

Proposed Policy

Gender Identity – Practical Guidelines for Parish Councils

(To be read in conjunction with the Doctrine Statement on Gender Identity and the Pastoral Guidelines for Churches, Schools and Organisations.)

1. Christians struggling with Gender Incongruence or Dysphoria

- 1.1. Christian congregations should be safe places for all who are struggling with life and need to hear the message of hope. We must seek to demonstrate the compassion of Christ towards those who are hurting and vulnerable.
- 1.2. Some issues for discipleship, such as the experience of gender incongruence or dysphoria, are more public than others, and therefore require different sorts of attention, acknowledgement and care.
- 1.3. The person should be encouraged to speak to a member of the ministry staff whom they trust. While church friends and family can continue to love and support the person, the church itself may be able to offer additional practical resources as well as providing pastoral care and reassurance.
- 1.4. Confidentiality is crucial among church members that may know about the person's concerns as well as among staff. However, the Rector should advise the Regional Bishop of the situation, so that staff might be offered any assistance they require, such as professional supervision.
- 1.5. Church staff should love and care for the person, offer pastoral support, and make available information (reports, research etc.), in addition to biblical teaching in line with the Doctrine Statement on Gender Identity.
- 1.6. Assistance in accessing appropriate professional counselling should be made available.

2. Christians considering or already Transitioning

- 2.1. Beyond applying the points in 1 above, the relevant member of staff should:
 - 2.1.1. attempt to discern whether transitioning is a desire that is being explored or the decision has already been made, and
 - 2.1.2. In the context of continuing pastoral and practical care, explain the goodness of God's creation and his intention for human beings. Carefully indicate that our sex is something given to us by our Creator and that gender transitioning involves repudiating God's gift and seeking to determine our own identity apart from him.
- 2.2. Nevertheless, if a person continues to pursue social or medical transitioning, ministry staff are to continue to provide for the person's spiritual needs. This will include telling and showing the person that they are loved and welcome at church, despite their decision being inconsistent with faithful Christian living. As with all pastoral correction and discipline, this will include a call to repentance and faith issued with patience and sensitivity, taking special account of the vulnerability of the person concerned.

3. Christians who have already Transitioned

- 3.1. Christian brothers and sisters in the person's church, as well as the staff, are to uphold the foundational truths expressed in the Doctrine Statement on Gender Identity.
- 3.2. Ministry staff and congregations need to recognise that transitioning often happens in stages, involving continuing distress, and medical intervention may be irreversible. Any discussion about the appropriateness of transitioning should only be given in the context of care and compassion and ideally in a relationship which has established trust.
- 3.3. An encouragement to be content with our biological sex as a gift of God may raise for the person questions about de-transitioning. Such conversations should only be conducted in the

context of a relationship of trust in which care for the person's spiritual, physical, emotional and social wellbeing is paramount.

- 3.4. The person should be welcome to continue to attend church but may not be able to participate fully in the life of the congregation.

4. Unbelievers struggling with Gender Dysphoria or Transitioning

- 4.1. Our first concern should be to encourage all unbelievers, regardless of present struggles, to turn to Christ and accept him as their Lord and Saviour.
- 4.2. Bible teachers in the church are to be clear on the Bible's teaching on sex and gender, and are to explain this with love and sensitivity to non-Christians who may be struggling with their identity.
- 4.3. Assistance in accessing appropriate professional counselling should be made available.
- 4.4. All members of a church have the responsibility to show the love of Christ and care for all people struggling with this issue. This love should take both emotional and practical forms.

DRAFT