

Tips for a Trans-Affirming Church

Language

- Make your language sensitive to the experiences of transgender people.

Instead of ...	Try this ...
Pregnant women	Pregnant people
Feminine hygiene products	Menstrual products
People who are biologically male/biologically female	People who have penises/vulvas
Born male/born female	Assigned male at birth/assigned female at birth
Male/female choir members	Sopranos, altos, tenors, and basses

- Make your language more gender neutral when speaking to a group:

Instead of ...	Try this ...
Brothers and sisters in Christ	Siblings in Christ
Ladies and gentlemen	Distinguished guests
Boys and girls	Children

- Make your language more gender neutral when speaking to or about a nonbinary person (remember to ask people for their preferences when using language that specifically refers to them):

Instead of ...	Try this ...
She/her or he/him	(Singular) they/them or zie/zer
Ms. or Mr.	Mx. or scrap the use of honorifics
Mother or father	Parent
Brother or sister	Sibling
Son or daughter	Child or adult child or offspring
Niece or Nephew	Nibling (yes, this is a real word)
Aunt or Uncle	Aunkle (this is a word we made up)
Godmother or godfather	Godparent

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Pronouns and Names

- When meeting someone on an individual level, introduce yourself with your pronouns, and ask them what pronouns they would like you to use.
- When gathering in a group setting, give people the option to introduce themselves with their pronouns.
- When a person has adopted a new name or pronouns, it may take you a while to adjust. If you do make a mistake, simply say the correct name/pronoun and then move on. If you really feel the need to apologise, a simple "sorry" will do, but a long, drawn out apology is unnecessary and emotionally cumbersome.
- Practice using a person's new name and pronouns by making an effort to use them when you think of that person, or when talking about them to another person. Simply practicing while the person in question is not around will make it easier the next time you interact with them..
- Never tell someone that you don't like their new name. Think about it—you would never say this to someone still using their birth name.
- Never tell someone their use of the singular they/them is grammatically incorrect. The rules of grammar can be broken for the sake of someone's basic human dignity.
- Never call someone "it" unless they explicitly request that you do. Otherwise, this is dehumanising.

Church Structure

- If there are groups in your church that are gendered, such as a women's outreach group or a men's breakfast club, either de-gender the groups, or make sure there is a third gender-neutral option for nonbinary folks. Make it clear that trans women and trans men are welcome to join the groups that match their gender.
- If there are implicitly gendered groups at your church (for example, if your church's extreme skydiving group is comprised only of women) make it clear when advertising the group that all gendered are welcome.
- Make room for trans and nonbinary people in leadership positions:
 - If forms are required for certain leadership roles, they should be checked for barriers that might prevent trans and nonbinary people from applying. For example, if it requires the applicant check a box for their gender as either "male" or "female", either scrap this requirement or add in a third option (such as "please specify"). Make it clear on forms whether applicants must provide their legal name (for example, this might be necessary for the position of treasurer, who would be interacting with a bank), or if their real name is allowed.
 - Invite trans or nonbinary people to your church to guest preach.

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Washrooms

- Change the signs on all single-stall washrooms to gender neutral. Gendering single-stall washrooms is just pointless discrimination—after all, a single stall washroom just becomes the gender of whoever happens to be using it at the time.
- Make it clear that trans people are welcome to use the washroom that they feel most comfortable with, even if that washroom does not match their sex, gender identity, gender expression, or the sex designation on their ID. The majority of trans people have had negative experiences using washrooms—they know which one they feel the safest using. As a church, create a policy that explicitly allows trans people to use the washroom they feel most comfortable and safe using. Put this in your bulletin or visitors' information. Put signs on washrooms that say things like "trans people are welcome to use this washroom" – not only will this make trans people feel safer, it will also remind cis people to be courteous to those whose gender expression doesn't necessarily match the sign on the door.
- Make sure to have at least one washroom in your church building designated gender neutral. Most nonbinary people feel safest using gender neutral washrooms, and some binary transgender people prefer using gender neutral washrooms as well. A gender neutral washroom can be multi-stall—just make sure there is a stall around each toilet/urinal.
- Place disposal for menstrual products in all washrooms, regardless of the sign on the door.

Youth Outings & Church Retreats

- If headed on an overnight or multi-day excursion with teens, consult with them to see how to organise rooms/cabins/tents in the way that makes them most comfortable. It might be in the best interests of your church to create a policy wherein youth who are dating (regardless of gender) should not be sharing accommodations, where possible. It may not be possible in certain situations, such as when the entire youth group is crashing for the night on the church basement floor.
- Make a group covenant with your youth group. Include topics like respecting each others' privacy and creating a trans-affirming environment.
- If a church retreat is happening with adults/families, simply allow people to organise themselves into rooms/cabins/tents that they feel most comfortable in.
- If you're the only group at a location, re-label doors on washrooms to make sure there's one everyone can use.
- Plan ahead and book at locations that already have gender neutral options for washrooms/rooming and that have trans affirming policies.