible, and where appropriate, having everyone introduce names and pronouns is an easy way to accommodate trans people and prevents misgendering, or the use of incorrect pronouns. If you don’t know a person’s pronouns, use they/them/theirs instead of the binary pronouns he/him/his or she/her/hers.

Are there transgender children?

Yes. Many children begin to have a sense of their gender identity around age three. That said, many people take longer to come to an understanding of their gender identity, and so come out or transition later in life. Both experiences are valid.

What do the initials FTM and MTF stand for?

FTM stands for female-to-male and MTF stands for male-to-female. These acronyms are most often used to describe transsexual people. Alternative terms, which are preferred by many trans people, are trans woman for MTF and trans man for FTM.

What is the difference between transsexual and transgender?

The term transsexual was coined about 25 years before the transgender was coined. Transsexual is often considered a dated term and transgender is preferred. In more specific terms, transgender is an umbrella term that encompasses a variety of identities that cross over, move between or fall outside of the socially constructed boundaries between genders. Transsexual refers to people who seek medical and surgical transition to change their assigned sex and/or gender. Typically, when referring to trans people as a group, stick with the term transgender. It is always best to use the term preferred by the individual you are referring to.

 **Common Misconceptions**

Sex characteristics are immutable and always go together.

Humans have a wide variety of sex characteristics and there are countless variations of the combinations of these characteristics. Anatomy, chromosomes, secondary sex characteristics, etc. vary greatly, but humans decide to assign meaning to them. Nature provides us with a sex spectrum, but humans decide where the category “male” ends and the category of “intersex” begins, as well as where intersex ends and the category of “female” begins. For more information about the diversity of sex characteristics, visit the Intersex Society of North America at isna.org.

Transgender people are deceiving other people if they do not disclose their transgender status.

It is often dangerous for trans people to come out, so if a trans person chooses not to tell someone they are trans, they are likely doing so for their own safety. If a trans person does not come out to you, it may be because they sense you are not a safe person or because you have done something transphobic in the past.

Return the Gayze provides a helpful understanding of authenticity and coming out for trans people:

I started thinking about how so many narratives in our culture are obsessed with “authenticity.” How we as trans people are celebrated because we have “embraced our truth.” And I think about what this does: how it standardizes visibility as authenticity, how it understands authenticity outside of violence, how it erases all of the calculations we must make to keep ourselves safe and whole.

Can we hold that on the days we are most authentic, that we are most ourselves, that we love ourselves the most — are the days that we are most terrified and afraid?²

Furthermore, this idea is based on the false assumption that trans people owe disclosure in the first place. Not disclosing is not always a question of safety. It’s trans people’s free choice if and when to disclose for their own personal reasons. Some trans people also do not want to acknowledge their previous life and are not out and never will be; they are not deceiving you, they are moving forward. This is often referred to as being stealth. Holiday Simmons and Fresh! White articulate in *Trans Bodies, Trans Selves*:

While some of may continue to live our lives as openly trans, some of us who “pass,” or have our male or female gender presentation correctly read by others around us, choose to live stealth. This means few, if any, of those around us know that we are transgender. Living stealth may be a matter of safety or privacy for some of us; for others, it is a matter of what feels natural and makes us happy. For most of us, our lives are combinations of living openly, passing, and being stealth depending on the context or situation.³

Trans people are actually the gender they were assigned at birth.

Trans people are the gender they identify as. Referring to them as the gender they were assigned at birth is misgendering them.

Genderqueer and non-binary identities are not real.

Genderqueer and non-binary people experience their identities as very real. The gender binary does not recognize their identities but that does not make them any less valid or real.

Trans people used to be the gender they were assigned at birth.

This may be true for some trans people, but not for all trans people. Some trans people used to be *perceived* as the gender they were assigned at birth, but were always the gender they identify as currently.

Trans people know their whole lives they are trans.

Some trans people know from a young age that they are trans but many do not. Gender identity is complicated and due to varying pressures, circumstances and experiences, some trans people do not know until later in life that they are trans. All these experiences of gender are valid.

Trans people are just enacting a fetish/are sexually confused.

This is a myth, used especially against trans women, that pathologizes trans people and their identities. Historically, this has been described as “autogynephilia,” which according to Ray Blanchard’s theory, was the phenomenon that trans women who are exclusively attracted to women have a sexual fetish for viewing themselves as female. This theory sexualizes trans women and women in general without their

consent and is harmful to trans women.

Julia Serano provides helpful commentary on this assumption, “Thus, the presumption that trans women (but not trans men) are sexually motivated in their transitions appears to reflect the cultural assumption that a woman’s power and worth stems primarily from her ability to be sexualized by others.”⁴

All trans people want hormones and surgery.

Some trans people want hormones and/or surgery in order to align their body with what they internally understand about themselves. On the other hand, many trans people are comfortable with their bodies without hormones or surgery and desire the world to perceive them the way they understand themselves.

Trans people are a recent phenomenon.

Trans and gender non-conforming people have existed throughout history in varying capacities and ways, even if they are not identified by the same terms we use today. Many societies are or were not organized along a gender or sexual binary, and so understand gender in ways that differ from the way Western societies have conceptualized gender.

Trans people don’t or can’t have children.

Many trans people are parents. While being trans alters the experiences of parenthood due to institutionalized transphobia and cissexism, trans people are capable of having and do have children.

Trans people using the bathroom that corresponds to their gender identity creates dangerous environments for everyone else.

Trans and gender non-conforming are far more likely to be the victim of aggression in public bathrooms than the aggressor. Lambda Legal provides important information about trans people and public bathrooms:

There is no evidence that gender-segregated bathrooms are ‘safer’ for cisgender women than unisex bathrooms...Transgender people face a uniquely high degree of harassment—53% of 6,450 transgender people reported being harassed or disrespected in a place of public accommodation in a recent survey conducted by the National Center for Transgender Equality and the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force.

In *Mathis v. Fountain-Fort Carson School*

District 8, Colorado’s Division of Civil Rights found that barring transgender students from gender-segregated bathrooms in accordance with their gender identity may out an individual as transgender and invite the very harassment that a school or employer claims to want to prevent.⁵

Something bad or traumatic happened to make a trans person trans.

The “cause” of gender identity (and sexual orientation) is unknown, but trauma does not cause someone to be transgender or cisgender. Trans people may experience trauma due to oppression and marginal-

ization, but that does not make them trans.

All transgender people feel trapped in the “wrong body.”

Some transgender people feel this way and seek surgery or hormones to change this, but many trans people, especially non-binary and genderqueer people, are comfortable with their bodies as they are without surgery or hormone replacement therapy. Another way of understanding this concept is to think about it as a metaphor for trans experience but not an absolute reality.

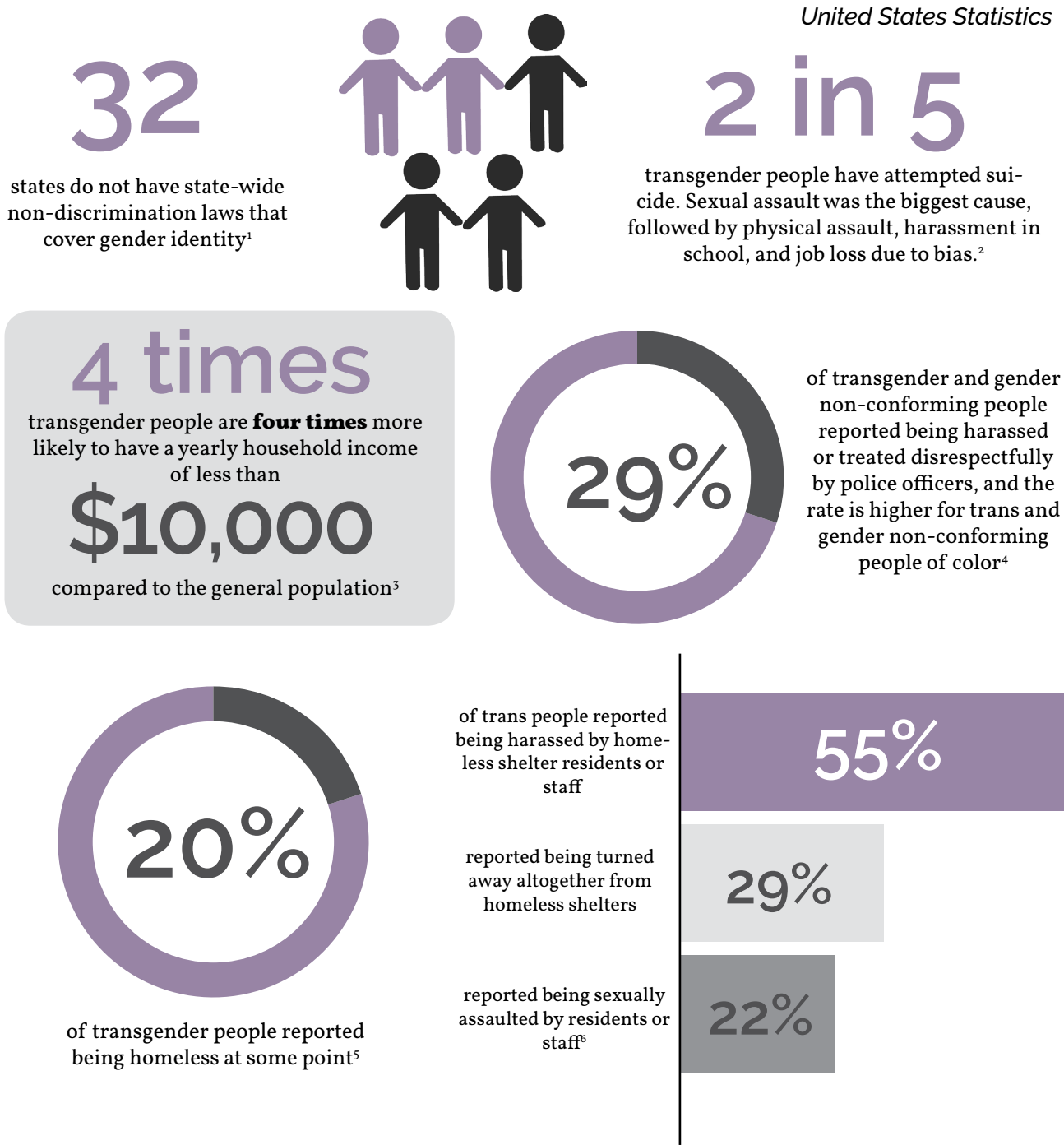
I believe that when we love someone, we respect them, and we listen to them; we feel that their voice matters. And we let them dictate the terms of who they are and what their story is.

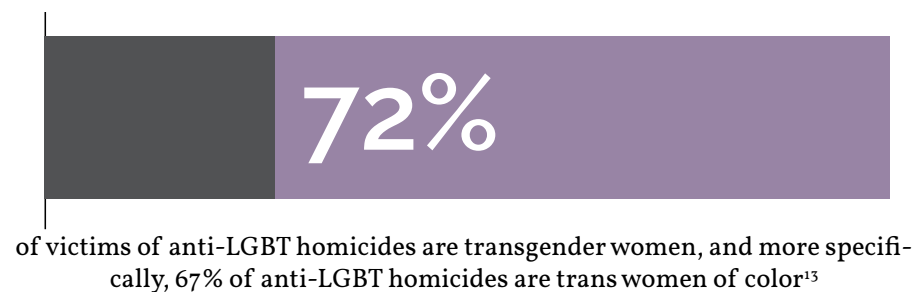
—LAVERNE COX,
Actress and Activist

NARRATIVES

What do trans people face?

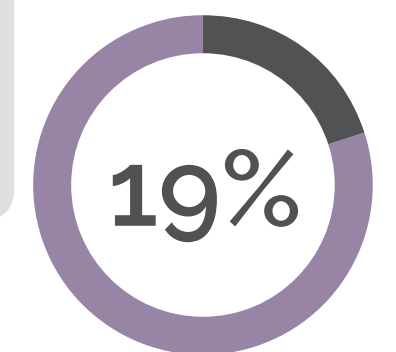
This section will offer a few statistics about the reality of trans experiences in the United States and Canada today. While these statistics are useful and helpful for looking at the bigger picture, keep in mind that they cannot capture the full complexity of the lives in trans people. For individual stories about trans people in Mennonite and Brethren communities, read the next section.



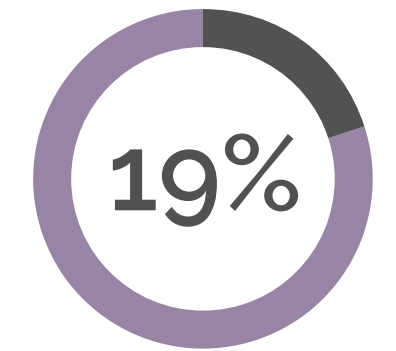


18
states have clear laws protecting transgender people, according to the American Civil Liberties Union¹¹

1 in 5
trans people surveyed have been able to update all of their IDs and records after transitioning¹²



of trans people reported being refused medical care due to their transgender or gender non-conforming status, with rates even higher among people of color¹⁴



of trans people surveyed experienced abuse or violence from a family member¹⁷



Many of the statistics in this survey included an important piece of intersectionality: that many trans students were harassed or assaulted due to both gender expression and sexual orientation.

■ Mennonite and Brethren Narratives

Included in this section are the stories of Mennonite and Brethren transgender people who volunteered their stories for the purpose of the booklet. These are not meant to be representative of all trans people, but they are helpful in coming to a better understanding of gender identity in Mennonite and Brethren communities. The first is an interview with Calvin Neufeld. To find out more about Calvin, visit bmclgbt.org/videos and watch “On the Male Side of Middle,” produced by Paul Neudorf.

Interview with Calvin Neufeld



What are some common questions you receive about being transgender? How do you typically address them?

As a speaker on sexual and gender diversity I’ve been asked just about everything! Common questions include what was my name before? My parents named me Caitlin. It means “pure.” I named myself Calvin (after my favourite cartoon character) which means “little bald one.” It was prophetic. I am now bald. I get asked about my parents, how did they respond to my coming out, especially considering my Mennonite and evangelical Christian upbringing? It was hard. It would be hard for any parent. But I’m privileged, my parents are wise, good people. They said “We love you and we will support you.” They didn’t know how this would fit into everything they’ve always believed, but they committed themselves to reading and researching and soul-searching and finding knowledgeable people to speak to. Through this they discovered BMC and I know that Carol Wise was a wise and formative influence in their journey to wholeheartedly accepting and celebrating

who I am. Our family owes BMC great thanks!

How does your gender identity interact with your faith?

I no longer have beliefs of any kind around God. This is something that changed independent of my struggles around gender and sexuality. I allowed myself to consider one day, deeply and sincerely, “If there were no God, would it change anything about my values and how I live my life?” My answer was no. From that point on I no longer cared whether or not there is a God. The model that Jesus provided is as relevant to my life today as ever – perhaps more than ever – but I don’t need to believe or disbelieve or even care about the existence of a deity to live out those values. Identities are formed around beliefs, and identities are divisive, setting people apart. If I have any belief, it is that IF there is a God, then God is love. I can see no other possibility. I continue to serve love. I suppose it’s a matter of faith that that’s the best way to live my life.

What are some different ways you understand and/or describe your gender identity?

I always tell people that I just feel like a guy. Being transgender brings into question what makes a man and what makes a woman. I don’t worry about those things. I don’t particularly care what makes a man. All I know is that when I look in the mirror, my brain expects to see a guy. It has been that way for as long as I can remember. I didn’t recognize myself before. Now I do. Before, every mirror reflected conflict at me. Now I just brush my teeth or trim my beard or suck my belly in as blandly as the next man, rarely reminded that I’m trans. I look the way my brain expects me to look, I speak the way my brain expects me to sound. That pretty much sums up any identity I might have around gender. I look, sound, and feel like me.

Of course, gender isn’t simple. The spectrum of mas-

culinity overlaps the spectrum of femininity. There are feminine men, masculine women, trans people, genderqueer people, intersex people, and people at either extreme of masculinity and femininity. There are as many gender identities as there are human beings. I feel like a guy but I also recognize in myself some feminine attributes. I have a sweet smile. I gesture a lot as I speak. I could sit and talk for hours about this, that and everything. I love the parts of me that are more typically associated with women, but that doesn’t make me feel like a woman. On the spectrum of gender, I place myself “on the male side of middle” – which ended up being the title of Paul Neudorf’s wonderful documentary.

Who are some of your role models (trans-gender or not)? How did they factor into your coming out?

I have too many role models to count! Every person I meet proves a role model if I listen and learn from them. My biggest role model growing up was Jesus, naturally. I guess you could say he played a role in my coming out, since I always believed truthfulness and connectedness to be vitally important, and living with secrets and lies was destroying me and my relationships with friends and family. If God is a God of truth and love, then that God would only look favourably on LGBT people living their lives authentically.

Carol Wise has been a role model for me. She has accomplished so much through the BMC, and her personal passion for justice and the intersectionality of oppression have enhanced my own ethical maturation. I am not just working for the wellbeing of LGBT people but all people and all other animals suffering under the weight of oppression.

The most significant role model in my life, now and always, is my mother, Franceen Neufeld, author of the book *Suffering Eyes: A Chronicle of Awakening*. She is the best and kindest person I know. She was probably a reason I remained closeted for so many years – I didn’t want to break her heart – but she was unquestionably a reason for my coming out too. I could no longer deny either of us the closeness and joy that secrecy and lies robbed us of. Young people often think that by not telling their parents the truth about themselves, they are protecting their parents. This is not true. You are robbing your parents of the opportunity to know their child. If you’re hiding the truth because you’re afraid they’ll reject you, then you’re denying them the opportunity to prove you wrong. You are not doing your parents any favours by hiding. And as I tell young closeted people all the time, you’re

suffering anyway. Might as well suffer for the truth.

What did the process of transitioning look like for you?

Before or after? Before transitioning, the process looked absolutely terrifying. Not the medical aspects of transition, but just coming out and saying “I’m a he... this is my new name... yes I’ve always felt this way” and being a visual spectacle as I physically morph from female to androgynous to male. Knowing and accepting that you’re trans and then facing the transition ahead – terrifying. Actually transitioning, though, was no big whup. It was difficult logistically – I’ve described it as having to “machete my way through the neglected undergrowth of transsexual healthcare” – but emotionally and mentally it was up and up for me. Every step breathed new life into me. Like an actor in heavy makeup and costume backstage at the end of a long play, peeling off piece by piece the heavy, irritating layers until finally the true person underneath emerges and breathes the freedom and familiarity.

How do you find safe spaces for yourself? How do you create safe spaces?

I’m privileged. I just look like a guy, I’m just accepted as a guy. I am safe. And I have a good home and a good family. I am privileged. Living in Canada, attitudes are for the most part very liberal by global standards. Canada prides itself as an open and accepting country. Despite all this, there will always be ignorance, prejudicial thinking, religious objections, there will always be bullying targeted largely at those who are perceived to be outside of the norm, people will always be tempted to distrust or fear what they don’t understand. When I transitioned, I knew that I had to make a conscious decision about whether I would live “stealth” (not disclosing that I’m trans) or live openly as a trans person. I decided I’d had enough of hiding, and if being trans is nothing to be ashamed about, then neither is it something to be not talked about. It’s just a fact about me and countless others like me. A naturally occurring morally benign phenomenon. As it turns out, being open and honest has for me proved the most effective way to create safe space. I am not afraid of it. I am not ashamed of it. And that’s contagious.

What do you love about being transgender?

Gosh. More than loving being trans, I love that there is a mixture of male and female in me. I am far from balanced in life but I feel rounded as a human be-

ing. I feel ease and belonging among women, I feel belonging and fearless among men. I have no desire or ability to compete masculinity-wise (which I’m increasingly convinced is a source of intense insecurity in many or most men), and I am not shy or reserved in the company of women, having been raised and socialized as a female. I feel connected to everyone, biologically and experientially. No one is the “other” to me. “I’ve looked at life from both sides now,” as the

song goes. I also love how being trans disarms people. Suddenly people don’t know quite what to think, minds come alive with questions and not-knowing. I believe that’s a very healthy thing to happen. With it comes newness. Eagerness to learn. Revisiting rooted assumptions. Not to mention captivating conversations. The life of a trans person may be as unspectacular as the next person but it’s never dull!

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When Did God Stop Creating? Gender and Language in Community

Pax Ressler

Many years ago, I heard a transgender woman speak about the fear and intolerance she faces on a daily basis. When fearful people ask her why she’s choosing to go “against God’s creation” and the “natural order of life,” she responds with a simple question that has forever changed the way I think:

“When did God stop creating?”

This past year, with this question ringing in my ears, I slowly and surely began to name what has always been true for me. In my spirit, mind and body, I have never felt male.

While I was assigned male at birth, my earliest memories include the recognition that I wasn’t a boy, even (and especially) when placed in a group of boys. Through study and learning, I have come to name my experience and claim the identity of “third gender” (a gender other than male or female) or “genderqueer,” an identity under the larger Transgender umbrella. With lingering fear, I made this part of my reality as public as possible, a decision to be known that has blessed me in more ways than I could have imagined.

At the same time, inviting people into my reality has not been a cure-all remedy for the many ways that I still seek to be more fully known and named in my communities, including Germantown Mennonite Church. This requires continued work in asking my friends and family to refer to me with the gender-neutral pronouns they, them and theirs and not refer to me as a guy, man, brother or son. In doing so, it didn’t take long for me to realize that male and female gender labels unknowingly permeate our everyday speech. In order for me to feel more fully known and named by my communities, I have to speak up to correct loved ones when they misgender me, a task that takes constant energy, courage and shared respect.

While important, the desire to be more fully known and named goes deeper than pronouns and labels; it is a desire to share in the fullness of community life as a genderqueer person. The limitations of our language reflect a societal lack of awareness in allowing and creating space for people who identify outside of the strict and defined “gender binary.” Even among my queer communities (populated mostly by cisgender gay and lesbian folks), I have to continually create space for myself as a gender-queer person.

What becomes clear is that gender (as we have understood it) is a construct, and an oppressive construct at that. We have given meaning and social capital to concepts of “male” and “female” without allowing for a full array of gender identity and expression. I grew up with a construct of gender that wasn’t built for me, nor could it allow space for me as a genderqueer person. Those who identify outside of the binary have to continually create that space for themselves in a society unprepared to understand their experience. This is an exhausting and time-consuming task.

If you’re reading this, I encourage you to continue questioning your constructed view of gender. Who



are you excluding with gender binary language? Can you commit to asking and using the preferred gender pronouns of the transgender people in your congregation, your family and your communities? How does stretching your view of gender stretch your concep-

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Genderqueer and Asexual

L. Wiebe

Growing up I always knew something was up with my gender. It’s stereotypical but true. It wasn’t a huge deal until puberty when people started splitting us up based on gender and then I always seemed to be in the wrong spot, the wrong clothes, the wrong body. Some days would be really bad and I would flinch every time I saw my reflection or heard my name and especially if I heard “she.” I didn’t know what trans was until high school and even then I dismissed the idea that I might be trans because I knew I did not want to be a boy. When I heard the word genderqueer during university it was like everything fit into place.

Growing up as genderqueer was difficult. I was assigned female at birth and my mother had very clear ideas about how her daughters should behave. My interests in masculine things were tolerated but at the end of the day there were norms that I had to adhere to. When I chopped all my hair off at age 12, she [my mother] hit the roof. The church that I attended during middle and high school was similarly conservative in their gender roles. I was constantly invited to women’s events (all about the family), put in the women’s lodge at retreats, and no one, no one would even think of approaching queer issues with anything other than condemnation. My avoidance of all female spaces made me deviant and I had a lot of difficulty making friends there. People couldn’t box me, and I couldn’t stand them trying.

I was at best a tomboy through middle school. I hung out with guys, played video games, I took shop class. I had been forced into the female gender for so long that I sling-shotted into a rejection of all things effeminate. I went through phases of tight, girly clothing and baggy sarcastic t-shirts. I grew my hair out again but I would often leave it in a simple unisex ponytail. When I wore baggy clothes and had short hair I would often get mistaken for a guy, my father thought this was hilarious but my mother was always upset. My dad called me “#1 Son” and the sheer leap from the norms I had been raised in appealed to me. He would call me that in church to the dismay of many. While I never wanted to be his son, the confusion that

tion of who God is?

Can you open yourself to the possibility that God is still creating — on earth, in creation and in you?

it created was something I came to enjoy. Later in life (at the wise old age of 22), I have found I have come to enjoy the space in gender where people are thrown off balance about what they expect of me.

Despite my bouncing around on the spectrum I spent a lot of that time suicidal. My mother was abusive, and from age ten to when my parents divorced when I was 16, she increased her abuse; my deviance only made it worse. I also didn’t date, partly because I was very uncomfortable with myself but also because I was asexual and greyromantic and just hadn’t felt the urge to chase anybody. There were many factors that went into it but the disconnection from a specific gender made it feel like I didn’t belong anywhere. I had a problem inside of me that I did not have the ability to verbalize. My church, again, made it worse by not giving me language to explain my pain and sorrow. My church focused on the good news and the great life you can have with Christ but never talked about abuse, or loss, or feeling like one didn’t belong because it was an all-white, upper-middle class, straight, cisgender church or at least they were pretending to fit into that mold.

When I was 18, I realized that I was asexual and that non-binary genders were something I should look into and left my church to find a better space. I spent a year bouncing around different churches. I even had an ‘ex-lesbian’ pray for my heterosexuality. After a year of not finding affirming communities and a particularly bad day, I prayed. I asked God if they hated me, if they could accept me for being queer. I still cry when I recall it. All I remember is lying in my bed and feeling like the Niagara Falls of love had fallen on me with a roar. God didn’t just pour love on me, they drenched me in it and I cried for ages, I don’t know how long it lasted but it was probably hours. A couple hours after that, still in recovery, my sister came home from a visit with our mother in tears because our mother had gone on a rant about the homosexuals and I knew that I had found my affirmation just in time to help my sort of still closeted little sister.

It has been almost three years since then and I am still playing with my gender to see where I sit but the freedom to do so has been fantastic. I have also found an affirming church when a friend invited me to his. I have shown up with pronoun pins and had my pastors, supervisor, and friends respect them almost immediately. I talk about queer issues a lot in my church since there aren't a lot of queer people willing to do so and my church brought in a guest speaker a few months ago to do a seminar on trans* basics. My dad was really weirded out with me being genderqueer since it was a serious breach of gender norms in a real

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My Story with Sheila
Anonymous

My husband was born in 1958 into a typical American family, mother, father an older sister, and a few years later a younger sister. He recounted to me being a child and being jealous when his cousin got white go-go boots. That was his first memory of wanting women's clothes. His mom knew I don't know if the rest of his family knew. To the world he was a manly man, he wore jeans and flannel and biker leather. He was a machinist. He loved camping.

At some point during our first date he told me that he liked to wear women's clothes. Ok. That was the extent of the conversation. At some point in our dating I met Sheila. I liked her. I was not interested in being married to a woman, but I never minded coming home from work and finding Sheila in our house. She often showed up when we went camping. She was stylish and loved high heels. She was certainly better at applying makeup than I was.

I asked to go out with her but we lived in a smallish town and her fear was that we would be seen. She was terribly concerned about my church finding out. Honestly that was never a concern for me. But she had spent so much of her life hiding from people that she didn't understand my lack of fear.

We had a conversation once in which she mentioned taking female hormones and thinking about living as a woman, but it was presented as long ago and far away and certainly not something she wanted now. He loved being married to me and he loved our children. No talk of changing was ever made.

The funny thing is I have long been an LGBTQ friend. I have discussed with our children that he was born this way and did not choose to cross-dress due to anything that happened in his childhood. It was never a

sense but he has also started to attend my church. I have started wearing dresses and skirts again as well, they are a lot more fun when they are done on your own terms. I also love, love my super long hair. On the flip-side I am also saving up for a binder and a really nice tailored suit to look snappy at work (it has to be tailored to hide the curves). My church is not Mennonite but has been a core of my support and I came out there before school, my family, or anywhere else because I knew that it was a truly safe space through the hard work the leaders had put into the community.

big deal to me. But somehow I missed the fact that my husband felt like a woman inside.

I watched the Caitlyn Jenner (then Bruce Jenner) interview with Diane Sawyer and realized my life had changed forever. I suddenly understood my husband. I am sad that she is not here to talk to about my new understanding of who she was and how hard life must have been.

When he was diagnosed with prostate cancer he blamed those female hormones. I worked hard to convince him (and the doctor agreed with me) that this was not related to those hormones in any way. But he truly felt God was punishing him. I have hope that she realized that was not the case. I have hope that in heaven she is who she is and feels loved and accepted.

Taking Off the Mask
Rachel Bergen (about Erin Wiebe)

This story about Erin Wiebe was originally published in *The Canadian Mennonite* in December 2015. Read the original article at <http://www.canadianmennonite.org/stories/taking-mask>.

Childhood is all about the endless possibilities, the dreams that will come true if you wish hard enough.

Erin Wiebe's childhood was no different in those ways. She knew if she wished hard enough, the dream of her outside appearance matching the way she saw herself would become a reality. Every night, Erin says she wished she would wake up a girl.

In fact, Erin was born with a gender variance: she is transgender, identifying as female, opposed to the male sex assigned to her at birth.

Being transgender wasn't her choice, nor was it a result of the way she was raised. Scientific evidence presented in a 2008 BBC online story maintains that people experience gender variances because of genetic differences, brain structure and function, and exposure to certain hormones in utero.

"Like you, my gender identity is an innate, fixed part of who I am," Erin says. "I can do no more to change it than I can my race."

On her 15th birthday, everything changed for Erin. She recalls being at her grandparents' home in Alberta. She woke up on a Sunday morning to her family getting ready for church. She stepped in the shower and realized her dreams wouldn't come true.

"I was 15 and terrified of what male puberty was doing to my body. I began to resign myself to the harsh reality that had suddenly replaced my childhood innocence," she says. "I was trapped in this body. I would never wake up the next morning in the body that I needed. No amount of wishing would change the situation, and I began to hate myself."

Erin says she wore a metaphorical mask, hiding her true identity and projecting a false self that was more socially acceptable in her community, for the better part of her life. In fact, she didn't tell anyone about her struggle until she was nearly 40.

"I made the decision to forever lock that part of me away because there was nothing I could do about it," she says. "I was ashamed and I felt that everyone would think I was a pervert or something. I was so afraid. For all I knew, I was the only one in the world

that felt this way."

Love and marriage

Even when Erin met a woman, fell in love and got married, she didn't reveal her true self to anyone, not even herself. Erin met her wife when she was 16. They got married when Erin was 20 and had a child together.

"When I got married, I thought, 'If I try, maybe I can manage to be what she needs me to be and what society expects of me,'" she says, but she couldn't.

Erin loved her wife and their son, but she suffered crippling depression. She had nobody to talk to about her gender crisis and difficulty accessing resources. This is common in the trans community.

Erin also realized she had a false impression of other trans people. "My own ideas about transgender people were highly skewed and ill informed," she says. "I had no experience or exposure to others like me. I thought being trans was to be like drag queens: flamboyant and highly sexualized. They were the type of people you would see at Mardi Gras, not walking down the street. I soon realized I had many of my own trans-phobic issues to work through if I was to explore my gender identity authentically."

"I was so ashamed. I didn't want to risk everything by telling my wife," she says.

Erin's bouts of depression intensified and became more frequent. They became so bad that she isolated herself and contemplated suicide nearly every day.

One day, Erin saw a group of high school girls talking and laughing with each other. "I suddenly realized I'd never experience the freedom these girls enjoyed and took so much for granted. To simply be yourself, to laugh and enjoy yourself effortlessly with a group of friends. I fell apart inside. I broke down and wept. I knew then that I was at a point where I either had to do something about it or I was afraid I would just go out on the highway and drive into oncoming traffic. I was so close."

Coming out

Finally, Erin worked up the courage to do something about it.

It was 2010. Erin put her son to bed and sat her wife

down to talk. “I told her, ‘I’m transgender.’ I thought if I presented all the evidence in the right way, we could get through it,” she says. The couple went to counseling and therapy, but there was no reconciling the relationship.

Erin’s parents, Art and Alma, who are members of Bethel Mennonite Church in Winnipeg, say they didn’t have any idea that she was suffering from a gender-identity crisis. It was a complete shock when she came out to them when she was 38.

“I had no idea how they were going to respond,” Erin says. “My mom said, ‘You mean you’re a woman trapped in a man’s body? . . . What can we do to support you?’”

Art says they never had the closest relationship with Erin but never understood why. “Imagine misdiagnosing the real gender of your own child,” he says. “Now that the mask is off, we are proud parents to a daughter we can finally embrace. We’ve always misunderstood her,” he says.

Metamorphosis

For trans people, hormone therapy is one of the first steps in the process of transitioning into one’s true self. The same was true for Erin after she came out to her family.

She eased into it by taking testosterone blockers and small doses of estrogen.

“It’s a rather strange experience to go through a second puberty at 38,” she says. “This time, it was the right puberty. My skin softened, my breasts were growing and I grew my hair out. But more importantly, I felt an inner calm I’d never known before.”

Obvious changes to secondary sex characteristics aside, Erin says equally important psychological changes were taking place.

Before she began taking estrogen, she says paying attention was very difficult.

“It was like standing on one side of a busy road and trying to hear a bird sing,” she says. “Everything I did demanded all of my attention and all of my energy. A few months after starting hormone replacement therapy, I realized I was able to focus my thoughts in a way I was never able to before.”

“The dysphoria I felt was beginning to ease and as my mind relaxed, the noise in my head quietened. It felt as though the traffic had ceased and I could hear the

bird without effort or strain.”

The pieces started to come together, but there were still problems. Erin says there was also a gap between how she imagined herself and how she looked. Her masculine-looking face was especially difficult for her to look at. “I would shower in the dark, shave in the dark to avoid looking at myself,” she says.

For Erin, it was important to correct the incongruence she felt between mind and body before feeling comfortable presenting herself to the world in an authentic way. In 2013, she traveled with her parents to Thailand to undergo facial feminization surgery. And in 2014 she underwent sexual reassignment surgery in Montreal, again with her parents by her side.

“I often think of Erin as a butterfly,” Alma says. “Erin is a beautiful butterfly, testing her wings in what sometimes seems to be an unforgiving world.”

The need for support

Throughout the process, Art and Alma attended Bethel Mennonite Church and participated in its Pilgrim Group, a support group for lesbian/gay/bisexual/transgender/queer (LGBTQ) people and their families and friends. In turn, they found the strength to support their daughter through her transition process of taking off a proverbial mask.

Erin, who has not felt comfortable in the Mennonite church for many years, compares her transition to being a prisoner who has been kept in solitary confinement for her whole life. “Suddenly one day the jailer unlocks the door and says, ‘Here, you’re free to go,’” she says. “To the prisoner who hasn’t known anything other than a life lived in a horrible dark cell, how would they know how to go out and explore the world like everyone else?” While Mennonite Church Canada is currently discerning issues of sexuality through its Being a Faithful Church process, Art and Alma believe that people suffering from gender crises need particular support.

“I feel it’s imperative that the church learns to treat transgender people, as well as homosexual people, as normal human beings who happen to have a birth variance,” Alma says. “They need to be accepted, affirmed, loved and encouraged in life, just like anyone else.”

“Our diversity isn’t an ethical or moral issue,” Erin says. “It’s just what is.”

Finding a Space *Jonathan Bay*



I’ve been privileged to grow up in California and marry into a Brethren family from La Verne. This has directly shaped my experience of being trans within the Church of the Brethren. I say this to situate myself within the wider church and the world. I grew up in a Californian conservative family that was not particularly religious but attended a Presbyterian church throughout my life. When I went off to college I left the church emotionally and physically feeling it had become a close-minded, uncreative and unquestioning space as the church had forced out a really liberal minister.

My first introduction to the Brethren was theological discussions with my then best friend and now partner. She spoke of a church that let her create her own baptismal vows, a church that believed in peace and social justice. This intrigued me as I had never heard of church like this. A year later when I came out as trans and wanted to get together with her, it was her faith and belief that God loves everyone that led her to say yes. I had never seen faith work this way. I didn’t just see this in her alone. When we would visit her family and go to church during the beginning stages of my transition, I was always met with love and support. Much of this I didn’t notice because it was seamless, but simple things like getting my name and pronoun right created a safe and validating space for me.

I was drawn to the authenticity of the people, the pacifism and the social justice work; mostly I felt like I could be myself with this congregation.

After my undergraduate degree finished in 2010, I decided to go into Brethren Volunteer Service (BVS). I didn’t know how supportive BVS would be as I had been exposed to the complicated relationship that the church has with LGBT folk through several Annual Conferences that I attended with my now family. I was drawn to the church even though I knew that my identity complicated my involvement. These fears were unfounded and I happily found a supportive space of individuals who wanted me to be me, wanted me to feel safe and wanted to help me serve others. I spent a year serving in rural eastern Ohio. A rewarding and challenging experience that I have been very happy to have. It both challenged and grew my faith in ways that I am still understanding.

During this year of service, I attended Young Adult conference and began working towards involvement on a denominational level. I was very apprehensive about this because I had never done any sort of leadership but also I knew that my identity and the church I was a member of would complicate my role. I became a part of the Young Adult Steering Committee and worked hard to help represent progressive voices and give them spaces at a time when these spaces weren’t readily available. I think I became a bit too loud or a bit too strong willed and eventually ended my commitment early. I had also moved abroad for an indeterminate amount of time. My goal the entire time, and still, is to help young people, particularly young queer folk, find their voice and empower them or create much needed space for their voices.

After finding a bit of a struggle with denominational leadership, I started working with Womaen’s Caucus in 2013. This work has proved interesting and helpful. It has linked me to more progressives and has helped me understand some of the workings of the church. I also am encouraged by like-minded people and empowered. It feels the opposite of working on the steering committee. It feels like what originally drew me to the church and that is a good thing.

I know that my story is a bit different as I did not grow up Brethren. I feel very lucky that I did not ever receive any anti-LGBT church rhetoric growing up either and have only experienced that at Annual Conference.

In the winter of 2012 after moving to Scotland late that summer, my wife and I started attending a church

listed as LGBT friendly. This church has changed how I understand the term “open and affirming”. Augustine United Church is not a Brethren church, it has a congregational model and is part of the United Reformed Church, a UK wide denomination of merged sects. I do not always agree with the theology, but have learned some valuable things about being a welcoming church. The value of language is too often ignored. When I can see myself, or someone like me in leadership, it helps me understand that I am truly a child of God, that I am included. When my identity is reflected in liturgy or music, I do not have to do

extra work to understand I am created in the image of God. I think that having a dedicated space for LGBT folk is also important. But interestingly, when a church opens itself to LGBT folk there are many other things that happen; AUC is also mental health affirming, and incredibly social justice oriented, most importantly we are focused on letting people use their gifts. It feels incredible to be celebrated. I look forward to a day when all of us can be celebrated within the Church of the Brethren for who we are in this moment.

But when you hear the same stories over and over again, from people from all over the world, you start realizing that transgender is not an anomaly. It's a part of the spectrum of people's realities. Then you stop wondering about the cause and you start realizing it's a part of reality.

—SUSAN KUKLIN,
Beyond Magenta: Transgender Teens Speak Out

SUPPORT AND RESPONSE

Congregations and Communities

There are many ways that congregations can support and respond to transgender members. The recommendations below are adapted from *TransAction: A Transgender Curriculum For Churches and Religious Institutions* and Metropolitan Community Church resources. The celebration ceremony included comes from Calgary Inter-Mennonite Church.

Facilities

Does the building your congregation or community uses have gender neutral bathrooms? If there are single-stall restrooms, are they currently gendered? If not, make them gender-neutral by using a sign like the one to the right.



Do gender non-conforming children have access to toys and activities that make them feel safe and comfortable?

Language

Assess what language is used to describe God. Does this language go beyond simply alternating between she/her and he/him pronouns? Does the imagery surrounding God reflect feminine, masculine, androgynous, etc. characteristics?

What language is used to describe people? If phrases such as “both genders,” “men and women” are used try switching to “all genders” or “people of all genders.”

If your congregation uses name tags, consider adding pronouns underneath the name to accommodate people who do not use she/her or he/him pronouns. Make a regular practice of asking new visitors and members what their pronouns are.

Policies

What are your congregation’s hiring practices? Is

gender identity included in non-discrimination statements or policies?

On forms (such as applications, sign-up sheets, retreat registration, etc.), are there more than two options for gender?

Are retreats, children’s programming and education, bible studies, Sunday school etc. separated by gender? If so, consider the ways that this excludes trans and gender non-conforming people and what steps you can make to change that. If there is still a need felt for gender-segregated spaces, make sure trans people are included according to their gender identity and not their assigned sex.

Political and Social Action

Engage with local LGBTQ groups and find out ways your congregation can support them. For example, some LGBTQ centers need donations of clothing, toiletries, etc. for trans youth who do not have access to clothing that reflects their gender identity. Consider doing a clothing or funding drive to support them.

Learn about local laws that affect transgender people such as: hate crimes, name changes, gender markers on legal documents, and employment non-discrimination.

Support ecumenical and denominational organizations such as BMC and the Institute for Welcoming Resources financially.

Outreach and Public Welcome

Be explicit and public in your welcome of trans people. Make sure to include transgender realities and people in curriculum, sermons, hymns and other rituals. In publications and online, publicly state your welcome of LGBTQ people.

Give trans people leadership positions in the church and include their gifts into the life of the congregation.

Ritual

During the service, include the gifts of the trans people in your congregation.

In music, separate the parts of hymns and other songs by part (bass, tenor, soprano and alto), instead of by gender.

Include trans people in the stories, pictures and illustrations that you use during worship.

Consider dedicating a service to National Trans Day of Remembrance in November. Trans Faith Online has worship resources available specifically for Trans Day of Remembrance.

When a member of the congregation comes out as trans and wishes to be referred to by a different name, consider doing a naming or celebration ceremony. The liturgy on the next page is a celebration service performed at Calgary Inter-Mennonite in Calgary, Alberta.

Other examples of naming ceremonies can be found under the following links:

Liturgical Naming Rite for a Transgender Church Member

Nadia Bolz-Weber, House for All Sinners and Saints

Transgender Renaming Service

Many Voices: A Black Church Movement for Gay and Transgender Justice

Liturgy for Blessing of Transgender Transformation

Rainbow Community Cares

Naming/Christening Service Matrix

Rainbow Community Cares

A Transgender Naming Ceremony

Reverend Fred L. Hammold, Unitarian Universalist

Spiritual Resources

Below are further resources that look specifically at Biblical passages and the inclusion of transgender people in the church at large:

Transgender Welcome: A Bishop Makes the Case

for Affirmation

Bishop Gene Robinson, Center for American Progress

TransAction: A Transgender Curriculum for Churches and Religious Institutions

Institute for Welcoming Resources

Many Voices: A Black Church Movement for Gay and Transgender Justice

Gender Identity and Our Faith Communities: A Congregational Guide for Transgender Advocacy

Human Rights Campaign

Gender Identity and Our Faith Communities: Audio Files of Dramatic Readings

Human Rights Campaign

Full links for all these resources are available in the comprehensive list of resources at the end of this booklet.

Honoring and celebrating Karen

Calgary Inter-Mennonite Church

Brenda Dyck and Corey Herlevsen

July 24, 2015

Brenda (pastor): Besides being a community who likes to party, tonight we have gathered with a special cause, to honour and celebrate Karen and her transition, her crossing over time into a new life as a new person. Four years ago, a person came to our faith community having first checked us out on our website, attracted by our affirmation of persons who identify as LGBTQ. A year later as part of a transgender education series, this person shared with the community their spiritual journey as a transgender person, the joys, the pain, the fears, the relief of being true to oneself. Today, on behalf of TOGETHER and CIM, Corey, Gary and I want to pay tribute to the gifts that person we now know as Karen has brought to us and our faith community. Karen, when you shared your story with me at the Joshua Tree Café, I was moved by your honesty, courage and vulnerability. I felt as if I had been handed a precious treasure.... which was true. From that experience and as I have come to know you, I realize that I and CIM had been greatly honored by your trust in us, your belief that we were up to being your community of faith. As you sorted through how you would tell your children, your father and your siblings, I was aware how carefully, that is how full of care you were approaching these people whom you loved with news that might surprise and distress them. You did this disclosing with such integrity, for example, sending a letter to your dad so that he had time to process a bit before you arrived at the family gathering. Finally when you ended your talk to us, three years ago, with your wonderful dry humour, you gave us a “heads up” and said, “The next time you see me, you may not recognize me.” When Art and I attended the Day of Remembrance ceremony at Outlink November 2014, I saw how you had found a place of belonging and service in the transgender community and in the broader Calgary community, and noticed the love and respect you were shown there. Thank you, Karen, from all of us, for trusting us enough to take us along on your journey with its challenges and joys. It has been a privilege and a delight to witness your transformation. You have blessed us with your grace and your dignity. You have found a place in the CIM faith community and in our hearts.

Corey’s Blessing: This is a celebration tonight and, exactly because it’s a celebration it is also a holy evening. We want to take a moment to specifically pray blessings upon Karen. For me, and for us as a faith community, we felt that rooting tonight’s celebration into the ancient/future faith we try to be part of and embody would be very appropriate.

The ancient Hebrew community had a series of 18 daily prayers called the *berekah* each of which would start with the formula, in Hebrew,

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם

(Blessed are You, Lord our God sovereign of the universe)

Each specific prayer after that was intended towards gratefulness for who the individuals and the community were as well as gratefulness towards the God who had brought them to each milestone on their journeys toward becoming. I will read just a couple of these out and when I pause I would like for us as a community to respond with an “amen”...

Blessed are You, Eternal One, our God, Ruler of Time and Space, the Transforming One for those who transition... for being powerfully present during Karen’s transition (amen)

Blessed are You, Eternal One, our God Ruler of Time and Space who has made each of us, as we truly are, in God’s image...for making Karen in your image, she reflects you beautifully (amen)

Blessed are You, Eternal One, our God Ruler of Time and Space who has kept us alive and sustained us and helped us to arrive at this moment who has helped Karen arrive at this moment (amen)

For the gift of who Karen has been, is, and will be amongst us as a community we say... (amen)

Corey: Karen, we have a gift for you to mark this milestone in your life and your spiritual journey. As you know, every year in January we celebrate our

life in community, with stories, symbols, songs and rituals. This year as our ritual we chose rocks, stones which were gathered from a river bed. Reflecting the OT practice of building stone altars when and where they experienced God, together we built a stone altar – a collective milestone and touchstone which reflected our thoughts and feelings and added them to the community. We took time to reflect upon and paint the stones. Then we added words describing what we had received at Calgary Inter-Mennonite Church. Some of the stones have been here tonight for people to see and think about.

Brenda: Our gift to you is a pair of amethyst geodes made into book-ends. Geodes are ordinary looking rocks, often spherical in shape and hollow-sounding when you tap them. They are rough and ordinary looking on the outside but when you crack them open they have crystals inside, which have been formed when mineral-rich water fills the cavity of a rock.

Corey: As you might guess, besides its natural beauty, we chose it also for its symbolic value. Amethyst comes in shades of purple, an important colour in the LGBTQ community, particularly in the western hemisphere, a colour which symbolizes magic, mystery, spirituality, the sub-conscious, creativity, dignity, royalty.

Brenda: Here is some of the mythology surrounding this beautiful stone. Whether factual or not, there are some lovely and intriguing possibilities...Amethyst is a stone which from the earliest known Greek tradition has been worn to guard against drunkenness and to instill a sober mind. The word amethyst comes from the Greek meaning “without drunkenness.” It is also used to help insomnia and create good dreams.

Corey: The amethyst is known as the Bishop’s Stone and is still worn by Catholic Bishops. The amethyst symbolizes piety, humility, sincerity and spiritual wisdom.

Brenda: Amethyst is considered a royal stone and features prominently, for example, in the British Crown jewels.

Corey: A gemstone often worn by healers, amethyst purportedly has the power to focus energy.

Brenda: What was compelling for us was the reality that this geode appeared to be an ordinary stone and yet when it was cracked open, its hidden beauty and treasure were revealed.

Corey: Karen, we want you to take this to your home as a gift from Calgary Inter-Mennonite, a milestone and a touchstone for this important time in your life and a reminder that you are a valued member of this faith community.

Brenda: Now, for the community piece. We will pass these stones around and as each person holds one of the stones, silently please offer a blessing for Karen. The stones will carry these blessings to Karen’s home.

Parents, Friends & Family

This section will include BMC’s recommendations, as well as other places to find resources and learn how to better support your transgender family member or friend. The outside resources provided do not necessarily reflect all the beliefs of BMC.

Initial Coming Out

When your family member or friend comes out to you as transgender, express support and admiration for their identity and expression. Ask what they need from you and what you can do to accommodate any changes they will be making. In this stage, if you have questions about transgender identities in general, try consulting books and online resources instead of placing the burden of your education on your family member or friend.

Many parents and family experience grief when their family member comes out as transgender. In *The Transgender Child: A Handbook for Families and Professionals*, authors Stephanie Brill and Rachel Pepper recommend returning “to your philosophical foundation of parenting...When you approach your struggles around your child’s gender by remembering that love, support, compassion, empathy, and protection of your children are a parent’s solemn responsibility, it becomes easier to progress.”¹ Brill and Pepper also recommend thinking about the dreams parents have for their children and letting go of the ones tied to gender, “When parents let go of dreams for their child, they often realize that their truest hopes and dreams for their child remain the same.”²

As you process your family member’s coming out, make sure you are doing so in healthy ways. Keeping communication open and being honest are important to that process, as well as space and time to adjust. Writing and talking with other people who have transgender family members may help your during this time, as well as educating yourself about transgender identities and issues.

Language

There are many different words that transgender people use to describe themselves. It is always best to use the term preferred by the person you are speaking about. You can also refer to the “Defining a Common Language” section of this booklet to educate yourself about the definitions of some of these terms and what terms to avoid.

Respect your family member’s or friend’s chosen

name and use the pronouns they prefer. If you slip up, apologize and correct yourself. It may take some time to use your family

member’s new name and pronouns, so do not be too critical of yourself, but make a consistent effort to use the correct name and pronouns. If you hear someone else using the wrong name or pronouns, correct them, even if the transgender person they are speaking about is not in the room. If you have difficulty changing your speech, try practicing on your own or with a partner, such as a therapist, spouse, sibling, or another family member. Express non-tolerance for transphobic jokes and slurs used by your family and friends. Hold other family members and friends accountable for using the correct name and pronouns.

When speaking about someone’s gender identity and sex, try to consistently use the language of “assigned sex” rather than terms like “biological,” “male- or female-bodied” or other terms. Using assigned sex and the related acronyms (see “assigned sex” in the “Defining a Common Language” section) allows you to talk about sex and gender without making assumptions about a person’s current body and identity while also accommodating intersex people.

Community & Role Models

Find a local trans or LGBTQ organization where you can meet other families with trans or gender non-conforming children. Try to connect your child with an older trans person who can act as a mentor or role model. Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (PFLAG) has local chapters where you may be able to connect with other families with trans and gender non-conforming youth. Gender Spectrum, a non-profit based in the Bay Area, has two free call-in





support groups that meet once a month. One is in English and the other is in Spanish. For more information, visit <https://www.gender-spectrum.org/we-can-help/>.

Trans Mentors International may also be able to connect you with other families in your area. They also have online support groups on Facebook. For more information, visit their website at <http://transmentors.org/>.

If you are in school or college, look into LGBTQ groups (such as a Gay Straight Alliance) that may offer trainings or seminars about gender identity. If you are trans, this may be a good place to connect with other trans and LGBTQ people and to form a community for yourself.

You can also attend a BMC Connecting Families retreat or contact a chapter near you. For more information about Connecting Families, visit bmclgbt.org/connectingfamilies.

It is also important to make books, movies and other media that feature transgender people accessible for your child or family member. Below is a list of recommended books and movies:

Children’s Books

10,000 Dresses by Marcus Ewert
Dogs Don’t Do Ballet by Anna Kemp
I Am Jazz by Jessica Herthel and Jazz Jennings
My Princess Boy by Cheryl Kilodavis and Suzanne DeSimone
You’re Different and That’s Super by Carson Kressley and Jared Lee
Tutus Aren’t My Style by Linda Skeers
Backwards Day By S. Bear Bergman
Be Who You Are by Jennifer Carr
A Different Kind of Life by Katie Leone

Young Adult Books

One in Every Crowd by Ivan Coyote (gender non-conforming)
First Spring Grass Fire by Rae Spoon
George by Alex Gino
Choir Boy by Charlie Anders
Some Assembly Required by Arin Andrews
Rethinking Normal by Katie Rain Hill
Beyond Magenta: Transgender Teens Speak Out, edited by

Susan Kuklin
The Gender Quest Workbook by Rylan Jay Testa and Deborah Coolhart
Lizard Radio by Pat Schmatz
Parrotfish by Ellen Wittlinger
Luna by Julie Ann Peters
Tomboy by Liz Prince (gender non-conforming)
Being Emily by Rachel Gold

The memoirs *Rethinking Normal* and *Some Assembly Required* are great for parents to read as well as young adults. The back of each of those books also features a list of resources and recommendations for further reading.

Other Books

The Collection: Short Fiction from the Transgender Vanguard, edited by Riley MacLeod & Tom Léger
Gender Outlaw by Kate Bornstein
Redefining Realness: My Path to Womanhood, Identity, Love & So Much More by Janet Mock
She’s Not There: A Life in Two Genders by Jennifer Finney Boylan
Trans Bodies, Trans Selves: A Resource for the Transgender Community, edited by Laura Erikson-Schroth

Movies, Documentaries and TV Shows

A Girl Like Me. Dir. Agnieszka Holland, Lifetime. (2006)
Boys Don’t Cry. Dir. Kimberly Peirce, Fox Searchlight. (1999)
The Danish Girl. Dir. Tom Hooper, Working Title Films. (2015)
Ma Vie en Rose. Dir. Alain Berliner, Sony. (1997)
Tangerine. Dir. Sean Baker, Magnolia Pictures. (2015)
Tomboy. Dir. Céline Sciamma, Hold Up Films. (2011).
Transparent. Amazon Studios. (2014-present)
Becoming Chaz. Dir. Fenton Bailey, World of Wonder. (2011)
Growing Up Trans. Dir. Miri Navasky, Karen O’Connor, PBS Frontline. (2015).
I Am Jazz. The Learning Channel. (2015)
On the Male Side of Middle. Dir. Paul Neudorf, YouTube. (2011)
Transgeneration. World of Wonder. (2005).
The Trans List. Dir. Timothy Greenfield-Sanders, HBO. (2016).

For a complete list of books and resources, look at the resources section at the back of this booklet.

Transition and Medical Issues

There are many issues to consider when seeking transition-related healthcare for your child or family

member. This section will not be detailed, but will just offer some general recommendations and considerations. If you are seeking more specific or detailed information, read *The Transgender Child*, or use one of the resources included in this list:

- Many pediatric doctors receive little to no formal training on the subject of gender variance and transgender issues, so it is important to seek a doctor that is knowledgeable.
- When looking for a doctor, pay attention to red flags, such as the doctor advising you to discipline your child for their gender variance, thinking that your child is too young to know their gender identity, or that you are wrong for supporting your child or family member’s gender expression.
- Seek community and ask other people for recommendations for knowledgeable doctors in your area.
- Gender Spectrum has many different resources available and is in the process of compiling a list of knowledgeable doctors. Visit their website <https://www.genderspectrum.org/explore-topics/medical/> for more information.
- Lambda Legal’s website also provides many resources for transition and medical issues. Visit <http://www.lambdalegal.org/know-your-rights/transgender/transition-related-care-faq>.
- *Transition and Beyond, Observations On Gender Identity* by Reid Vangerburgh explores many different topics related to transition.
- *Transgeneration*, directed by Jeremy Simmons, is a documentary series about four college students who are in the process of transition.
- Many independent creators have documented their transition stories on YouTube. Searching “transition ftm,” “transition mtf” or a variant of that should bring up several videos. These may help you and your family member to better understand transition and what it may look like.

Long-Term Coming Out & Disclosure

Coming out is not a one-time conversation or event and is heavily influenced by other factors in a transgender person’s life, including marital status, occupation, race and ethnicity, class, sexual orientation, and gender. It’s important to remember the complexity of coming out. If a family member or child has recently come out, here are some things to keep in mind:

- Negotiating how and when coming out or disclosure will happen is an important part of this

process. If you wish to tell someone else about your family member or friend’s gender identity, be sure to discuss it with them beforehand. Try to think of different scenarios where their gender identity may come up and ask them how they would like to see you respond.

- Sometimes a letter, to a teacher, doctor, another family member, etc. is helpful before having an in-person conversation.
- Set boundaries for siblings and other family members and friends as they learn about the gender identity of their transgender family member or friend. This will look different for different groups of people, but consider discussing how to respond to different situations that may come up, what jokes and teasing will not be tolerated, and the different ways to support them.



Gender Expression

Allowing your transgender child or family member to express their gender in the ways they desire is instrumental to supporting them. If possible, give them access to the clothes, accessories, activities, etc. that reflect the ways they see themselves. Do not try to change, demean or constrict their gender expression. This goes beyond simply allowing them to wear the clothes they want to wear; pay attention to the ways you respond to gender non-conforming behavior such as voice patterns and mannerisms and learn ways to become affirmative instead of restrictive or driven by fear.

In *Trans Bodies, Trans Selves*, Arwyn Daemyir recommends to parents to “Assign gender provisionally... Show them the full spectrum of gender... Fill their gender tool box with as much diversity as possible... Play with gender and encourage your children to play with gender... Accept them—whoever they are.”³

If a close friend has recently come out to you as transgender or is gender non-conforming, affirm their gender expression and create spaces where they feel safe and comfortable expressing their gender.

RESOURCES

This section includes all the resources listed throughout the booklet, so you do not have to go back to that specific section to find the resource you’re looking for. There are also several other resources included in this that are not included elsewhere in the booklet.

Trans Bodies, Trans Selves: A Resource for the Transgender Community is a comprehensive resource that includes information about basic terms, health, transitioning, life stages, intersectionality, relationships, employment, coming out and more. If you have more specific questions about any given topic concerning transgender communities, people and identities, check to see if your local library has *Trans Bodies, Trans Selves* or purchase a personal copy.

Children’s Books

Bergman, S. Bear. *Backwards Day*. Flamingo Rampant, 2012. Print.

Carr, Jennifer. *Be Who You Are*. Author House, 2010. Print.

Ewert, Marcus, and Rex Ray. *10,000 Dresses*. New York: Seven Stories, 2008. Print.

Herthel, Jessica, and Jazz Jennings. *I Am Jazz*. New York: Dial, 2014. Print.

Kemp, Anna, and Sara Ogilvie. *Dogs Don’t Do Ballet*. London: Simon & Schuster Children’s, 2010. Print.

Kilodavis, Cheryl, and Suzanne DeSimone. *My Princess Boy: A Mom’s Story About a Young Boy Who Loves to Dress up*. New York: Aladdin, 2011. Print.

Kressley, Carson, and Jared D. Lee. *You’re Different and That’s Super*. New York: Simon & Schuster for Young Readers, 2005. Print.

Leone, Katie. *A Different Kind of Life*. CreateSpace, 2012. Print.

Skeers, Linda, and Anne Wilsdorf. *Tutus Aren’t My Style*. New York: Dial for Young Readers, 2010. Print.

Young Adult Books

Anders, Charlie. *Choir Boy*. Brooklyn, NY: Soft Skull, 2005. Print.

Andrews, Arin. *Some Assembly Required: The Not-so-secret Life of a Transgender Teen*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 2014. Print.

Coyote, Ivan E. *One in Every Crowd: Stories*. Vancouver, BC: Arsenal Pulp, 2012. Print.

Gino, Alex. *George*. New York: Scholastic, 2015. Print.

Gold, Rachel. *Being Emily*. Tallahassee, FL: Bella Books, 2012. Print.

Hill, Katie Rain. *Rethinking Normal: A Memoir in Transition*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 2014. Print.

Kuklin, Susan. *Beyond Magenta: Transgender Teens Speak Out*. Sommerville, MA: Candlewick, 2014. Print.

Peters, Julie Anne. *Luna*. New York: Little, Brown for Young Readers, 2008. Print.

Prince, Liz. *Tomboy: A Graphic Novel*. San Francisco: Zest Books, 2014. Print.

Schmatz, Pat. *Lizard Radio*. Sommerville, MA: Candlewick, 2015. Print.

Spoon, Rae. *First Spring Grass Fire*. Vancouver, BC: Arsenal Pulp, 2012. Print.

Testa, Rylan Jay, Deborah Coolhart, and Jayme Peta. *The Gender Quest Workbook: A Guide for Teens & Young Adults Exploring Gender Identity*. Oakland: Instant Help, 2015. Print.

Wittlinger, Ellen. *Parrotfish*. New York: Simon & Schuster for Young Readers, 2007. Print.

Books for Parents

Brill, Stephanie A., and Rachel Pepper. *The Transgender Child*. San Francisco, CA: Cleis, 2008. Print.

Brill, Stephanie A., and Lisa Kenney. *The Transgender Teen*. San Francisco, CA: Cleis, 2016. Print.

Duron, Lori. *Raising My Rainbow: Adventures in Raising a Fabulous, Gender Creative Son*. New York: Broadway Books, 2013. Print.

Ehrensaft, Diane. *The Gender Creative Child: Pathways for Nurturing and Supporting Children Who Live outside Gender Boxes*. New York: Experiment, 2016. Print.

Orr, Asaf, and Joel Baum. “Schools in Transition: A Guide for Supporting Transgender Students in K-12 Schools.” *Gender Spectrum* Ed. Beth Sherouse. Gender Spectrum, 2016. Web. <https://www.genderspectrum.org/staging/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/Schools_In_Transition_6.3.16.pdf>.

Solomon, Andrew. *Far From the Tree: Parents, Children and the Search for Identity*. New York: Scribner, 2013. Print.

General Books

Bornstein, Kate. *Gender Outlaw: On Men, Women, and the Rest of Us*. New York: Routledge, 1994. Print.

Boylan, Jennifer Finney. *She’s Not There: A Life in Two Genders*. New York: Broadway, 2003. Print.

Cotten, Trystan T., ed. *Transgender Migrations: The Bodies, Borders, and Politics of Transition*. New York: Routledge, 2012. Print.

Currah, Paisley, Richard M. Juang, and Shannon Minter, eds. *Transgender Rights*. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota, 2006. Print.

Enke, Anne. *Transfeminist Perspectives: In and beyond Transgender and Gender Studies*. Philadelphia: Temple UP, 2012. Print.

Léger, Tom, and Riley MacLeod, eds. *The Collection*.

New York: Topside, 2012. Print.

Mock, Janet. *Redefining Realness: My Path to Womanhood, Identity, Love & So Much More*. New York: Atria, 2014. Print.

Mollenkott, Virginia R., and Vanessa Sheridan *Transgender Journeys*. Eugene, OR: Resource Publications, 2010. Print.

Serano, Julia. *Whipping Girl a Transsexual Woman on Sexism and the Scapegoating of Femininity*. Seattle, WA: Seal, 2007. Print.

Teich, Nicholas M. *Transgender 101: A Simple Guide to a Complex Issue*. New York: Columbia UP, 2012. Print.

Vanderburgh, Reid. *Transition and Beyond: Observations on Gender Identity*. Portland, OR: Q, 2007. Print.

Walker, Alexander, and Emmett J. P. Lundberg. *Finding Masculinity: Female to Male Transition in Adulthood*. Riverdale, NY: Magnus, 2015. Print.

Movies/TV Shows

A Girl Like Me. Dir. Agnieszka Holland, Lifetime. (2006)

Boys Don’t Cry. Dir. Kimberly Peirce, Fox Searchlight. (1999)

The Danish Girl. Dir. Tom Hooper, Working Title Films. (2015)

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The Aggressives. Dir. Daniel Peddle. (2005).

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The Trans List. Dir. Timothy Greenfield-Sanders, HBO (2016).

Three to Infinity: Beyond Two Genders. Dir. Lonny Shavelson. (2015).

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Websites
BMC Connecting Families
bmcglt.org/connectingfamilies

Connecting Families is a support network of Brethren and Mennonite persons committed to providing mutual support for families with gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, or intersex member(s).

Ash Hardell (YouTube Channel)
https://www.youtube.com/user/HeyThere005
Ash Hardell is the author of *The ABC's LGBT+* and their YouTube channel features educational videos, personal stories and other content related to lgbtq issues.

Gender Diversity
http://www.genderdiversity.org/
Gender Diversity increases the awareness and understanding of the wide range of gender variations in children, adolescents, and adults by providing family support, building community, increasing societal awareness, and improving the well-being for people of all gender identities and expressions.

Gender Spectrum
http://genderspectrum.org/
Gender Spectrum helps create gender sensitive and inclusive environments for all children and teens. Author Stephanie Brill is the Founder and Chair of the board.

Intersex Society of North America
http://www.isna.org/
The Intersex Society of North America (ISNA) is devoted to systemic change to end shame, secrecy,

and unwanted genital surgeries for people born with an anatomy that someone decided is not standard for male or female.

Lambda Legal
http://www.lambdalegal.org/issues/transgender-rights
Lambda Legal is the oldest and largest U.S. legal organization whose mission is to achieve full recognition of the civil rights of lesbians, gay men, bisexuals, transgender people and those with HIV through impact litigation, education and public policy work.

National Center for Transgender Equality
http://www.transequality.org/
The National Center for Transgender Equality is the United States' leading social justice advocacy organization winning life-saving change for transgender people.

PFLAG
https://www.pflag.org/
Founded in 1972 with the simple act of a mother publicly supporting her gay son, PFLAG is the U.S.' largest family and ally organization.

Philadelphia Trans-Health Conference
https://www.mazzonicenter.org/trans-health
The mission of the Philadelphia Trans Health Conference (PTHC) is to educate and empower trans individuals on issues of health and well-being; educate and inform allies and health service providers; and facilitate networking, community-building, and systemic change.

Services and Advocacy for GLBT Elders
http://www.sageusa.org/
Services & Advocacy for GLBT Elders (SAGE) is the United States' largest and oldest organization dedicated to improving the lives of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) older adults.

Sylvia Rivera Law Project
http://srlp.org/
The Sylvia Rivera Law Project (SRLP) works to guarantee that all people are free to self-determine their gender identity and expression, regardless of income or race, and without facing harassment, discrimination, or violence.

Trans Active Online
https://www.transactiveonline.org
TransActive Gender Center provides a holistic range of services and expertise to empower transgender and gender diverse children, youth and their families in living healthy lives, free of

discrimination.

Trans LifeLine
http://www.translifeline.org/
Trans Lifeline is a non-profit dedicated to the wellbeing of transgender people. Trans Lifeline runs a hotline staffed by transgender people for transgender people.

Trans Mentors International
http://transmentors.org/
TransMentors International is a non-profit organization founded in 2009 which provides aid, support and assistance to Trans-identified individuals.

Trans People of Color Coalition
http://transpoc.org/
Trans People of Color Coalition exists to advance justice for all trans people of color. They amplify stories, support leadership, and challenge issues of racism, transphobia, and trans misogyny.

Trans Youth Family Allies
http://www.imatyfa.org/
TYFA empowers children and families by partnering with educators, service providers and communities, to develop supportive environments in which gender may be expressed and respected.

TONI Project
http://www.transstudents.org/
The TONI Project is an online resource for trans people to share information about policies and practices at colleges and universities across the country. Prospective students can use TONI to explore the schools they are applying to, and current students and allies can discover new ideas for organizing and transforming their campuses.

UndocuQueer
http://equalityarchive.com/issues/undocuqueer-movement/
The UndocuQueer movement is a potent network of queer undocumented immigrant activists organizing for the rights of undocumented youth and their families.

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