

LBGTQIA Welcome & Inclusion

Respecting the dignity
of every human being

Susan Russell | Spring 2021

Will you strive for justice and peace among all people,
and respect the dignity of every human being?

*“As the Episcopal branch of the Jesus Movement,
we dream and work to foster Beloved Communities
where all people may experience dignity and abundant life
and see themselves and others as beloved children of God.”*

What Does Welcome Look Like?



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Worship Info

Sunday Services are streamed at 11:15 a.m. (English) and 1:00 p.m. (Español/English).

Rector's Forums are also streamed most Sunday mornings at 10:00 a.m.

LGBTQ+ Affirming 

All Saints is an LGBTQ+ welcoming and affirming congregation.

[Read More](#)

LGBTQ+ Resources



All Saints Church has been in the forefront of the struggle for LGBTQ+ inclusion in our church and equality in our nation for decades. The following are some recommended resources for further reading, study and inspiration. Suggestions for additional resources are welcome and should be sent to info@allsaints-pas.org

Glossary

- Language changes. Some of the terms now in common usage are different from those used in the past to describe similar ideas, identities and experiences.
- Some people may continue to use terms that are less commonly used now to describe themselves, and some people may use different terms entirely.
- What's important is recognizing and respecting people as individuals.

Sex | Gender

- Sex refers to a person's biological status and is typically assigned at birth, usually on the basis of external anatomy.
- Sex is typically categorized as male, female or intersex.
- Gender is often defined as a social construct of norms, behaviors and roles that varies between societies and over time.
- Gender is often categorized as male, female or nonbinary.

Sexual Orientation

- Sexual orientation refers to the enduring physical, romantic and/or emotional attraction to members of the same and/or other genders, including lesbian, gay, bisexual and straight orientations.
- People don't need to have had specific sexual experiences to know their own sexual orientation. They need not have had any sexual experience at all. They need not be in a relationship, dating or partnered with anyone for their sexual orientation to be validated. For example, if a bisexual woman is partnered with a man, that does not mean she is not still bisexual.

Gender Identity | Gender Expression

- Gender identity is one's own internal sense of self and their gender, whether that is man, woman, neither or both. Unlike gender expression, gender identity is not outwardly visible to others.
- For most people, gender identity aligns with the sex assigned at birth, the American Psychological Association notes. For transgender people, gender identity differs in varying degrees from the sex assigned at birth.
- Gender expression is how a person presents gender outwardly, through behavior, clothing, voice or other perceived characteristics. Society identifies these cues as masculine or feminine, although what is considered masculine or feminine changes over time and varies by culture.

Examples

- **Cisgender**, or simply cis, is an adjective that describes a person whose gender identity aligns with the sex they were assigned at birth.
- **Transgender**, or simply trans, is an adjective used to describe someone whose gender identity differs from the sex assigned at birth. A transgender man, for example, is someone who was listed as female at birth but whose gender identity is male.
- Cisgender and transgender have their origins in Latin-derived prefixes of "cis" and "trans" — cis, meaning "on this side of" and trans, meaning "across from" or "on the other side of."

[Both adjectives are used to describe experiences of someone's gender identity.]

- **Nonbinary** is a term that can be used by people who do not describe themselves or their genders as fitting into the categories of man or woman. A range of terms are used to refer to these experiences; nonbinary and genderqueer are among the terms that are sometimes used.
- **Agender** is an adjective that can describe a person who does not identify as any gender.
- **Gender-expansive** is an adjective that can describe someone with a more flexible gender identity than might be associated with a typical gender binary.
- **Intersex** is an umbrella term used to describe people with differences in reproductive anatomy, chromosomes or hormones that don't fit typical definitions of male and female.

- **Queer** is not specific to sexual orientation or to gender identity but is more of an umbrella term for anything that exists outside of the dominant narrative. Originally pejorative for gay, it is now being reclaimed by some gay men, lesbians, bisexuals and transgender persons as a self-affirming umbrella term.
- You may also see the acronym **LGBTQIA**. The additional "IA" is added to include those who identify as intersex/ intergender and asexual. Some iterations of the acronym also add a "+" sign at the end, symbolizing the inclusion of all other identities.

What Does Welcome Look Like?



1. Is being gay a sin?

No. Sins are acts that separate us from God and keep us from loving our neighbors as ourselves. Being gay is not a sin. Bullying is a sin. Being hateful to other people is a sin. Putting yourself in the place of God to judge others is a sin. Being gay is not.

2. What did Jesus say about gay people?

Jesus said the same thing about gay people that he said about all people: God loves you beyond your wildest imagining and calls you to walk in love with God and with each other. He also said a whole lot about welcoming the stranger, embracing the outcast, ministering to the marginalized and loving – not judging – your neighbor.

3. Does the Bible really condemn homosexuality?

The short answer is no, it does not. The handful of passages in the Old and New Testaments that talk about God condemning specific sexual acts have nothing whatsoever to do with sexual orientation and everything to do with contexts such as cultic prostitution or gang rape. To put it another way, using the Bible as a handbook on human sexuality makes as much sense in the 21st century as using it as a handbook on astronomy did in the 16th. The church got it wrong when it misused the Bible to condemn Galileo and it gets it wrong when it misuses the Bible to condemn LGBTQ people.

4. How do I respond when people say “God hates f-s”?

First of all, God's nature is to love, not to hate. We believe that what God cares about is not our sexual orientation but our theological orientation — and that the question that matters is not “who do you love?” but “do you love?” Recognizing that homophobia causes some folks to project onto God their own fears, prejudices and biases against LGBTQ people, sometimes the best response is simply no response. It can be a challenge, but getting triggered by hate-mongers prevents us from being the change we want to see.

FAQ's



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FAQ's



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- To put it another way, using the Bible as a handbook on human sexuality makes as much sense in the 21st century as using it as a handbook on astronomy did in the 16th.
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FAQ's



- **How about transgender people? Where do they fit in?**
- The same place all God's beloved children fit in: smack dab in the center of God's care, love, and desire for health and wholeness for every single human being. We support and affirm transgender and non-binary people in their goals of living out their God-given gender with integrity and authenticity.

FAQ's



- **What do I tell people when they say being gay is a sin and a choice?**
- Tell them that Jesus said absolutely nothing about being gay, but he said a lot of things about judging other people. Then tell them that while there is no consensus among scientists about the exact reasons that an individual develops a heterosexual, bisexual, gay, or lesbian orientation, there is a consensus that sexuality is a continuum.
- So the “choice” is not to be gay, straight, or somewhere in between; the “choice” is to build our own healthy relationships—and give other people the grace to build theirs.

FAQ's



- **How do I respond when politicians condemn my sexuality, citing their belief in the Bible?**
- Remind them that the First Amendment protects them in believing whatever they want to about what God does and does not bless, but it also prohibits them from using those beliefs to decide who the Constitution protects or doesn't protect. Tell them to stop confusing their theology with our democracy. And then campaign for and donate to their opponent in the next election cycle.

FAQ's



- **What about those who say they need “religious freedom laws” to protect their right to discriminate against LGBTQ+ people because of their religion?**
- They are wrong. The Constitution already protects their right to exercise their religion. It does not protect their right to impose their religion. Just as using the Bible to justify racial segregation was wrong in the 1960's, using it to justify LGBTQ+ discrimination is wrong today.

FAQ's



- **Should I try to “pray away gay”?**
- No. If you need to pray away something, pray away homophobia. Homosexuality doesn't need healing. Homophobia does.

What Does Inclusion Look Like?

Some First-Person Stories



I found a home in the Episcopal Church in the 1980's when my partner and I walked into All Saints Church prepared to put up with hearing stuff we didn't like from the pulpit as the price we had to pay for being in church. Instead, we were welcomed unconditionally – and when Donald was diagnosed with and died of AIDS in a matter of weeks after our arrival, the church community scooped me up and surrounded me with love, care & compassion. I've spent the last 30+ years paying that forward by working to welcome others as I was welcomed as we continue to grow more fully into the Beloved Community we are called to be.

Jim [he/him]



- Visibility and affirmative action are essential when the church is pledging radical welcome to LGBTQ+ persons, but it lacks meaning if the collective can't understand the struggle.
- To place a Pride flag outside the main door, you must be committed to hearing the stories of hardship, make accommodations for healing to transpire, and leave all forms of LGBTQ+ oppression behind.
- In essence, this is about seeing LGBTQ+ individuals as the whole child of God, made in the divine image of God.

Thomas [he/him]



Ella [she/her]

- As a queer trans woman I know a church community is welcome and safe if they explicitly say so and if I can find other people like me in the leadership and congregation.
- Events like Transgender Day of Remembrance are also incredibly special and helpful in maintaining belonging.



Mel [he/him]

- The most important moment for me was when I saw people like me on the chancel: an Asian person. I saw this in the Catholic church all the time. I had zero expectation of it in the Episcopal Church.
- Another important moment for me was meeting other gay people in the pews who introduced their partners as partners, not as "friends". Out people in the pews made me feel visible and welcome.



When searching for a church community, my husband and I visited many churches that claim to be inclusive. Many seem a rainbow sticker on a window or had a blurb on their webpage but that was it.

We knew All Saints in Pasadena was different, most particularly because there were openly gay clergy and lay folks actively participating in all aspects of church life.

We knew we would not only be tolerated at All Saints, but able to live fully and deeply the way God created our family.

James [he/him]



Lori [she/her]

- Over 20 years ago I found the Episcopal Church looking for a place where my partner and I could raise our girls in community with families that looked like ours. All Saints was that place.
- My girls are grown now, and I want my church to continue to be that place. I'm not going to be fully included unless everyone else is – no matter who they are – so I look for accessibility, inclusive language, multi-cultural competency and an openness to change.



- The first place I go is a church's website to see if they overtly mention inclusion. Sometimes it's very clear from their homepage that a church is LGBTQIA welcoming.
- Other times, I have to dig and look for coded language ("all are welcome," "diversity," etc.) to know the church *might* be a safe place.
- That's where I start in order to make sure a church is genuinely welcoming to me and my family.

Tim [he/him]



A Final Word about Welcome & Inclusion

- Yes, it can be complicated. It is also not at all surprising that as we grow in both our understanding and experience of the complicated continuum of sexual orientation and fluidity of gender identity/ expression our language will grow and change as well.
- Ultimately, the most important message we have to offer is that whoever you are and wherever you find yourself in the alphabet there is a place for you here

Here endeth the presentation.

THE END