

Pastoral Guidelines for Churches, Schools and Organisations

(To be read in conjunction with the Doctrine Statement on Gender Identity.)

1. Christians need to show compassion to all who experience Gender Identity Issues
 - 1.1. We have an obligation to show compassion, love and care to all those who experience gender identity issues or incongruence, as they too are made in God's image.
 2. In considering how to help our brothers and sisters in Christ who experience gender identity issues, we take into account that –
 - 2.1. 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 dysphoria.
 - 2.2. The biologically-based binary distinctions of male and female are part of the creation that God described as good and so are to be embraced and guarded in the lives of Christian men and women respectively, and expressed in culturally appropriate ways that conform with Scripture.
 - 2.3. The reality and intensity of gender incongruence is something we acknowledge as part of the disruption of the world following the first sin. None of us is immune from the brokenness of the world, though we may experience it in different ways, and all of us need God's compassion and his rescue from sin and its consequences that comes only in Christ.
 - 2.4. God gives to his people the resources necessary to live faithfully as a disciple of Christ in the midst of our brokenness, including his word, his Spirit, and the loving fellowship of his people.
 - 2.5. God has compassion on the struggling 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.
 - 2.6. 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.
 3. Believers in Christ who experience this issue are encouraged to consider the following –
 - 3.1. While gender dysphoria may be a lifelong battle for you, God's word declares that all those who have faith in Christ are loved by God and belong to the body of Christ, and that nothing can separate them from the love of God in Christ Jesus.
 - 3.2. Fix your eyes on Jesus, and look forward to wholeness and relief from suffering and temptation in the new creation.
 - 3.3. Seek options that maintain the integrity of your physical and mental unity, and which honour and preserve the maleness or femaleness of the body God has given you.
 - 3.4. Seek regular Christian fellowship.
 - 3.5. Share your struggles with some mature Christian people so you can receive Christian compassion and support, as well as accountability and encouragement.
 - 3.6. God desires your wholeness and wellbeing, and he will be patient with you, and his grace will sustain you.
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4. Churches, Organisations, Schools and individual Christians who care for people who experience gender identity issues and dysphoria can show this love by –

- 4.1. Remaining faithful to the teaching of the Bible, including upholding the goodness of God's design of male and female.
- 4.2. Ensuring that churches, organisations, schools and other persons or parties are adequately informed about gender identity issues and dysphoria, and the relevant teaching of the Bible.
- 4.3. Showing compassion, active love, care, and support even though you may disagree with the choices or behaviour of those for whom you are caring.
- 4.4. Being patient and sensitive to a person's needs, listening carefully to their experiences, and seeking to alleviate their distress; recognising that vulnerable persons require specific approaches to care.
- 4.5. Seeking to provide an environment that does not exacerbate the person's distress.
- 4.6. Being committed to pray for the person, including their physical and psychological wellbeing.
- 4.7. Praying for the person's salvation (if they are not a Christian).
- 4.8. Rejecting all bullying, ridicule, mistreatment, and abuse of gender non-conforming people.
- 4.9. Avoiding rigid and unbiblical gender stereotypes.
- 4.10. Pursuing and affirming evidence-based pathways for treatment, which are consistent with Scripture.
- 4.11. Differentiating between compassion for the person, including an understanding of the distress of their situation or condition, and agreeing with, celebrating, or validating any treatment protocol for transition.

5. Public engagement about gender identity issues by Churches, Organisations, Schools and individual Christians should –

- 5.1. Be informed about and embrace the teaching of Scripture on sex and gender.
 - 5.2. Seek the common good of all people, through concern and involvement in public debate and policy formation.
 - 5.3. Show grace, by being loving, gentle, courteous, wholesome, and humble, which may include recognising the good in our interlocutor's arguments.
 - 5.4. 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.
 - 5.5. Show love, as public engagement is an expression of love for our neighbour, and withdrawal from such engagement may signify a failure to love.
 - 5.6. Seek to point people to Jesus and the full, rich salvation that is found only in him.
 - 5.7. Be informed about the different dimensions of the public debate. There are those who promote transgender ideology, and those who experience gender incongruence, who are vulnerable members of our community. The needs and claims of the two groups can be different, and must be carefully distinguished in any public engagement on these matters.
 - 5.8. Be courageous, knowing that God is sovereign over all.
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I Certify that the Pastoral Guidelines as printed are in accordance with the Pastoral Guidelines as reported.

P COLGAN
Chair of Committees

I Certify that these Pastoral Guidelines were passed by the Synod of the Diocese of Sydney as a policy of the Synod on 22 October 2019.

D GLYNN
Secretary