



Reconciling in Christ



In this Connections article I'll be focussing on the term **Transgender**.

The term transgender has come to our attention more and more over the last few years. For people with little or no experience in the 2SLGBTQIA+ world there may be misconceptions when we think about what transgender actually means.

Transgender (trans) is an umbrella term that represents a wide range of gender identities and expressions. Trans people do not identify fully or partially with the gender associated with their assigned sex at birth. (Canadian Federation of Students 2017)

Cisgender are people who identify as the gender they were assigned at birth.

Two Spirit, the 2S part of 2SLGBTQIA+, should only be used by Indigenous people. It is a term used within some Indigenous communities, encompassing cultural, spiritual, sexual and gender identity. I encourage you to learn more about the Two Spirit culture. It is very interesting.

The gender the doctor announces at the birth usually is determined by the baby's genitals. This is also based on the traditional binary system of only 2 possibilities, boy or girl. Know that just like there is a spectrum of skin colours of people, there is a whole spectrum of gender identities that include male and female.

If transgender is new or difficult for you to understand, try closing your eyes and think about who you are and the gender you identify with. Now imagine you open your eyes and you're staring into a mirror and the body parts you see or the clothes you are wearing do not align with who you are. For many people this is a daily (or moment by moment) struggle.

Transsexual is an older term which began in the medical community. Some people who have made permanent medical changes to their bodies use this term but to many transgender people it is seen and felt as derogatory. If a transgender person chooses to alter one's birth sex and/or gender expression it is called to **transition**.

The following is a definition for **transition** as per Jasper Smith, Education Coordinator for HIV/AIDS Resources and Community Health (ARCH) here in Guelph.

“Altering one's birth sex is not a one-stop procedure, it is a complex process that occurs over a long period of time. Transition can include **some** or **all** of the following personal, medical, and legal steps: telling one's family, friends and co-workers; using a different name and new pronouns; dressing differently; changing one's name and/or sex on legal documents; hormone therapy, and possibly (though not always) one or more types of surgery. The exact steps involved in transition vary from person to person. Avoid the phrase “sex change”.

GCS = Gender Confirmation Surgery

SRS = Sex Reassignment Surgery

*It is **never** okay to ask if someone has had or plans to have “the surgery” or take hormones. Their personal journey is their own private medical information.*

Terms to Avoid:

Transgendered – not proper terminology

Transgendering – not a real word

Note of interest: To change one’s sex designation on an Ontario Driver’s License there does not need to be any physical or medical changes.

Sadly, trans people are at a higher risk for suicide due to a number of factors including:

- prejudice found as law creating inequalities
- prejudice through societal expectations/limitations
- discrimination
- lack of family support
- fear of transitioning
- gender dysphoria (distress over gender identity)

(For more information check out <https://www.mentalhealthcommission.ca>

Transgender people and suicide – Mental Health Commission of Canada)

The good news is that trans people can and do live happy fulfilling lives. Research suggests that trans youths that have a strong relationship with their parents can reduce trans youth suicidality by 93%.

Imagine the difference we can make as a church community that also accepts and supports all who enter our doors for who they truly are, heart to heart.

“It isn’t about ‘becoming’ another person – I already am who I am – I just want my body to reflect that. It’s not like I’m suddenly changing from the person you’ve always known ‘this is more about your willingness to see who I’ve always been.” - Cooper Lee Bombardier

Or like my own trans son said to me, “Mom, it’s still me.”.



Image Credit: Egale Canada Human Rights Trust

Women are women
Regardless of sex

And men are men
In the same respects

You can both
Or a mix of the two

Or you can be neither
If that's what suits you

But people are people
Whatever their parts

Because what really matters
Is inside of our hearts

Respectfully submitted,
Carolyn Conibear

