

**Transgender. Christian. Human.**

## **Church Guide to Trans Identities**

In Matthew 7:1-2 Jesus says

**“Do not judge, so that you may not be judged. For with the judgement you make you will be judged, and the measure you give will be the measure you get.”**

Just as some people are left-handed, some people are trans.

Trans people do not choose to be trans. Very often we try hard to choose not to be trans.

Being trans does not negate a person’s right to not be judged.

This guide is written to help Church members to understand the basics of trans identities, so that we might treat all people with love and respect, rather than judgment.

### **TOP TIP**

**If you don’t know how to describe somebody, ask them.** If you can’t ask, use the singular ‘they’, which is a widely accepted neutral pronoun. For example; “They forgot their umbrella!”

### **9 SIMPLE GUIDELINES**

- 1. Avoid the use of language which is widely considered to be offensive** to trans people, for example; sex swap, sex change, tranny, pre-op, she-male.
- 2. Avoid sensationalist reference to trans people** or gender identities in general especially where their gender has no direct bearing on the subject at hand.
- 3. Avoid using pronouns and gendered descriptions** that conflict with an individual’s personal experience of their gender identity.
- 4. As with anybody else, trans people can have varying sexualities. There is no automatic link between gender identity and sexuality** and the two should not be confused.
- 5. Take particular care when talking with/about trans children.** They require the same sensitivity that would be shown to any child.
- 6. Avoid talking/asking about the medical histories of trans people** unless they choose to bring them up in conversation. Do not share anyone’s medical history with another person.
- 7. Avoid gratuitous descriptions, comments or references** that ridicule people on the grounds of their trans status.
- 8. Avoid revealing the previous names or identity** (including photographs) of trans people except where their express permission is given.
- 9. Remember that people who have only recently revealed themselves as trans or started transition** may be vulnerable, isolated from social support and unaware of their rights.

## WIDELY ACCEPTED TERMS

**Trans (transgender)** is an umbrella term, describing people who present as and/or who identify as other than the gender that they were assigned at birth. Trans is the most widely accepted term used by trans people, but it is also OK to use the word transgender when more clarity is needed.

**Other words** that trans people use to describe themselves include (but are not limited to): female-to-male (ftm), male-to-female (mtf), transmasculine, transfeminine, gender-queer, non-binary. These are words that people may use to describe themselves, or ask you to use to describe them. Do not use these words to describe someone unless they themselves suggest that you should do so.

**Pronouns** are words like he/she/they that we use to describe people. Most trans people will be very happy to indicate which pronouns they use. Please respect their need and choice to do so. There are many gender-neutral pronouns in use, including they/them and hir/ze. If in doubt, ask.

## DO NOT USE

**Many other words have been used negatively when talking to/about trans people.** Please do not use words such as tranny, sex swap, she-male or gender-bender, as they may be experienced as disrespectful at best, abusive at worst. Do, however, respect trans peoples' right to reclaim these words should they wish to do so.

## 5 ADDITIONAL TIPS FOR CHURCHES/Christians

- 1. Think carefully** when using scripture passages that have been used to hurt trans people, and deny their personhood. An example is the Genesis creation narratives. Think, and if possible talk with trans people, about creative and respectful ways to read scripture.
- 2. Use inclusive language** when talking about people. Phrases such as 'Christian men and women' exclude many trans people.
- 3. Some trans people (& people in general!) are touch-sensitive.** Do not touch or hug a trans person without asking first.
- 4. Do pray with and for trans people,** but remember that saying you will pray for, or asking to pray for, a trans person can be a sensitive topic. Many trans people have had prayer used against them as a weapon. **Ask people** what you can pray about for/with them.
- 5. Remember that anyone might be trans, and that trans people have families too.** Don't assume that trans identities are not relevant and/or personal to/for the people around you/in your congregation. **Do offer pastoral support** to the families, friends loved ones of trans people, who might be experiencing things very differently to the trans person themselves.