

23/17 Gender Identity Initial Principles of Engagement

24/17 Development of a final form of diocesan policy for gender identity issues

(A report from the Gender Identity Subcommittee of SIC.)

Key Points

- The Gender Identity Initial Principles of Engagement have been reviewed in light of feedback and responses received in relation to Synod resolution 24/17.
- The Gender Identity Subcommittee, with the endorsement of the Social Issues Committee, recommend that the Initial Principles of Engagement (section 9.1 of the 'Gender Identity Report' received by Synod in 2017, revised November 2017), with a minor editorial change, be adopted by the Synod.

Purpose

1. The purpose of this report is to recommend the adoption of a final form of the Initial Principles of Engagement by the Synod, in accordance with the request of resolution 24/17.

Recommendations

2. Synod receive this report.
3. Synod, noting Synod resolutions 23/17 and 24/17, adopt the revised form of the Initial Principles of Engagement contained in this report at Appendix 1 as the framework from which the Gender Identity guidelines will be developed.

Background

4. At its session in October 2017, the Synod passed resolution 24/17 in the following terms –
'Synod commends the Gender Identity Report ('the Report') to all Synod members, Anglican schools and other agencies in the Diocese which are called upon to care for people with gender identity issues and asks the governing boards and councils, and the heads and chief executive officers of such schools and agencies, as well as Synod members, to –
 - (a) provide comments and feedback to Standing Committee on the Initial Principles of Engagement approved in principle as a policy of the Synod at its session in 2017 by 30 April 2018, and
 - (b) ensure any policies, guidelines and procedures which they draft to address this issue are consistent with those Initial Principles of Engagement, and
 - (c) consult with the Archbishop about the final form of such policies, guidelines and procedures before they are published, and
 - (d) commit to reviewing such policies, guidelines and procedures in light of any revised form of policy adopted by the Synod following its session in 2017,and requests that the Standing Committee bring to the Synod session in 2018 a revised form of the Initial Principles of Engagement with a view to the revised form being adopted as a policy of the Synod.'
5. In order to respond to the request in the last paragraph of the resolution, the Social Issues Committee (SIC) in consultation with the Archbishop revised the Terms of Reference of its Gender Identity Subcommittee (GISC) and refreshed its membership in 2018 to be constituted of the following members –
 - Bishop Peter Hayward (Chair),
 - Ms Maryanne Davis,
 - Mrs Pat Jackson,
 - Dr Chase Kuhn ,
 - The Rev Barry McGrath,
 - The Rev Dr David Sandifer,
 - Dr Claire Smith,

and appointed the following as advisors to the GISC –

- Mrs Lorrae Sampson, and
- The Rev Joe Wiltshire.

Review of responses

6. The GISC met on 1 August 2018 to review the four responses received over the six months given to reply (there were no late responses), and made the following observations –

- (a) One response was by a member of Synod who was very positive about the Initial Principles of Engagement (Initial Principles), but cautioned that we not give the subject so much attention as to become a contributor to curious experimentation.
- (b) The other three responses were submitted by various bodies corporate representing Anglican organisations. These submissions had substantial praise for the substance of the report, but expressed some concerns regarding the proposed development of pastoral guidelines and their implementation. Among these three responses, there was –
 - (i) a strong preference to write their own guidelines in order to address their particular circumstances,
 - (ii) a general nervousness about the response of non-Christians who are part of the broader Anglican community,
 - (iii) some lack of confidence that God’s good plan is best for all (see 9.1.8(d) of the Report).
- (c) All responses have suggested in-service training for governance and senior executive staff (including heads of school, counsellors, pastors and the like).

7. In its review, the GISC noted in particular that none of the responses took issue with the tenet of “protecting the biologically sexed body that God has given” (9.1.1(g)), as a “psychosomatic unity” (9.1.1(g)). The GISC also noted that as this comes before Synod again, it needs to be looked at in the context of the entire Gender Identity Report (of which this is part, namely 9.1), and in the context of the Diocesan Doctrine Commission’s report ‘A Theology Of Gender And Gender Identity’, which were both received by Synod in 2017 and are currently available to view on the secure Standing Committee section of the SDS website.

8. As a result of these submissions and the review, the GISC was of the view that only a minor editorial change was required. This amendment was proposed in the feedback received, and is as follows –

‘At 9.1.6, omit “Ministry” and insert instead “Church Ministry”’.

This amendment is shown in mark up in Appendix 1.

9. Although by resolution 24/17, the Synod asked the Standing Committee to bring to this session of the Synod a revised form of the Initial Principles of Engagement, with a view to the revised form being adopted as a policy of the Synod, the Committee is of the firm view, based on feedback and developments in this area in the past 12 months, that Synod should instead focus on developing Gender Identity guidelines based on the Doctrine Commission report and Gender Identity report already received by the Synod in 2017.

10. Accordingly, the Standing Committee recommends that the Gender Identity Initial Principles of Engagement, as revised in this report at Appendix 1, be adopted by the Synod as the framework from which the Gender Identity guidelines will be developed.

11. The Standing Committee authorised \$2,000 from Synod Fund Contingencies for the costs of convening meetings with related parties to develop such guidelines that are to be brought to Synod in 2019.

12. The GISC also formed the view that it would be helpful to provide in-services for school boards and staff to encourage them to adopt the guidelines.

For and on behalf of the Gender Identity Subcommittee of the SIC

BISHOP PETER HAYWARD

Chair

30 August 2018

Extract from the Conclusion to Gender Identity Report to Synod 2017 (section 9), marked to show recommended change to 9.1.6.

9 Conclusion

(219) Our churches, schools, and organisations should be places where those dealing with gender identity issues are welcomed, loved, and nurtured with generous care shaped by the love of Christ, and informed by the word of God. All those who have faith in Christ belong to the body of Christ, regardless of their personal trials and afflictions. It is our hope that those dealing first-hand with gender identity issues might find the love and support they need within our fellowship.

(220) This Report is the first step in a Diocesan response to gender identity issues. It seeks to provide the biblical framework and medical background for these issues and outlines the current Australian legal situation. A basis is thus provided from which to address the pastoral care of those experiencing gender non-conformity in an informed way, and to engage with developments in society.

(221) Our commitment to the good of all people also means we should be concerned for the welfare of all those with gender identity issues, not just those within our churches. Equipping Christians and churches to appropriately reach out with the gospel and love of Jesus to those who suffer gender identity issues requires further careful reflection.

(222) The next stage of this work entails the development of detailed policies and a pastoral care practice framework for entities within the Diocese. These entities include schools, community service organisations, and youth ministries. The task of caring for people – church communities, families, children and individuals – also requires sensitive consideration.

(223) In the meantime, the following Initial Principles of Engagement are offered, as an indicative response to the complex pastoral issues involved, taking into consideration the teaching of Scripture, medical and legal considerations, and personal responses from the mixed-methods study undertaken by the committee. These principles reflect the main contours of this report.

9.1 Initial Principles of Engagement

9.1.1 General Principles

- (a) The promise of the gospel is that all who trust in Christ are assured of existential peace and wholeness in the resurrection life of the new creation.
- (b) All those who have faith in Christ are loved by God and belong to the body of Christ, including those whose personal trials and afflictions in this life include gender identity issues or gender incongruence.
- (c) Those who experience gender identity issues or incongruence deserve our compassion, love, and care.
- (d) In the beginning, God made humanity male and female, and, in his creative purposes, biological (bodily) sex determines gender.
- (e) Human nature was damaged and distorted by the Fall but not destroyed. All people continue to be made in the image of God. The experience of incongruence between objective biological sex and subjective gender identity is one consequence of that damage and distortion but in no way diminishes a person's full humanity.
- (f) God has compassion on the weak and vulnerable, and is able to bring healing to the experience of gender incongruence, however in his sovereign wisdom, that healing might not be fully experienced in this life.
- (g) The human person is a psychosomatic unity, where body and soul come into being at the same time and, in this life and the next, exist together. Embodiment is integral to human identity, and biological sex is a fundamental aspect of embodiment. Preserving the integrity of body and soul, and honouring and protecting the biologically-sexed body that God has given are necessary for human flourishing.
- (h) The binary distinctions of male and female are to be embraced and upheld in the lives of Christian men and women respectively, and expressed in culturally appropriate ways that conform to Scripture.

- (i) Churches, schools, and other Anglican organisations are to be places where all people, including those who experience gender identity issues and incongruence, are welcomed, loved and supported and helped to live in obedience to Christ.
- (j) Practical love of those experiencing gender identity issues and incongruence entails:
 - faithfulness to the teaching of the Bible
 - compassion, and active love, care, and support
 - rejection of all bullying, ridicule, mistreatment, and abuse of gender non-conforming people
 - evidence-based pathways for treatment, which are consistent with Scripture
 - ensuring that churches and organisations are adequately informed about gender identity issues and incongruence, and the relevant teaching of the Bible.

9.1.2 Those experiencing gender incongruence

You are made in the image of God and you will find your identity in Christ. Therefore, we encourage you:

- (a) to seek treatment options that aim for the integrity of psycho-somatic unity;
- (b) to seek regular Christian fellowship;
- (c) to share your struggles with some mature Christian people so you can receive Christian compassion and support, as well as accountability and encouragement;
- (d) to know that while gender dysphoria may be a lifelong battle for you, nothing can separate you from the love of God in Christ Jesus, and God will be patient with you, and his grace will sustain you; and
- (e) to fix your eyes on Jesus and look forward to wholeness and relief of suffering in the new creation.

9.1.3 Family and Friends of those experiencing gender incongruence

Family and friends are encouraged:

- (a) to be informed about and embrace the teaching of Scripture on sex and gender;
- (b) to be educated in the various aspects of gender identity and expression (biology, identity, orientation, roles) so you are able to distinguish between sexual orientation (same sex attraction, same sex behaviour) and gender identity (gender dysphoria, transgender) and the different responses each requires;
- (c) to demonstrate gospel grace by loving and caring for the person even if you do not approve or celebrate their behaviour or choices;
- (d) to be honest about your concerns;
- (e) if appropriate, to provide information about alternative treatment approaches to those which promote transitioning;
- (f) not to make your love conditional upon acceptance of your views;
- (g) to be patient and sensitive, and seek to alleviate the person's distress; and
- (h) to be committed in prayer for the person: their physical and psychological wellbeing, and their salvation (if not a Christian).

9.1.4 Christian parents

Christian parents are encouraged:

- (a) to be informed about and embrace the teaching of Scripture on sex and gender
- (b) to be educated in the various aspects of gender identity and expression (biology, identity, orientation, roles) so you are able to differentiate between sexual orientation (same-sex attraction, same-sex behaviour) and gender identity (gender dysphoria, transgender) and the different responses each requires;
- (c) to understand that your own identity is found in Christ and not in any other source, and make opportunities to explain this to your children;
- (d) to seek mature Christian counsel and pastoral care if your child has gender identity issues that cause you concern, and seek to support the child in their biological sex role;

- (e) to demonstrate gospel grace by loving and caring for your child even if you do not approve of or celebrate your child's behaviour or choices; and
- (f) to build support networks and be actively involved in your Christian community.

9.1.5 Counsellors, teachers, doctors (those with secular professional relationships)

Christian professionals are encouraged:

- (a) to be informed about and embrace the teaching of Scripture on sex and gender;
- (b) to be educated in the various aspects of gender identity and expression (biology, identity, orientation, roles) so you are able to differentiate between sexual orientation (same-sex attraction, same-sex behaviour) and gender identity (gender dysphoria, transgender) and the different responses each requires;
- (c) to understand the biblical view of personhood, and identity in Christ, both for yourself and your clients;
- (d) to differentiate between compassion for the person and understanding the distress of their situation/condition and agreeing with and validating a treatment protocol to transition; and
- (e) to build support networks for consultation, possibly including legal contacts.

9.1.6 Ministry Church Ministry Staff

Ministry Church Ministry staff are encouraged:

- (a) to be informed about and embrace the teaching of Scripture on sex and gender;
- (b) to provide public teaching about the Bible's instruction on these matters;
- (c) to have compassion for those who experience gender incongruence, and teach and model such compassion;
- (d) not to make insensitive or uncaring comments or jokes about gender nonconforming people;
- (e) to build a church culture where all people are actively welcomed, knowing that Jesus bids us all 'come as we are', but that he does not leave any of us 'as we are';
- (f) to encourage a church culture of openness that would allow a person to begin a conversation with ministry staff about their gender identity issues;
- (g) to listen carefully to the person, and not doubt, minimise or dismiss their experience;
- (h) to be concerned for the whole person, not just their gender issues;
- (i) to be patient and committed to the person long-term;
- (j) to respect the person and their family's privacy and confidentiality;
- (k) to ensure church facilities provide a public access uni-sex toilet;
- (l) to provide some non-gendered church activities, e.g., mixed Bible study groups ;
- (m) do not have rigid, unbiblical gender stereotypes, especially for children;
- (n) to encourage others to reach out with friendship and support, especially in children's and youth ministries.
- (o) to ensure that gender non-conforming children and youth are not bullied, teased, excluded, or abused; and
- (p) to consider the pastoral care needs of those close to the gender nonconforming person, especially family.

9.1.7 Congregations

Congregations are encouraged:

- (a) to be informed about and embrace the teaching of Scripture on sex and gender;
- (b) to show love, compassion, hospitality, and welcome to gender nonconforming people;
- (c) to be concerned for the whole person not just their gender issues;
- (d) to offer companionship to the person and their family;
- (e) to be patient and committed to the person and their family for the long-term;
- (f) to respect the person and their family's privacy and confidentiality;
- (g) not to stare, exclude or isolate gender nonconforming people;

- (h) not to bully, tease, exclude, mistreat, or abuse gender nonconforming people;
- (i) not to make the person into a celebrity or spectacle for their gender incongruence;
- (j) not to make jokes about gender nonconforming people;
- (k) to be aware that taking or displaying photos or images of a person with gender incongruence might cause them distress;
- (l) to avoid rigid and unbiblical gender stereotypes; and
- (m) to uphold the goodness of God's design of male and female, and provide healthy role models of living faithfully as Christian men and women.

9.1.8 Public engagement

Those participating in public engagement are encouraged:

- (a) to be informed about and embrace the teaching of Scripture on sex and gender;
- (b) to seek the common good of all people, through concern and involvement in public debate and policy formation;
- (c) to show grace, by being loving, gentle, courteous, wholesome, and humble, this may include recognising the good in our interlocutor's arguments;
- (d) to affirm what is true. God's truth is good, and applies to all people, whether or not they accept or recognise its wisdom. Cultural awareness and effective communication may shape how we express our viewpoint, but it cannot alter our adherence to biblical truth;
- (e) to show love, as public engagement is an expression of love for neighbour, and withdrawal from it may signify a failure to love;
- (f) to be informed about the different dimensions of the public debate, as there are those who promote transgender ideology, and those who suffer from gender incongruence, who are vulnerable members of our community, yet the needs and claims of the two groups are different, and must be considered in any public engagement on these matters;
- (g) to ensure that your presuppositions and expectations of the role of the state are informed by and consistent with the Scriptures; and
- (h) to be courageous, knowing that God is sovereign over all.