

New Jersey Synod Guiding Principles, Policies and Practices relating to ministry with LGBTQ+ Youth

Guiding Principles for Ministry with and among LGBTQ+ Youth

1. LGBTQ+ young people are beloved children of God, made in the image of God and full members of the Body of Christ. This we proclaim and celebrate!
“Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you” -Jeremiah 1
2. Our welcome of LGBTQ+ young people needs to be specific, regularly articulated, and lived out.
 - a. The default understanding in our society is that the church is not welcoming or accepting of LGBTQ+ people. It is easy for marginalized people to hear “all are welcome” as “all are welcome but me”. Therefore simply saying “All are Welcome” is not enough.
 - b. If we aren’t actively, intentionally articulating and living out this welcome, then we are (unintentionally or not) unwelcoming to LGBTQ+ people.
3. We need to be aware of, and address in our ministries, specific safety and health concerns relating to LGBTQ+ young people, including the following:
 - a. They are at greater risk of physical, psychological, spiritual and social violence than the general teen population.
 - b. They have higher levels of alcohol use, drug abuse, and self-harming behavior - including suicide; often with fewer resources to help them at home.
 - c. They have higher rates of homelessness than their peers.
 - d. They are at greater risk for depression, anxiety and other mental health concerns.
4. We are eager to learn more and to strengthen and grow in our ministry with and among LGBTQ+ young people in our congregations and communities.

Explanatory Notes

Principles directly articulate guiding theological statements or core values.

Policies are formally adopted guidelines that establish specific behaviors for a organization

Practices are standard, accepted behaviors in accordance with approved policies. They can be in writing, but are not formally adopted or approved by supervising groups.

LGBTQ+ stands for:

Lesbian

Gay

Bisexual

Transgender

Queer or Questioning

+ the plus (+) indicates an inclusion of all identities (i.e. asexual, intersex)

A good source of information relating to LGBTQ+ youth health and safety is the CDC (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention):
www.cdc.gov/lgbthealth/youth.htm

There are many other sources and resources. We have compiled a list at:
www.njsynod.org/lgbtqyouth

Synodical Youth Ministry Events Policies

Registration

1. We only ask for gender information when needed.
2. When asking for gender information in registration material we offer male/female/non-binary gender options.

Housing

1. Housing is assigned according to the gender identity of the participant.
2. If event participants or their parents/guardians have concerns regarding housing assignments, they are encouraged to contact an event leader.
3. Housing for non-binary participants will be determined on an individual basis in consultation with the participant and their parents/guardians.
4. The responsibility for determining event housing resides with the Synod staff member relating to the event.

Training

1. Each Synodically sponsored Youth Event will provide training relating to the needs of LGBTQ+ youth for:
 - Core Leadership Team, Chaplain/s, Musician/s
 - Event Planning Team
 - Other key event leaders
2. Whenever possible a basic orientation for adult participants relating to the needs of LGBTQ+ youth will be offered. This could be provided in writing in advance of the event or offered at or near the start of the event.

Bathrooms

1. Participants and guests will have access to bathrooms that correspond to their gender identity.
2. Every effort will be made to provide all-gender single-occupancy bathrooms at synod youth ministry events.

Non-binary, sometimes known as Genderqueer, is a category for gender identities that are not exclusively masculine or feminine—identities which are outside the gender binary. Non-binary people may express a combination of masculinity and femininity, or neither, in their gender expression. They have a variety of sexual orientations, just as transgender and cisgender people do.

Cisgender (often abbreviated to simply **cis**) is a term used to describe people whose gender identity matches the sex that they were assigned at birth.

Gender identity refers to a person's innate identification as a man, woman, or another gender, which may or may not correspond to the sex assigned to them at birth.

Sexual orientation, or orientation, is a term used to describe to what gender/s someone is physically and/or emotionally attracted. *Gay, lesbian, bisexual, straight* are examples of terms referring to sexual orientation.

General Practices

1. Synod Youth Ministry Meetings & Events

- a. Efforts will be made to hold meetings and events where all-gender single-occupancy bathrooms are available.
- b. Inclusive, positive language will be used.
- c. LGBTQ+ people are intentionally invited and welcomed in leadership, planning teams and all other gatherings.

2. Training and Resources

We will make every effort to provide training and resources for congregations relating to safe, healthy ministry with young people of all gender identities, gender expressions, and sexual orientations.

3. Pronoun use

We will encourage the practice of inviting people to share their personal pronouns.