

Further information on the use of the terms “trans,” “two-spirit,” “cisgender,” and so on, may be found in Celebrating Gender Diversity: A Toolkit on Gender Identity & Trans Experiences for Communities of Faith, available at www.united-church.ca.

It is important to note that for some cultures, more than two gender identities are recognized and that there may be a more appropriate identity that an individual prefers to use in conjunction with or instead of “trans.”

The term “two-spirit” is used by Indigenous peoples, but holds a variety of meaning depending on the community. The term “two-spirit” was included in this resource to respect that people may wish to claim a gender identity outside of norms defined through colonialism.



For more on this topic, search www.united-church.ca for “trans gender identity.”



The United Church of Canada/L'Église Unie du Canada



Celebrating TRANS AND TWO-SPIRIT PEOPLE IN COMMUNITIES OF FAITH

In communities of faith, all should feel loved and welcomed. Therefore, these spaces should challenge the hurtful messages trans/two-spirit people receive from the rest of society every day. This is why it is so important to commit to trans and two-spirit justice as a community of faith.

We live in a world that teaches us many hurtful assumptions about people who are trans/two-spirit. So it requires intentionality to help someone who is trans/two-spirit feel affirmed. This work will directly benefit members of trans/two-spirit communities. But remember, too, that when communities are created where everyone feels fully welcome, it benefits the entire community.

Here are some ways that you can engage in trans and two-spirit justice.

1. UPLIFT AND AFFIRM THE EXPERIENCES OF TRANS/TWO-SPIRIT FOLKS.

Find ways to explicitly name trans/two-spirit people as children of God in liturgy. Use sermons to explore theologically how trans/two-spirit people are blessed members of the kingdom of God, and explore how trans/two-spirit experiences can influence someone spiritually.

2. MAKE SURE THAT TRANS AND TWO-SPIRIT FOLKS ARE GIVEN THE SPACE TO SPEAK FOR THEMSELVES.

As you engage in allyship, be sure to carefully consider the folks who are living visibly as trans/two-spirit in your community. Always give space for trans/two-spirit folks to express their needs and boundaries so that they feel safe and respected.

3. ENCOURAGE TRANS/TWO-SPIRIT LEADERSHIP IN YOUR COMMUNITY BY GIVING THEM AN OPPORTUNITY TO SHARE THEIR GIFTS.

Trans/two-spirit folks are not only gifts to their communities because of their presence and insight on gender. They also have many skills and gifts that they want to be invited to share. Take the time to get to know the trans/two-spirit folks in your community.

4. CREATE A TRANS-INCLUSIVE WASHROOM POLICY.

Safe washrooms exist when communities are educated about gender and understand that all people have the right to choose the washroom that feels safest for them. For some trans/two-spirit folks, having a gender-neutral washroom is an important piece to feeling safe. However, it is also important to ensure that trans men and trans women can access gendered bathrooms while feeling safe and respected.

5. USE LANGUAGE THAT IS INCLUSIVE OF ALL GENDERS.

The more you learn about trans/two-spirit experiences, the better you will become at using inclusive language. For example, phrases such as “ladies and gentleman” or “brothers and sisters” do not allow space for people who have non-binary gender identities. Try alternatives such as “folks,” “family,” or “siblings.” Trans/two-spirit inclusive language challenges the assumption that everyone is cisgender. For example, it does not assume that all women can give birth or that everyone lives as the same gender their whole life. Inclusive language should be part of all that your community engages in including your website, bulletins, Sunday school curriculum, liturgy, and conversations.

6. LEARN HOW TO SUPPORT.

Make sure your pastoral care providers are educated about trans and two-spirit issues so that they can provide adequate support to trans and questioning individuals as well as their family and friends.

7. OFFER MINISTRY TO TRANS/TWO-SPIRIT FOLKS BEYOND YOUR COMMUNITY.

Do you have any resources you could offer to members of the trans/two-spirit community? Networking with organizations that are engaged in trans/two-spirit activism is a great way to let people know of the resources and gifts your community of faith can share with others.

8. REVIEW THE CURRENT POLICIES AND RESOURCES THAT ARE BEING USED IN YOUR COMMUNITY TO ENSURE THAT THE LANGUAGE AND ETHOS ARE TRANS-AFFIRMING AND TRANS-INCLUSIVE.

Are your marriage certificates and policy inclusive of all genders? Is gendered language used in baptism certificates? Are any educational resources on gender and/or sexuality outdated but still in circulation?