

Presbytery of New Covenant Transgender Inclusion Policy

Statement of Inclusivity

The Presbytery of New Covenant strives to create a fully inclusive culture and environment that values equality and fosters respect for all people. We understand that Christian spirituality is a shared journey from which no one should be excluded. In alignment with our values, vision and mission, the Presbytery of New Covenant welcomes all persons of all sexual orientation or gender identities as full participants and leaders in all our programs.

As we work to welcome all on the journey of faith, we are committed to the following

- A person is taken at their word as to their identity.
- We affirm that a person's gender is more complex than what is physically recognizable.
- We will do what we can to be inclusionary and welcoming. This includes, but is not limited to, use of pronouns, bathroom facilities, and lodging.
- A person is welcome to use the lodging and bathroom facilities of the gender with which he/she/they identifies.

Regarding Youth

Youth is a time of exploration and identity formation. We aim to help our youth consider what it means to live a Christian life and how God is working in them in their congregation, at presbytery youth events, and in the world. We encourage our youth to develop self-confidence, embrace their creativity, explore their surroundings and create relationships with those who may be different from them.

During childhood and adolescence deeply held aspects such as one's gender or sexual orientation can be questioned. We believe that it is essential to allow children and youth to consider different identities in a safe and affirming environment. We embrace diversity and we welcome all children and youth to our programs and hope that through their experience, they will discover more about the person they are or want to become.

The arc of Scripture and the work and witness of Jesus Christ support accepting people as they are. There are people in Scripture who defy gender norms and are accepted, such as the eunuch who was baptized by Philip and is credited for starting the church in Ethiopia (Jesus also called for acceptance of eunuchs), as well as Deborah, the female judge and warrior. Just as Jesus called for the acceptance of these individuals, we welcome all LGBTQIA+ people to participate fully in our programs.

Guidelines for Youth Events

- We welcome and accommodate all people, and gender expressions.
- For registration purposed, parents/guardians determine and select the gender of their child during the registration process. If the parents/guardians are unaware their child has requested a different gender expression than they were registered with, staff will work with the child to accommodate them and make them feel comfortable. It is not the job of the staff to report this to the child's parents/guardians, but to support and encourage the youth participant.
- It is not required that the participant nor the parents/guardians inform us that their child is transgender, but it is preferred that the information be shared in advance. We want to be prepared and provide the most positive experience for the participant.
- Participants will be housed in rooms based on their gender expression. They also will use restrooms that correspond with the same.
 - If parents/guardians are aware of their child's gender expression and disagree with this policy, the staff will work with the parents/guardians to seek an option that will provide for the greatest emotional and physical safety of the child.
 - It is our practice that participants will change clothing privately. Nudity and disrobing in front of others is discouraged.
 - If another participant expresses discomfort with sharing space with a transgendered youth, that person can use a separate, private space. The transgender participant should be allowed to use the facilities they are comfortable with. The burden of prejudice should never rest on the child who is the target of that prejudice.
 - Some transgender youth may feel more comfortable housing with the gender that correlates with their full time presentation and identity, others with their assigned birth sex.
 - It is important to work with all of the participants to create an accommodation that best suits everyone. If parents/guardians of another participant express discomfort with sharing space with a transgender youth, staff should look for other lodging options so that child whose parents object can be housed in another space.
 - Parents/guardians of other participants will not be informed that their children are assigned to a lodging unit with a transgender youth. Participants are supervised at our youth activities, so that there are not any apparent safety concerns or legal issues regardless of which bunk a participant is assigned.

Training and Pronoun Usage

Staff training will include a session regarding transgender participants. This policy will be discussed, along with rationale and training for providing transgender guests (AND every guest) with an emotionally and physically safe environment. Staff will not discuss the gender of a participant in any situation where it is not pertinent or appropriate to do so. Calling attention to something that is particularly EXCLUSIVE is not in keeping with the INCLUSIVE nature of the environment we seek to create.

Staff and participants are encouraged to use the pronouns that reflect the gender that each individual identifies with when not using the person's name.

Summary

It is difficult to imagine all of the situations where what we have always done is limiting or exclusionary. This document is intended to be a map towards inclusion. As a presbytery we continue to strive to find ways to be as inclusive as possible for all God's children. This strategy will be reviewed by the General Council on a regular basis with input from all parties.