

MADE IN GOD'S IMAGE 2025

**A Fresh
Perspective
on Gender
Difference**

**Rev. Cedric A. Harmon
Ann Thompson Cook**



MADE IN GOD'S IMAGE: A FRESH PERSPECTIVE ON GENDER DIFFERENCE

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For questions and requests, you may reach the authors at guide2gender@gmail.com.



WHY THIS GUIDE?

This guide reflects hundreds of hours of listening to and learning from people whose experience of gender doesn't fit conventional understanding.

As you read, consider that despite what many of us have been taught, our stereotypes of man/woman, masculine/feminine, and male/female don't fit the world as it really is.

Every human has a relationship to gender. Gender is thought to be determined by many factors, including chromosomes, genes, hormones, and prenatal environment. Expressing ourselves as gendered people is a core component of who we are, of our wholeness as a people.

We offer this guide as an introductory resource for the increasing number of Black Christians and others who have asked for help getting started. We hope it will provide you, your family, your church, and other communities an opportunity to begin an informed and brave conversation about God's wonderful gift of gender diversity.

In these pages, you most likely will encounter new information and new perspectives. You may find that some of what we say challenges what you've always held to be true. We invite you to be open to new information, new perspectives, and people's lived experiences. We've learned from them and been enriched by them, and we trust that you will be as well.



We simply don't talk about gender. Or do we?

Yes, all the time, though possibly without realizing it. We teach our children about gender every time we call our sons “little man” or call our daughters “sweetheart” and “baby girl.”

With flirting, catcalls, and stares, we sexualize girls and women in front of our children. And we set out to “toughen up” boys if they cry or want to play with girls. We ask boys, “Do you have a girlfriend?” And we ask girls, “Do you like him?” but also caution them to “watch out,” sending the message that boys are predators.

We think we know how girls should dress and speak, which is different from how boys should dress and speak—or wear their hair, or adorn themselves, or express emotion.

We believe in our hearts that we already know the difference: All boys are this way, all girls are that way. Girls are interested in these things, boys in other things.

Of course, we can always find examples that fit our stereotypes, but holding on to such stereotypes—without recognizing them to be untrue beliefs—can be risky, even dangerous.



What happens when labels don't fit?

If your experience aligns with common perceptions of gender, it may be difficult for you to imagine when such expectations don't fit. For a moment, try to imagine how it would feel to sense from a very early age that there's something wrong or shameful about you or your body.

If what you feel about yourself is different from what people tell you you're supposed to feel, you may conclude that

- You must keep secret whatever is different about you.
- If you express yourself fully, you'll be criticized, punished, or rejected.
- Who you are is a deep disappointment to those you love and depend on.
- You can never be what your family expects.
- You may be teased unmercifully or get beaten up because others perceive you to be different.
- Since no one ever really talks about it, no one understands and no one else is having these same feelings.

What is it about the human family that would allow such suffering because of variations in sex and gender?

Variations among humans are completely normal.



What does the Bible say about gender?

First, nowhere does God say, I am male. And nowhere does the Bible say God is a man.

In fact, Scripture puts forward multiple representations of God. Sometimes God is like a mother who comforts her child, or a mother eagle hovering over her young, or the many-breasted one. The spirit of God hovers over the water like a nested hen.

God, then, is spirit, and we are made in the very image of God in all our rich diversity.

Remember, we always come to the Bible with a perspective, and—perhaps without realizing it—we are the ones who have made God exclusively male.

The Genesis narrative is about all of creation.

You may feel that people who don't fit a traditional "either/or" view of gender are trying to change how God created them—that in changing God's work, they're not honoring God.

The truth is, nearly all of us begin changing our appearance and perhaps our bodies from an early age. We shave, pluck, color, straighten, and braid our hair; we pierce our ears and nose; we tattoo our skin; we even surgically alter parts of our body. We may not agree with all these changes, but few will insist that people who do these things dishonor God.

The Genesis narrative declares the whole, diverse creation—not just folks who fit our ideas of what's acceptable, usual, or customary, but all of creation—to be good and blessed. So when we reduce the creation story to male and female, man and woman, we distort the full blessing. All of humanity, in whatever form, is made in God's image.



Jesus teaches that each of us has value.

In all the reports of Jesus's life, we see him acknowledging the complex variation in the human community. He embraced and brought in those who were ostracized or pushed to the margins. Again and again, he spoke with outcasts, touched those who were considered untouchable, and included those who were excluded from society.

What happened when people seemed different? Jesus didn't condemn them. Instead, he chastised people who rigidly conformed to rules that marginalized or excluded others.

Jesus lived to bring us back to the wholeness of God's creation—in all its shapes and forms and blessed variety.

Gender— beyond either/or



Many of us have been taught that there are two—and only two—genders, that there are no other possibilities, and that boys and girls have certain innate characteristics.

When a family is expecting a child, the first thing we want to know is whether the baby will be a girl or a boy. We use that information to tell us how to relate to the child. Because we have different expectations for boys and girls, we think we know how they should behave, what they should wear, what they should be interested in, which restroom they should use, and—as they get older—whom they should date.

When they fit our stereotypes, we say, “He’s all boy” or “Isn’t that just like a girl?”

Of course, we know that not all children conform to these stereotypes, but society tends to put pressure on children to fit the mold. For example, boys get early messages about being tough and assertive, and when they’re not, someone is always ready to taunt them for being a “sissy” or weak. Girls, on the other hand, are constantly pressured to be attractive and meek.

You may believe that this is just the way things are or should be. It may seem that no one is getting hurt. What you may not realize, however, is that in your own congregation or neighborhood,

- *Twelve-year-old Mary is silently horrified by the breasts that have begun to develop on the body that Mary feels should be male.*
- *Alton, a prominent church leader, is secretly dressing in women’s clothes, and his wife is frightened, confused, and ashamed.*
- *At three, Tommy insists on being treated as a girl. Not understanding the full array of gender, the parents shame and punish the child. Tommy learns to stop talking about it, but the painful sense of really being a girl never goes away.*
- *Pastors and church leaders constantly admonish a gifted singer to “stop flailing your hands around like a woman,” but—behind closed doors—they sexually abuse him.*
- *Dee and Richard’s baby is born with genitals that are neither clearly male nor female. Despite this being a normal (though infrequent) occurrence, the family is ashamed and frightened. They agree to change the appearance of the baby’s genitals with surgeries that are not medically necessary, causing difficulties for the rest of the child’s life.*
- *Chris feels boxed in by the requirement to be either a man or a woman, when neither really fits Chris’s internal experience.*

Most of us are completely unaware of such occurrences and lack even the language to discuss them.



Here's some language you may find useful

The following are definitions that can provide a framework for discussion about physical sex, assigned sex at birth, gender role, gender presentation, perceived gender, and gender identity.

Please note that there's no complete agreement even among researchers and clinicians about the use of the words sex and gender. You may be accustomed to using these words in a different way from how they're used here. If so, please don't let that distract you. Instead, listen for the concepts underlying the words.

PHYSICAL SEX

Physical sex is often identified simply based on our visible genitals, but physical sex is much more than that. Just as human beings come in many shapes, sizes, and colors, we also come with many variations in physical sex, based on our own unique combination of chromosomes, hormones, and brain development, as well as physical characteristics, such as internal and external sex organs.

Despite this complexity, when a baby is born, we look only to the genitals to determine sex. Yet that indicator can be inconclusive, misleading, or even wrong. Some babies are born with bodies that differ in some way from what is considered typical for males or females.

ASSIGNED SEX AT BIRTH

Assigned sex is a label given at or before birth to answer the question, "Is it a girl or a boy?" Most of us don't realize that sex was assigned to us, and we accept that we are male or female as was originally determined. But even when a baby's genitals appear typical, sex assignment on that basis alone isn't necessarily accurate.

Sometimes a difference is visible. But variations in genetic sex and some characteristics of physical sex are invisible to the eye and only become apparent later, perhaps at puberty or if genetic tests are performed.

For example, a baby's genitals appear to be female, but when the child is four years old, the doctor notices a slight bulge in the groin. Tests reveal the child to have male sex chromosomes (XY) and testes rather than ovaries.

Still other people with a correct sex assignment—they have a clearly typical female or male body—have a profound sense that their sex assignment simply does not match who they feel they are, and they're deeply troubled by the bind they find themselves in.

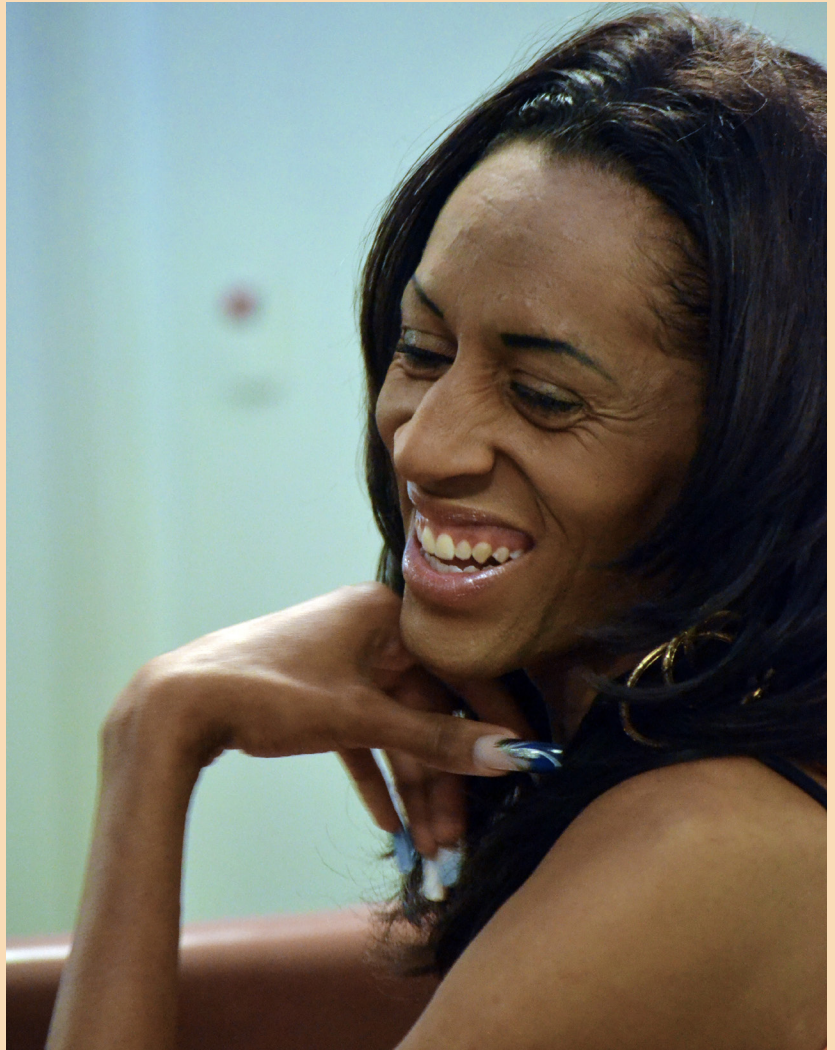
GENDER ROLE

Gender role is the way society says boys/men and girls/women should act, including how to dress, how to talk, what toys to play with, what colors to wear, which bathroom to use, and so on.

Nearly all children encounter gender role restrictions that don't feel right for them, but most of them work to make sure they stay within the gender role considered appropriate for their assigned sex. For instance, you've probably known a boy who held back tears at his grandma's funeral because he's been taught that boys aren't supposed to cry. For others, conforming simply isn't an option.

We often forget, though, how culturally specific gender roles are. A behavior that is acceptable in one culture may be completely unacceptable in another.

- In some countries, women are allowed to drive, whereas in other countries, it's forbidden.
- In some regions of the world, men freely hold hands and hug each other in public; in other regions, doing so can be dangerous.



GENDER PRESENTATION

Gender presentation (also called gender expression) is the way we express our gender or gender role outwardly. This includes the clothing and jewelry we choose, the way we walk and use our hands, our hairstyle, the interests we express, and our speech.



Through praise and admonitions, Black families and church members have many ways—intentional and unintentional—to socialize children and youth to present or express their gender appropriately and well.

“You look so sharp today.”

“Come here, honey. Let me help you out.”

“You’re wearing those shoes!”

“Wait a minute, no child of mine is going out looking like that.”

What happens when a child resists or can’t conform? When their choice of toys, clothing, activities, or playmates doesn’t fit what they’re being taught? Or when the child actively states they’re a different gender and wants to be recognized and treated that way?

Some children are accepted for who they say they are, but very frequently, a family and community resort to confrontation, control, yelling, hostility, and dismissal—even to the point of violence or throwing the child out of the home.

PERCEIVED GENDER

Perceived gender is how someone appears to others. Think about how you “know” whether someone is a girl or boy, woman or man. We usually take clues from the way they dress and behave. In other words, we perceive gender based on their presentation and how they fit society’s gender roles.

We think we can always tell, but what we perceive can be inaccurate.

For example, at first glance, you may inaccurately perceive a woman to be a man because she dresses and carries herself in ways society considers masculine. Or you may perceive an adolescent assigned male at birth to be a young man, even though she understands herself to be a young woman.

GENDER IDENTITY

That phrase we just used—“understands herself to be a young woman”—is what we mean by gender identity. Physical sex, assigned sex at birth, and gender roles aside, gender identity is a person’s internal understanding of their own true gender.

People who never question or contradict their assumed gender at birth are called “cisgender.” (The prefix *cis-* means “same.”) Their internal understanding of their own true gender agrees with their expected gender based on the sex they were assigned. They were declared to be male or female at birth, assumed to be a boy or girl, and that suits them completely.

For some children, however, the label “boy” or “girl” does not fit their understanding of themselves. Some children know from a very young age that both their apparent physical sex and assigned gender are wrong for them. These children often discover quickly that adults have strong ideas of how someone with their physical package is supposed to be and act (their gender role). Wanting to please their parents, caregivers, and family members, the child often tries valiantly to live up to expectations, all the while suppressing their internal understanding of what’s true for them.

As you can see, the binary concept of two genders—girl or boy, woman or man—doesn’t appreciate or adequately capture the normalcy, complexity, and diversity of gender identities in the human family.





Now Let's Step Back a Moment

Think about the distinctions we've just made between physical sex, assigned sex at birth, assumed/assigned gender at birth, gender role, gender presentation, perceived gender, and gender identity.

If you are cisgender—that is, you experience your gender in a way that matches your gender assumed at birth—you probably don't remember how or when you learned about your own gender or assigned sex. You learn these things even before you can talk. You take them for granted and assume everyone else does too.

But you may be able to recall some of the ways you learned about what was considered appropriate for boys and girls. You probably learned these things at a very young age by watching your family and friends. Were there times when you unknowingly crossed a gender line and were corrected, ridiculed, or punished?

If you objected to the rules or couldn't follow them, a parent or caregiver may have rigidly enforced them. For example, if you were a girl who didn't want to wear dresses, or a boy who did, you may not have been given a choice and were instead made to conform.

Or, as with more and more families, you may have been embraced as a sweet and special child learning and growing into yourself.

Questions & Answers

These are questions you may have about gender difference.

WHO ARE TRANSGENDER PEOPLE?

Most often, the term transgender is used to identify people whose gender identity doesn't match the gender assumed at birth. Often from a very early age, transgender and nonbinary people know their true gender is different from what society expects. This understanding persists strongly throughout their life.

A transgender woman, then, is a person who knows they are a woman, despite being assigned male at birth. A transgender man is a person who knows they are a man, despite being assigned female at birth. A nonbinary person knows their gender identity is not a binary, either/or experience.

But more and more, the word transgender has become an umbrella term that refers to a wide range of people whose gender identity, gender role, and gender expression vary from what our culture expects for someone with a particular set of physical characteristics and sex assignment.

WHAT DOES NONBINARY MEAN?

People whose gender identity is neither man nor woman are also under the transgender umbrella. Their gender and assigned sex are not necessarily at odds, yet they may feel out of sync with the language and customs that limit gender to only men and women. Or they may understand their gender in ways that challenge their sex assigned at birth.

Nonbinary people may or may not use the word transgender to describe themselves. They may prefer the term nonbinary, or they may use other terms like gender queer, gender fluid, or gender expansive.

You may feel like you just don't understand any of these terms. A person may look to you like someone who would use the pronoun "she" but instead uses "he" or "they" pronouns. The reality is that we can't tell just by looking. We have to trust the person's inner knowing and sense of self.

So it's okay not to understand. What's important is to offer the same respect you offer others in your life.



WHAT'S INVOLVED IN GENDER TRANSITION?

Gender transition, also known as gender affirmation, is the process of when a person begins living according to their gender identity. It may involve changing their clothing, grooming, appearance, and other aspects to align their presentation with who they know themselves to be.

Often, gender transition involves changing one's name and sex designation marker on legal documents—usually “M” or “F”—although some jurisdictions have added “nonbinary” as another marker. Due to societal stigma and discrimination, changing legal documents can be easy, challenging, or impossible, depending on where someone was born, where they currently live, even the public official who receives the request.

The social aspects of transition may be even more daunting than the legal ones. When people transition as adults, they must consider whether and how to come out to family members, bosses, coworkers, customers, neighbors, church members, and others in the community. In doing so, they may be risking their connections to family and friends, losing their jobs, and even subjecting themselves to violence.

Please note that many transgender people never transition or are unable to transition. For instance, a person may be denied the medical intervention they seek due to current health risks.

For those who do, most don't consider it “changing.” Rather, they see it as a way of aligning how they dress, behave, and are perceived with the gender they know they are. Achieving that goal can be difficult, particularly when transition is undertaken after puberty.

For some people, those who can afford it and have access, transition may also involve hormones and/or surgery—again, to align their bodies with their sense of who they know they are. That said, it's not our business whether people have had surgery or not. You don't want people asking about your genitals. Please don't ask transgender people about theirs.

WHAT IS GENDER-AFFIRMING CARE?

Imagine a person who's wanting to live in accordance with who they know themselves to be. Gender affirming care has much to offer:

Mental health and reproductive counseling can address emotional, physiological, and behavioral issues as well as medical issues.

Pubertal suppression temporarily pauses the development of secondary sex characteristics to give a young person and their family a bit more time to come to understand their gender identity and make decisions about what is right for them.

Hormone therapy can affect muscle mass, body and facial hair, voice pitch, hairline, sex drive, and other characteristics.

Voice therapy and laser hair removal may make a big difference in helping people who have experienced male puberty to live comfortably as a woman.

Medical transition surgeries may include facial reconstruction, chest or breast surgery, and genital reconstruction (rarely provided to children under 18).

Children and adults who have access to competent gender-affirming care generally experience dramatic improvements in their health, well-being, and happiness.

WHAT'S THE HARM IN GOING THROUGH PUBERTY?

It's natural to wonder why anyone would want to delay or stop puberty. After all, many of us felt awkward when our bodies were changing, and many teens scream, "I hate my body!"

But here's the deal: When a young person recognizes that their bodily changes won't or don't match their sense of self, their scream is a call for help. Without help, they may resort to some form of self-harm, such as cutting or attempting suicide.

For that reason, gender-affirming care includes many different



disciplines and services. Ideally, a team provides services to distinguish the distress, isolation, feelings of loneliness, depression, and self-harm—known as gender dysphoria—from the usual angst of adolescence.

Services are also important for parents and caregivers.

“This is new and scary for us, and I’m worried that outside voices are influencing her decisions. We dearly love our daughter. We want to do what’s best for her and be supportive as she transitions, but it’s totally new territory for us. As her parents, we’re in counseling, and we need help to find a skilled counselor for her as well, someone who knows what they’re doing.”

WHAT ABOUT SEXUAL ORIENTATION?

Remember, gender identity is who we know ourselves to be within a whole array of gender diversity. Sexual orientation reflects our pattern of romantic and sexual attraction to other people. We explain that more fully in the companion to this book, *And God Loves Each One: A Black Church Guide to Sexual Orientation*.

AND INTERSEX?

As we mentioned earlier, some people have a combination of attributes that are considered atypical for either the male or female body.

Sometimes these attributes are revealed through prenatal genetic tests; other times, they are seen at birth when the genitals are not clearly male or female. For such variations in physical, hormonal, and chromosomal sex, the terms “intersex” or “differences of sexual development” are used.

Examples of differences being visible at birth might be a male child who’s born with a smaller-than-usual penis or a female child who has a larger-than-usual clitoris. In such instances, many physicians persuade parents to agree to unnecessary surgery to “correct” these differences.

Unfortunately, in addition to the possibility of surgical complications, genital surgery may have irreversible effects, including chronic pain, infertility, and sexual dysfunction. Many adults who have undergone such surgeries report having been harmed by them and are calling for doctors to wait until people are old enough to give informed consent.

Other differences may not be visible at birth but may become apparent later. For example, males with an extra X chromosome (XXY) produce less of the hormone testosterone, which becomes evident only at puberty. And some people don’t know they are intersex until adulthood when they discover they’re infertile.

You may know of Dani, a former police officer. Assigned female at birth, Dani said that learning as an adult that he was intersex enabled him to make sense of his life and find his truth as a complete person. As a public figure, Dani wanted to speak out to disrupt the stigma around being intersex.

As you can see, most of us haven’t had language or permission to consider the complexity of sex and gender that Dani and others represent.

FINALLY, LET'S TALK ABOUT PRONOUNS

By reading this far, you've learned that people experience gender in a variety of ways. Like many people, though, you may still be struggling with the ever-evolving landscape of pronouns as they relate to various gender identities.

Here's what you need to know: When people tell you they use particular pronouns for themselves—whether he/his/him, she/her/hers, they/their/them, a combination such as she/they, or other language they choose—they would consider it a matter of respect for you to also use those pronouns to refer to them.

Obviously, that may be easier said than done. You may object to referring to an individual as “they,” because it seems to go against good English grammar. (Note: It doesn't. “They” has been used this way for centuries.)

Even more significantly, we've been trained from our earliest years to quickly assess and assume the gender of another person based on physical cues, and it can be difficult to override that training.

It all boils down to a matter of good will and respect. When in doubt, ask, and do your best to use the pronouns the person requests.




People in our churches & communities

Children and adults who live outside the gender stereotypes of what society says is “normal” live in our communities; are found in every ethnic/racial group; attend public and private schools; teach Sunday school, sing in the choir, and serve as pastors; conceive and raise children; are poor, middle class, or affluent; are someone's child, parent, grandchild, grandparent, sibling, or friend.

Like anyone else, people who are transgender, nonbinary, or otherwise not cisgender long for a life they love and an opportunity to express themselves and pursue their dreams. But instead, too often they face discrimination, harm, stigma, and barriers to meeting their basic needs.

Make no mistake. These issues don't arise from their gender identities; they arise from their living in a fearful, condemning world and from the way so many people scorn and hurt people who don't conform to society's gender expectations.



EXPERIENCES OF REAL PEOPLE: How would you feel?

"When I was 15, my folks told me to change or get out. I can't change, so I've been on the streets for two years. I do my best to scrounge for food, but sometimes I'm so hungry, I have to pull a trick."

"When I'm out in public, neither the men's nor the women's restroom feels safe for me. The minute I walk in, someone freaks out and shouts that I'm in the wrong restroom, and I don't know what's going to happen next."

"My sister was a trans woman, and I was outraged at her funeral when the minister kept calling her by her dead name, despite her having used her chosen name for many years. It was so hurtful—like a dagger to the heart to me and all her family."

"As an intersex person, every time I went into the hospital, there was a steady parade of doctors-in-training coming into my room. There I was, naked below the waist, legs spread, being poked and prodded by complete strangers who seemed oblivious to me as a person."

"Every morning, after I get dressed and complete my makeup, I have that moment of fear as I reach for the doorknob to step outside, knowing the ever-present threat of harassment or violence just from walking down the street among my own people."

"A few of us were out riding when police pulled the car over. Even though I wasn't driving, they asked me for my ID. I paused because the gender on my photo ID doesn't match how I look. That pause was all it took. They arrested me for suspicious behavior."

"Having grown up as a Black female, I'll never forget the first time I walked down the street as a male, and a white woman walking toward me clutched her purse, clearly afraid that I would rob her."

"I'm having trouble sleeping at night, because I don't have enough money to pay rent, and there's very little in the refrigerator to eat. Life is so overwhelming right now."

"I thank God every day for my grandbaby who's trans, because that's exactly who she's supposed to be. But I worry about her with all the cruel laws in our state that put her at risk."

Did you know...?

Nearly half of Black adults said they are extremely or very concerned about discrimination against LGBTQ people (2023).

Most trans or nonbinary youth who are homeless have a history of being harassed, bullied, and rejected by their families.

28% of LGBTQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer/questioning) youth reported experiencing homelessness or housing instability at some point in their lives.

Compared to cisgender people, gender queer people are more than four times more likely to experience violent victimization, including rape, sexual assault, and aggravated assault.

In the US, 2.8 million people identify as trans or nonbinary.

34% of Black trans and nonbinary people have had at least one negative experience with a health care provider, just in the last year.

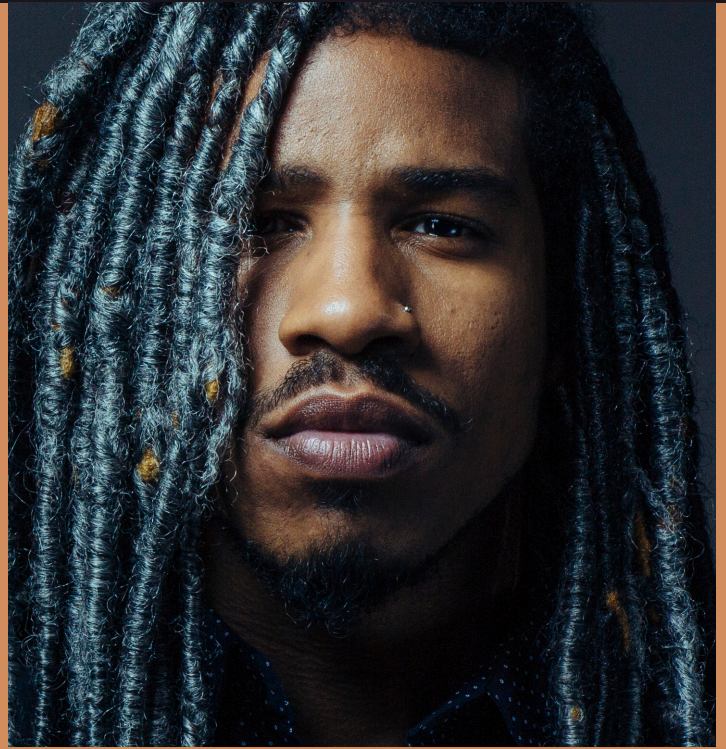
Reported hate crimes based on gender identity rose by nearly a third from 2021 to 2022.

Trans women who are incarcerated are likely to be placed in men's prisons, where 60% are sexually assaulted.

Compared with the general population, almost six times as many LGBTQ people were stopped by police in a public space.

Among Black adults, more than 1 out of 100 is trans or nonbinary.

In 2021, 31% of people who are trans, nonbinary, or otherwise not cisgender were living in poverty compared to 18% of cisgender people.





**EXPERIENCES OF REAL PEOPLE:
A glimpse of what's possible.**

"When the child I thought was my son let me know that in fact she was my daughter, I realized that what I want more than anything is for her to be happy and live freely as her true self. We've all learned a lot, we've supported each other, and our family's faith in God has grown stronger."

"When we moved to a new city, my spouse and I visited churches and found one where everyone was friendly and helped us get involved. To them, my being non-binary is only one piece of who I am."

"My five-year-old grandson, shopping for a soccer ball, immediately chose the hot pink one designed to benefit breast cancer awareness. I said, 'Of course, baby' and hugged him tight."

"Last year when I told my parents that I was transitioning, they naturally had a hard time with that, but gradually they've come around. Now we're able to just talk as family again. They've seen that I'm still me, and we're still family."

"As a trans man, when I wanted to be baptized, I felt I should tell the pastor. He didn't blink an eye and said, 'We love you—God loves you—just as you are.' That meant the world to me."

QUESTIONS FOR US ALL, IN A SPIRIT OF LOVE AND JUSTICE

Gender is extremely complex.

This short guide has only scratched the surface, but we hope it will support you in starting your exploration, learning, and dialogue.

As people of faith, we're fond of saying that each of us is "made in God's image."

Now that you've read this guide, please ask yourself these questions again:

What if each of us really is made in God's image, even when some of us don't look or act in ways that match the conventional view of male or female?

What if God's love of diversity—so evident in the profusion of flowers, trees, fish, and wildlife—extends to humans?

And what if God is well pleased?

Blessings as you begin your journey of expanding your understanding of gender.

May you discover the wholeness of God's creation—in all its shapes and forms and blessed variety—and recognize the need to create a safe, welcoming, and just world for all of God's people.

APPENDIX

By now, you know it's not really possible to tell simply by looking what a person's gender may be. In the appendix, we're inviting you to trouble what you thought you saw as you read this guide. Following are some of the photos from earlier pages, with the terms we reviewed on pages seven to ten.



Although Chris was assigned female at birth and identifies as female, people frequently perceive her to be male due to her gender presentation.



Tanesh, the mother in this family, is transgender. Assigned male at birth, her gender identity and gender presentation are female.



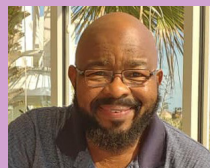
Dani was assigned female at birth and fully grasped as an adult that they were intersex. Dani says, *I personally embrace the feminine and masculine side of myself.*



Shareef was assigned male and identifies as a gender-non-conforming gay male.



Raymond is transgender. Assigned female at birth, his gender identity and gender presentation are male.



Rev. Brendan is transgender. Assigned female at birth, his gender identity and gender presentation are male. He says, *This is who I've always known myself to be.*



Jazmyne is transgender. Assigned male at birth, her gender identity and gender presentation are female.

