

## A LITURGY FOR TRANSGENDER DAY OF REMEMBRANCE



### CALL TO WORSHIP

Be with us Lord in all of our journeys

**From near and from far and histories unknown**

Be with us Lord in strength and in weakness

**The lost and forsaken the proud and the strong**

Be with us Lord in all of our beings

**Where life in our genders can truly belong**

Be with us Lord in all of our actions

**Fulfilling your Kingdom where all people come**

Be with us Lord in all of our wishes

**That rest in your love, when all are as one**

### OPENING READING

Paul Said: "There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus". (Galatians 3:28)

### COLLECT

God of all creation, whose wisdom and love is boundless. You have many names and you are beyond all divisions of gender.

We have many names for our sexual and gender identities. We give you thanks for the diversity of sexuality and gender. At times we deny that diversity by holding too strongly and tightly to the divisions that we ourselves create.

As we come together to remember those transgender people who have been killed, taken their own lives or been injured, help us to honour their identities, and the identities of all people. Help us to create a world where everyone can live with authenticity and dignity.

Help us all; who belong to every sexuality and gender, to live our own lives in true fulfilment of our different identities, in fellowship with each other and in the Love of Christ.

Amen.

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### READINGS

Romans 8: 31-39 and/or Matthew 22:30-40

### REFLECTION (Susan Gilchrist)

Great harm is done when people use the most insulting sexual slur they can find and then apply it to transgender people. Not only is the insult itself destructive, it is being applied to people who are trying to live lives which are true to who they are. According to some groups a person's sex (male or female) is an immutable biological reality which is unambiguously identifiable at birth. It is alleged by these groups that there is no rational or compassionate reason to affirm a distorted psychological self-concept that one's "gender identity" is different from one's biological sex. That viewpoint is reinforced by the traditional teachings which condemn homosexuality and, by implication, gender variant behaviour as intrinsically disordered.

This does not match the experience of transgender people, who find their gender identity contradicts their biological sex. Many have fought against this unremitting sense of gender identity for many years. There is the same range of moral attitudes and behaviour among transgender people as there is in society at large. There is also as great a range of sexual orientations among

transgender people as that which exists in wider society. Thus the primary concern for transgender people is about their identity. It is not about any sexual act.

These condemnations did not help David, a human rights lawyer with an outstanding international representation who, as Sonia, became intimately involved with her Anglican Parish Church, when she was killed by being pushed off the platform in front of an underground train in King's cross station. Today these condemnations do not help Angela who is becoming suicidal, not because of the attitude of her fellow workers, who she describes as brilliant, but because of the difficulties her senior management created. They do not help those who have fought their inner sense of gender identity for years, the trauma of which has now brought them to collapse. They do not help the person beside you, living an ordinary, unremarkable and respectable life in the role to which they truly belong, who may have come on the gender journey transsexuals make.

For Paul there was no male and female and nothing in all creation that could separate anyone from the Love of God. For Jesus the Love of God reigned beyond all gender and was totally supreme. If Jesus and Paul did not condemn people for being true to their own identities, then who are we to do so instead?

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This teaching is not reflected in today's society. Many transgender people report harassment, mistreatment and discrimination in their jobs. The rejection by family members, the refusal to use the appropriate gender pronoun; and the insistence on continuing to address someone by the name they used before transition are attacks that are commonly found. The scapegoating which occurs when societies and religious organisations condemn all transgender people for the misdemeanours of some creates great misunderstanding and distress.

Many sources report that 41% of transsexuals have attempted suicide at least once in their lives. The lack of understanding which brands transgender people as gender benders, pretenders, paedophiles, fraudsters and perverts is the source from which the greatest discrimination occurs. Our society should be one in which this ignorance and misunderstanding no longer applies, and a society in which the Gospel of love is fully expressed. The need for transgender people is to live the same lives to the same moral standards as everyone else in ways that are true to their own identities.

We now remember those transgender people who have been murdered and killed during the previous year because of the hate that has been generated by these misunderstandings and through the prejudice and discrimination that occurs.

### LIST OF NAMES

A witness of TDOR is to read out the names of those Transgender persons who have lost their lives in the past year. The list of names will be published before the Transgender Day of Remembrance via: [tdor.info](http://tdor.info). If this is not available, [a separate list may be used](#). (You may wish to include the list of those who have died by suicide; these are not on the TDOR list.)

### INTERCESSIONS

#### *For Loss*

Let us pray for all those who have been killed or died because they have not conformed to the gender roles that society expects. Grant them peace and bring to those they leave behind them your comfort in the knowledge that all people, irrespective of gender identity or sexual orientation are enfolded and are precious in the Love of Christ.

God in your wisdom

**Hear our Prayer**

#### *For Understanding*

As we reflect on this list of names and the deaths of so many people, help us Lord to think afresh about what it means to belong to our own gender and to be transgender; for we are all as one in your love. As far as we are able to, help us to listen, and to learn to understand what it means to be transgender, so that we and all transgender people always, and in harmony, live to the full, the Gospel of Love in our everyday lives

God in your wisdom

**Hear our Prayer**

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### *For Self-Acceptance*

We acknowledge the harm that our prejudice and ignorance has sometimes unknowingly created. We recognise the feelings of guilt and self-loathing that transgender people themselves feel when they apply these negative messages about transgender people in general to themselves. It is your love that transcends all genders. Grant us wisdom care and concern that all of us, whatever our genders and backgrounds are fellow companions on our journeys, and that we are all equally accepted for who we are in the Love of Christ

God in your wisdom

**Hear our Prayer**

### *For the support of other people.*

For transgender people the journey across genders crosses many divides. Help not only transgender people, but their friends, spouses and supporters make that journey together to find a true meeting place beyond these divides. For transgender people who are rejected by their families or lack social support we ask you to give all people involved, the strength and understanding to overcome these obstacles, and to bring new opportunities for relationships to be restored

God in your wisdom

**Hear our Prayer**

### *For an end to discrimination and Abuse*

Despite gender equality legislation, discrimination still occurs. Transsexuals find it difficult to gain employment. Unemployment rates are high. The attitudes of others may make

it impossible to continue in any employment that is held. Transsexual people are vulnerable to attacks on their homes and on the streets. Verbal abuse is common. Lord we ask you to grant wisdom, care and compassion to all people who engage in these disruptive activities; so that we may all live together in peace.

God in your wisdom

**Hear our Prayer**

### *To work for a more understanding society*

Lord, we have all failed in our understanding by embracing the historic presumptions and traditional teaching that transsexuals are following a lifestyle choice in pursuit of sexual rewards; and not of identity instead. We have failed in the treatment and management methods that have been prescribed because of the medical misdiagnoses that have been made. We recognise the harm that this has brought. Help all of us God to create a greater understanding in society and to promote a future which is not bound to the attitudes of the past but, one which can move forward to promote the fullness of life in all in the world

God in your wisdom

**Hear our Prayer**

### *For forgiveness and Love*

Loving God, Creator of the Universe, you know are inner hearts. Too often we have failed to follow your ways. Forgive us for our past failures. Grant us fresh hearts and new minds so that we can celebrate the full richness and diversity of human experience in the Love of Christ.

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### BLESSING

**May the blessings of God's Love  
And the joy of God's Peace  
Be found in us all  
Now and Always  
Amen**

About the Author, Susan Gilchrist  
(click on purple text for links)

Susan Gilchrist, now retired, taught in higher education for over 40 years. She has been involved in the work of reconciliation in conflict situations from 1969. A member of the Corrymeela Community, she has been involved in studies and research into the driving forces behind conflict, identity formation and the interactions that are encountered. She has undertaken similar research on gender dysphoria ([tgdr.co.uk/articles](http://tgdr.co.uk/articles)). Susan writes poetry and she has documented her journey through an anthology of poems.

Through her counselling involvement Susan aims to help others who may learn from her experiences. She has served on Government and NHS Advisory panels and is actively involved in Church of England activities and in ecumenical work. She is a committee member and secretary of the Sibyls, a Christian Spirituality group for transgendered people, their friends, families and supporters. Email [sgen4144@gmail.com](mailto:sgen4144@gmail.com)

Resources (click on purple text for links)

Beardsley, Christina. (2007): "The Transsexual is my Neighbour: Pastoral Guidelines for Christian Clergy, Pastors and Congregations". An alternative and abbreviated version of the document is given in the info section of:  
[www.gendertrust.org.uk](http://www.gendertrust.org.uk)

Beardsley, T. and O'Brien, M. Ed. (2016) "*This Is My Body: Hearing the Theology of Transgender Christians*": Darton Longman and Todd. May 2016

### Corrymeela

Corrymeela is Ireland's oldest peace and reconciliation centre, with over 50 years of witnessing to faith and peace. Since the early 1980s Corrymeela has been a venue for LGBT groups of people who are working for a fairer and more structures of society and faith. Corrymeela runs annual retreats for LGBT affirmative faith leaders, and also provides resources and runs dialogues for those Christians who wish to understand LGBT lives and stories more. [www.corrymeela.org](http://www.corrymeela.org)

## A LITURGY FOR TRANSGENDER DAY OF REMEMBRANCE

### ADVOCACY, TRAINING & SUPPORT ORGS

#### **THE SIBYLS** – [www.sibyls.co.uk](http://www.sibyls.co.uk)

The Sibyls is a UK-based confidential Christian spirituality group for transgender people, their partners and their supporters.

**GENDER IDENTITY RESEARCH AND EDUCATION SOCIETY** - [www.gires.org.uk](http://www.gires.org.uk). The Gender Identity Research and Education Society (GIREs) was established in 1997 to inform a wide public of the issues surrounding gender identity and transsexualism.

#### **PRESS FOR CHANGE** - <http://www.pfc.org.uk/>

Campaigns for equality and respect for trans people. Provides advice and advocacy and a range of information, training and publications.

#### **FTM NETWORK** - <http://www.ftm.org.uk/>

Providing support for female-to-male transgender and transsexual people.

#### **GENDER TRUST** - <http://gendertrust.org.uk/>

Helpline and other services for people who are transsexual, gender dysphoric or transgenderist. Volunteer run information line. Befriending, with a confidential contact system for members.

#### **MERMAIDS** - <http://www.mermaidsuk.org.uk>

Support group for children and young people who have gender identity questions, their parents, carers and professionals. Offers information, support and befriending.

#### **BEAUMONT SOCIETY** - [www.beaumontsociety.org.uk/](http://www.beaumontsociety.org.uk/)

National self-help organisation for transvestites, transsexuals, their partners and families. Advice and information on the subject of cross-dressing and gender dysphoria. Helpline.

#### **CHANGING ATTITUDE** Anglican (& friends) LGBT advocacy.

[changingattitudeireland.org](http://changingattitudeireland.org) (Ireland)

[changingattitude.org.uk](http://changingattitude.org.uk) (England)

[changingattitudescotland.org.uk](http://changingattitudescotland.org.uk) (Scotland)

#### **LESBIAN AND GAY CHRISTIAN MOVEMENT** - [www.lgcm.org.uk](http://www.lgcm.org.uk)

Challenging homophobia and working towards creating an inclusive Church since 1976.

#### **ACCEPTING SEXUALITY** <http://acceptingsexuality.org>

Accepting Sexuality is an informal group of Irish Methodists, ordained and lay, working for the inclusion of LGBT people in the Church.

#### **DIVERSE CHURCH** - <http://diversechurch.website>

Diverse Church is a supportive community of young LGBT+ Christians in UK evangelical churches.

#### **JAMES ALISON** - <http://jamesalison.co.uk>

James Alison is a Catholic priest and theologian writing and speaking about LGBT inclusion within Catholic and broader Christian contexts.

#### **Advocacy, Training and Festivals based in Northern Ireland.**

GIREs: Support Groups in Northern Ireland

<http://www.gires.org.uk/support-groups-northern-ireland>

Belfast Butterfly Club <http://belfastbutterflyclub.co.uk/>

Focus Trust - <http://thefocustrust.com>

Transgender NI - <https://transgenderni.com>

GenderJam - <https://genderjam.org.uk>

The Rainbow Project - <http://www.rainbow-project.org>

Here NI - <http://hereni.org>

Cara-Friend - <http://www.cara-friend.org.uk>

Belfast Pride <http://www.belfastpride.com>

Outburst festival [outburststarts.com](http://outburststarts.com)