

Overture 11-12, From New Castle Presbytery: Affirming And Celebrating The Full Dignity And Humanity Of People Of All Gender Identities

*Approved by the 223rd General Assembly (2018) of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)
by unanimous consent.*

Standing in the conviction that all people are created in the image of God and that the Gospel of Jesus Christ is good news for all people, the 223rd General Assembly affirms its commitment to the full welcome, acceptance, and inclusion of transgender people, people who identify as gender non-binary, and people of all gender identities within the full life of the church and the world. The Assembly affirms the full dignity and the full humanity of transgender people, their full inclusion in all human rights, and their giftedness for service. The Assembly affirms the church's obligation to stand for the right of people of all gender identities to live free from discrimination, violence, and every form of injustice.

Making these affirmations, the Assembly acknowledges that the church has fallen short of these commitments and obligations. In the world and in the Church, transgender people too often experience and suffer discrimination and violence. The church has failed to understand fully and to celebrate adequately the full spectrum of gender embodied in God's creation. As a result, we have participated in systemic and targeted discrimination against transgender people, and we have been complicit in violence against them. The Assembly affirms the scriptural obligation to work for justice for all God's children, and particularly here to work for justice for people of all gender identities. We have fallen short of this obligation, and – by the grace of God – commit ourselves to do better.

These affirmations and this commitment are rooted and grounded in the Gospel of Jesus Christ, in the breadth of Scripture, and in the Reformed Tradition. Scripture affirms that all people are created in the image of God. In God's creation, we see and experience God's image expressed across a broad and life-giving expression of gender. Honoring the breadth and variety of our gender identities and expressions is one of the ways we can come to an even deeper understanding of who we are created to be in relationship to God and each other. The Hebrew Scriptures, the Gospel, and the Reformed Tradition affirm the dignity and worth of all people and call on individuals and communities to work for the well-being and protection of all people. Because we recognize that people of all gender identities are created equally in the image of God, we also recognize that we share a mutual obligation to stand for the right of all people and all gender identities and gender expressions to live free from discrimination and from violence. The image of God expansively and specifically includes people of all gender identities including transgender, cis-gender, gender non-binary people, and people of all gender expressions.

Overture 11-1: Affirming And Celebrating The Full Dignity And Humanity Of People Of All Gender Identities

Accordingly, the General Assembly empowers, authorizes, and directs the Stated Clerk and the Office of Public Witness to advocate for the rights of transgender people and for legal protections to ensure and protect the full humanity and dignity of people of all gender identities. Specifically, the Stated Clerk and the Office of Public Witness are authorized to support the right of transgender individuals to:

- to serve in the military, and every type of government and public service,
- to full access to public accommodations, including gender inclusive restrooms,
- to full legal protection against discrimination, particularly with regard to employment, housing, education, and health care,
- to title IX protections for transgender students against violence and bullying,
- to other legal protections that guarantee and safeguard the full rights of transgender individuals.

The General Assembly also encourages congregations of the Presbyterian Church (USA) to welcome transgender and gender non-binary people into the life of the church and to continue to grow in compassion and knowledge about the full expression of our individual and respective gender identities. To that end, the GA directs the Presbyterian Mission Agency to consult with existing LGBTQ+ focused advocacy organizations to develop and/or adopt educational resources to support congregational and denominational learning, and encourages Synods, Presbyteries, Seminaries, and congregations to do the same. Transgender inclusion is lived out in our congregations and Presbyterian institutions in the following ways:

- Welcoming statements that specifically name transgender and gender non-binary people as included within the life of the church
- Policies that are inclusive of transgender and gender non-binary people
- Available facilities such as bathrooms that are either designated as gender neutral, or allow for transgender and non-binary people to use the facility that matches their gender identity
- Worship, liturgy, and hymns employ language inclusive of all gender identities
- Transgender and gender non-binary people's pronouns are respected and used appropriately.



**COVENANT NETWORK
OF PRESBYTERIANS**