

Liturgy for a Transgender Day of Remembrance

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CALL TO WORSHIP

Be with us Lord in all of our journeys

From near and from far and histories unknown

Be with us Lord in strength and in weakness

The lost and forsaken the proud and the strong

Be with us Lord in all of our beings

Where life in our genders can truly belong

Be with us Lord in all of our actions

Fulfilling your Kingdom where all people come

Be with us Lord in all of our wishes

That rest in your love, when all are as one

INTRODUCTION

Paul Said: "There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus". (Galatians 3:28)

COLLECT

Lord, God of all creation whose wisdom and love is boundless. You have many names and you are beyond all divisions of gender. We have many names for our sexual and gender identities. We give you thanks for the diversity of sexuality and gender. At times we deny that diversity by holding too strongly and tightly to the divisions that we ourselves create. As we come together to remember those transgender people who have been killed, taken their own lives or been injured, often because they have simply tried to live lives in ways which are true to their own identities, help us to honour their identities, and the identities of all people. Help us to create a world where everyone can live with authenticity and dignity. Help us all; who belong to every sexuality and gender, to live our own lives in true fulfilment of our different identities, in fellowship with each other and in the Love of Christ.

READINGS

Romans 8: 31-39

The Power of the Gospel

What, then, shall we say in response to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all - how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things? Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies. Who then is the one who condemns? No one. Christ Jesus who died - more than that, who was raised to life - is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? As it is written:

“For your sake we face death all day long;
we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered.”

No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

NIV

Matthew 22:30-40

The response Jesus gave to the Sadducees.

At the resurrection people will neither marry nor be given in marriage; they will be like the angels in heaven. But about the resurrection of the dead - have you not read what God said to you, “I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob”? He is not the God of the dead but of the living”. When the crowds heard this, they were astonished at his teaching.

Hearing that Jesus had silenced the Sadducees, the Pharisees got together. One of them, an expert in the law, tested him with this question: “Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?” Jesus replied: “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbour as yourself.’ All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.

NIV

REFLECTION

Gender bender, pretender, paedophile, fraudster and pervert are terms that are sometimes flung at transgender people. According to some religious conservative groups a person’s sex (male or female) is an immutable biological reality and is unambiguously identifiable at birth. It is alleged that there is no rational or compassionate reason to affirm a distorted

psychological self-concept that one's "gender identity" is different from one's biological sex. That prejudice is not helped by the traditional teaching of the Christian Church which condemns homosexual and, by implication gender variant behaviour as being intrinsically disordered, mortally sinful and always in pursuit of lust and depraved sex. This does not correspond with the lived experience of transgender people, nor does it conform to the massive amount of medical evidence that is now available. There is the same range of moral attitudes and behaviour among transgender people as there is in society at large. There is also as great a range of sexual orientations among transgender people as that which exists in society itself.

These condemnations did not help David, a human rights lawyer with an outstanding international representation who, as Sonia became intimately involved with her Anglican Parish Church, when she was killed by being pushed off the platform in front of an underground train in King's cross station. Today these condemnations do not help Angela who is becoming suicidal, not because of the attitude of her fellow bus drivers, who she describes as brilliant, but because of the difficulties her senior management created. They do not help those who have fought their inner sense of gender identity for years, the trauma of which has now brought them to collapse. They do not help those invisible transsexuals; one could be a person beside you, who are now living ordinary, unremarkable and respectable lives in the role to which they truly belong. For Paul there was no male and female and nothing in all creation that could separate anyone from the Love of God. For Jesus the Love of God reigned beyond all gender and was totally supreme. If Jesus and Paul did not condemn people for being true to their own identities, then who are we to do so instead?

This teaching is not reflected in today's society. Many transgender people report experiencing harassment, mistreatment or discrimination in their jobs. The rejection by family members, the refusal to use the appropriate gender pronoun; and the insistence on continuing to address someone by the name they used before transition are attacks that are commonly found. The scapegoating which occurs when societies and, religious organisations condemn all transgender people for the misdemeanours of some creates great misunderstanding and distress. According to figures from different sources 41 percent of transsexuals have attempted suicide at least once in their lives. The lack of understanding which brands transgender people as gender benders, pretenders, paedophiles, fraudsters and perverts is the source from which the greatest discrimination occurs.

Our society should be one in which this ignorance and misunderstanding no longer applies, and a society in which the Gospel of love is fully expressed. The need for transgender people is to live the same lives to the same moral standards as everyone else in ways that are true to their own identities. We now remember those transgender people who have been murdered and killed during the previous year because of the hate that has been generated by these misunderstandings and through the prejudice and discrimination that occurs.

LIST OF NAMES

To be read out¹.

INTERCESSIONS

For Loss

Let us pray for all those who have been killed or died because they have not conformed to the gender roles that society expects. Grant them peace and bring to those they leave behind them your comfort in the knowledge that all people, irrespective of gender identity or sexual orientation are enfolded and are precious in the Love of Christ.

Lord in your wisdom

Hear our Prayer

For Understanding

As we reflect on this list of names and the deaths of so many people, help us Lord to think afresh about what it means to belong to our own gender and to be transgender; for we are all as one in your love. As far as we are able to, help us to listen, and to learn to understand what it means to be transgender, so that we and all transgender people always and in harmony together, live to the full, the Gospel of Christian Love in our everyday lives

Lord in your wisdom

Hear our Prayer

For Self-Acceptance

We acknowledge the harm that our prejudice and ignorance has sometimes unknowingly created. We recognise the feelings of guilt and self-loathing that transgender people themselves feel when they apply these negative messages about transgender people in general to themselves. It is your love that transcends all genders. Grant us wisdom care and concern that all of us, whatever our genders and backgrounds are fellow companions on our journeys, and that we all are equally accepted for who we are in the Love of Christ

Lord in your wisdom

Hear our Prayer

For the support of other people.

For transgender people the journey across genders crosses many divides. Help not only transgender people, but their friends, spouses and supporters make that journey together to find a true meeting place beyond these divides. For transgender people who are rejected by their families or lack social support we ask you to give all people involved strength and understanding to overcome these obstacles and to bring new opportunities for relationships to be restored

Lord in your wisdom

Hear our Prayer

For an end to discrimination and Abuse

Despite gender equality legislation, discrimination still occurs. Transsexuals find it difficult to gain employment. Unemployment rates are high. The attitudes of others may make it impossible to continue in any employment that is held. Transsexual people are vulnerable to attacks on their homes and on the streets. Verbal abuse is common. Lord we ask you to grant wisdom, care and compassion to all people who engage in these activities, so that we may all live together in peace.

Lord in your wisdom

Hear our Prayer

To work for a more understanding society

Lord, we have all failed in our understanding by embracing the historic presumptions and traditional teaching that transsexuals are following a lifestyle choice in pursuit of sexual rewards; and not of identity instead. We have failed in the treatment and management methods that have been prescribed because of the medical misdiagnoses that have been made. We recognise the harm that this has brought. Help all of us Lord to create a greater understanding in society and to promote a future which is not bound to the attitudes of the past but, one which can move forward to promote the fullness of life in all in the world

Lord in your wisdom

Hear our Prayer

For forgiveness and Love

Lord God, Creator of the Universe, you know our inner hearts. Too often we have failed to follow your ways. Forgive us for our past failures. Grant us fresh hearts and new minds so that we can celebrate the full richness and diversity of human experience in the Love of Christ.

BLESSING

**May the blessings of God's Love
And the joy of God's Peace
Be found in us all
Now and Always**

Amen

RESOURCES

Beardsley, Christina. (2007): *“The Transsexual is my Neighbour: Pastoral Guidelines for Christian Clergy, Pastors and Congregations”*.

<http://www.gndr.org.uk/sibyls5/documents/beardsley.pdf>

This is also available in booklet form from The Gender Trust at, PO Box 3192, Brighton, BN1 3WR. An alternative abbreviated version of the document is given in the information sheet section of the Gender Trust website at: www.gendertrust.org.uk

Beardsley, T. and O’Brien, M. Ed. (2016) *“This Is My Body: Hearing the Theology of Transgender Christians”*: Darton Longman and Todd. May 2016 ISBN 978-0-232-53206-7

LINKS

THE SIBYLS – www.sibyls.co.uk

The Sibyls is a UK-based confidential Christian spirituality group for transgender people, their partners and their supporters. It offers companionship along the journey, and information/advocacy to churches. Sibyls seek to fulfil the two great commandments of Jesus: To love God and love one another. To achieve this we provide opportunities to meet in safe and friendly establishments. We promote the freedom to talk, to learn, to pray and to seek God's will.

GENDER IDENTITY RESEARCH AND EDUCATION SOCIETY - www.gires.org.uk. The Gender Identity Research and Education Society (GIREs) was established in 1997 to inform a wide public of the issues surrounding gender identity and transsexualism. Its aim is to improve the circumstances in which transgender people live by informing and educating all those who can support them, including family members, politicians, policy makers, commissioners and providers of healthcare, the police and other agencies within the criminal justice system, teachers, employers, and representatives of the media. The charity's education programmes and its contributions to policy development are soundly based on research. It makes an annual award to the authors of the best published research.

CHANGING ATTITUDE ENGLAND - <http://changingattitude.org.uk/>

Changing Attitude England, founded in 1995, is a network of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex and heterosexual members of the Church of England. We welcome as members everyone whose concern is to work for change in the church's understanding of human sexuality.

PRESS FOR CHANGE - <http://www.pfc.org.uk/>

Campaigns for equality and respect for people who are transsexual, transvestite or transgender. Provides advice and advocacy and a range of information, training and publications to educate the public and help people attain/maintain their civil rights.

FTM NETWORK - <http://www.ftm.org.uk/>

Providing support for female-to-male transgender and transsexual people.

GENDER TRUST - <http://gendertrust.org.uk/>

Helpline and other services for people who are transsexual, gender dysphoric or

transgender. Volunteer run information line. Befriending, with a confidential contact system for members. Self-help through a membership society. Information on specialist help, including counselling, psychotherapy, psychiatrists. Newsletter and publications.

MERMAIDS - <http://www.mermaidsuk.org.uk>

Support group for children and young people who have gender identity problems, their parents, carers and professionals. Offers information, support and befriending. Some meetings held in London and provides local contacts elsewhere in the UK. There are now some meetings in the North of England. Meetings are for members only. In contact with an NHS clinic for children with gender identity problems.

BEAUMONT SOCIETY - www.beaumontsociety.org.uk/

National self-help organisation for transvestites, transsexuals, their partners and families. Advice and information on the subject of cross-dressing and gender dysphoria. Helpline. Runs social functions. Produces a magazine for members. Provides guest speakers to other organisations. Linked to the Beaumont Trust.

LGCM - LESBIAN AND GAY CHRISTIAN MOVEMENT - www.lgcm.org.uk

LGCM (Lesbian and Gay Christian Movement) has been challenging homophobia and working towards creating an inclusive Church since 1976. LGCM is a membership based organisation that provides support to individual LGBT Christians and our friends from all denominations and none through local and special interest groups.

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ⁱ For a list of names of people who have died, go to: <http://www.tgdr.co.uk/documents/SuH1108w-TransgenderDeaths2017.pdf>
See also the Transgender Day of Remembrance Website <https://www.glaad.org/tdor>