

## Truths About Being Trans

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There has been a lot of false rhetoric about trans people in the news these past couple years, and given that this year's annual ministry theme is truth, the Welcoming Committee thought it would be a good idea to share some truths about being trans.

### **1. Trans people have always existed.**

Trans people have existed for centuries. In fact, people who we might consider today to be transgender, lived and thrived in Mesopotamia, the first known civilization in human history. Not only were they members of Mesopotamian society, they were priests. Mesopotamia was a polytheistic society, meaning they worshipped multiple gods and goddesses. One of these goddesses was the Queen of Heaven, Inanna. The Gala were a class of priests sacred to Inanna. One of their primary roles was to sing hymns and laments to the goddess in eme-sal, a Sumerian dialect spoken primarily by women that was used to render the speech of female gods. They presided over religious rites, healed the sick, predicted the future, made music, raised money for the poor, and “dissolved evil” during lunar eclipses. They were well-known and respected members of their communities, and many of them were what we would now think of as transgender. Biological males entered into the service of Inanna and became female for all intents and purposes. In their eyes, Inanna had made them women, and their society accepted that. Not only have trans people always existed, but they are also divine creations.

### **2. Being trans is neither a Western nor a colonial concept.**

There are many cultures around the world that recognize more than two genders. In North American Indigenous cultures, “two-spirit” is an umbrella term used to describe those who embody both feminine and masculine spirits and have traditionally occupied important social and spiritual roles in their communities. The Māhū of Indigenous Hawaiian and Tahitian culture are also thought of as embodying both male and female spirits. Historically, māhū adopted important roles in their communities by being caretakers and healers and passing down sacred knowledge. The Indigenous Zapotec people in Mexico have long recognized muxe (moo-shay) as a cultural third gender. There are also a number of other recognized genders in Africa, Asia, the Pacific Islands, Latin America, and the Caribbean. In many of these cultures, people who identify as these third (or more) genders serve important roles in society such as priests, artists, and ceremonial leaders. Many of these genders have been largely marginalized and eradicated as a result of colonization.

### **3. Being trans is natural.**

There are a number of animals who engage in behavior that we might consider to be “transgender” to obtain advantages such as reduced competition, better access to

territory, and improved mating opportunities. These behaviors include projecting an appearance that doesn't necessarily "match" that of their biological sex, and even changing their sex on a biological level. This is particularly common in snakes, lizards, bugs, birds, and fish. In fact, around 500 distinct fish species biologically change their sex as adults. A primary example of this is clownfish. All clownfish are born male and have the ability to change their sex but will do so only to become the dominant female of a group. For clownfish in particular, this change is irreversible, but for many fish species they can change sex back and forth.

#### **4. Gender-affirming care is safe and evidence-based.**

Medical care for transgender youth is backed by decades of research and supported by every leading medical association and world health authority including the American Medical Association, the World Health Organization, the American Academy of Pediatrics, the Endocrine Society, the American Psychiatric Association, and The American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry. Efforts to ban and criminalize this care are not based in medical or scientific expertise, and frequently spread misinformation about what that care is. The following statement was issued in 2022 by the American Academy of Pediatrics: "There is strong consensus among the most prominent medical organizations worldwide that evidence-based, gender-affirming care for transgender children and adolescents is medically necessary and appropriate. It can even be lifesaving. The decision of whether and when to start gender-affirming treatment, which does not necessarily lead to hormone therapy or surgery, is personal and involves careful consideration by each patient and their family."

#### **5. Gender-affirming care is difficult to access.**

Gender-affirming care is difficult to access for a number of reasons, including financial constraints; lack of availability of gender-affirming care; lack of knowledge about gender-affirming care from medical professionals; discriminatory behavior from those in the medical field, such as deadnaming and misgendering; interpersonal barriers such as fear of being estranged from family and friends; lack of accurate information about gender-affirming care; long wait times and short supplies of prescriptions. One of the most glaring issues as of late is the lack of accessibility to gender-affirming care due to geographical constraints and policy barriers that restrict access to gender-affirming medical services. According to the Williams Institute, as of August 2024, 39.4% of trans youth aged 13-17 are living in the 26 states that have passed bans on gender-affirming care.

#### **6. Cisgender people receive gender-affirming care too.**

Gender-affirming care is a term typically used in reference to transgender healthcare, but it is predominantly used by cisgender people, people whose gender identity aligns with their sex assigned at birth. For example, hormone replacement therapy for menopausal women, breast augmentation and enhancement, breast reduction for men with gynecomastia,

breast reconstruction following a mastectomy, testosterone therapy for cisgender men with “low T,” hormone blockers to treat premature puberty, growth hormones for kids with growth hormone deficiency, testosterone blockers to treat acne, hair transplants, laser hair removal, facelifts, face fillers, tummy tucks, buttock enhancement, just to name a few.

### **7. Transphobia hurts everyone.**

Many of us witnessed this over the summer during the Paris Olympics with Algerian boxer Imane Khelif. Despite the rigorous testing Olympic athletes must go through to prove their eligibility to compete and the fact that it is illegal to be transgender in Algeria, or LGBTQ+ at all for that matter, Khelif, a cisgender woman, was accused of being transgender due to her exceptional athleticism and quote “masculine” features. This lie, rooted in misogyny, was repeated all over the Internet, by news and media outlets, and by public figures and politicians, including former president and president-elect Donald Trump. Cisgender women of color are particularly vulnerable to this phenomenon as they don’t always fit the white standard for femininity. Transphobia is being used as yet another strategy to police women’s bodies.

### **8. The majority of people who transition are happy with their decision.**

There are a lot of statistics out there, many of which are flawed and biased, that are being used to restrict access to gender-affirming care. But the reality is that the majority of people who transition are happy with their decision. In 2022, the National Center for Transgender Equality conducted a survey of over 92,000 trans people in the U.S., the largest survey of trans people in U.S. history. Of respondents who were currently receiving hormone treatment, 98% reported that receiving such treatment made them more satisfied with their lives. Of respondents who underwent at least one form of gender-affirming surgery, 97% reported that receiving such treatment made them more satisfied with their lives.

Following today’s service, I highly encourage everyone to join me next door in Parish Hall where I will be doing a short presentation on another trans truth, which is the reality of fatal anti-trans violence in our country. I will be giving a brief history on Transgender Day of Remembrance and why we observe it as well as reviewing the statistics on fatal anti-trans violence. Following the presentation, everyone is invited to meet outside the church at 12:45 for a silent march to Market Square, where we will be holding a Trans Day of Remembrance Vigil. I hope to see you all there.