

Pastoral Guidance for use in conjunction with the Affirmation of Baptismal Faith in the context of gender transition

1. The Church of England welcomes and encourages the unconditional affirmation of trans people, equally with all people, within the body of Christ, and rejoices in the diversity of that body into which all Christians have been baptized by one Spirit.
2. If a transgender person is not already baptized, then baptism itself would be the natural liturgical context for recognizing and celebrating their identity in Christ and God's love for them. Where such a person has already been baptized, the House of Bishops commends the rite of Affirmation of Baptismal Faith as the central feature of any service to recognize liturgically a person's gender transition.¹ Where rubrics within that Rite allow, the House encourages ministers to respond to such requests in a creative and sensitive way. The Rite of Affirmation includes the opportunity for the candidate to renew the commitments made in baptism and for the congregation to respond. The emphasis is placed not on the past or future of the candidate alone, but on their faith in Jesus Christ. The Affirmation therefore gives priority to the original and authentic baptism of the individual as the sacramental beginning of the Christian life, allowing someone who has undergone a serious and lasting change to re-dedicate their life and identity to Christ. The image of God, in which we are all made, transcends gender, race, and any other characteristic. Our shared identity as followers of Jesus is the unity which makes all one in Christ (Galatians 3.27–28).
3. Everyone's journey through life is unique. Baptism is the place where we find our true identity in Christ. As with all pastoral encounters with people negotiating major life events, ministers will wish to respond sensitively and creatively to the person's circumstances. Trans people are as diverse as any other social group and ministers should avoid stereotyping. It is appropriate, however, to identify the preference of a transgender person in respect of their name and gendered (or other) pronouns. It should be noted that the term 'transgender' is typically preferred to transgendered. For example, the terms 'trans man' (referring to someone who has undergone female-to-male

¹ Affirmation of Baptismal Faith is a service designed to be used normally for those who have already been confirmed. However, if a trans person has not already been confirmed, it might still be pastorally appropriate for the Affirmation of Baptismal Faith to be used because of the flexibility and pastoral adaptation it offers. In such a case, confirmation might follow in due course. Whether the liturgical recognition of gender transition takes place in the context of baptism, confirmation or Affirmation of Baptismal Faith, the House of Bishops encourages ministers to respond to all requests with as much creativity and sensitivity as the rubrics and Notes allow. The guidance that follows assumes the use of the Affirmation of Baptismal Faith, but much of it could be adapted for baptism or confirmation if that were more appropriate.

transition) and 'trans woman' (male-to-female) are sometimes preferred by the individual concerned.

4. It is important that the occasion should have a celebratory character, and in preparation for the service, the minister will wish to meet with the candidate to understand better their personal journey. The minister should be guided by the wishes of the candidate regarding the way in which past experiences may be mentioned or reflected upon, either in the introduction to the service or if the candidate is to share their testimony. If members of their family are to be present, the minister will wish to be sensitive to their pastoral needs.
5. The sacrament of baptism provides the minister with a rich vocabulary of images which can be explored both in preparation for the service and in any sermon that may be delivered. In the journey of a trans person this liturgy will probably constitute a watershed in their Christian discipleship. It may be appropriate therefore for the minister to incorporate the *Affirmation of the Christian Way* (CW:CI p.36) in shaping the service. Obviously, the nature of the service will be determined in part by whether the Affirmation occurs in the company of other candidates, perhaps in the context of the Eucharist, or whether it is a stand-alone service at which only friends and family are likely to be present. The use of this Rite should be in keeping with the Notes in *Common Worship: Christian Initiation*, which help to explain how the rite can be used in Eucharistic and non-Eucharistic worship of different kinds.

Readings

6. The choice of readings should be governed by the rules in *Common Worship* (Main Volume, pp.539 ff). When it is permitted to depart from the lectionary provision, other appropriate readings, such as those listed below, may be used. A celebration of the Eucharist must always include a Gospel reading.

Genesis 17.1–7, 15–17: *God changes the name of Sarai to Sarah*

Genesis 32.22–31: *Jacob wrestles at Peniel and is named Israel*

Exodus 3.1–15: *Moses is called to serve the God named I AM*

Isaiah 42.1–9: *God's promise concerning God's servant*

Isaiah 43.1–7: *God's restoration and protection is promised*

Isaiah 56.1–8: *The maintenance of God's justice and welcome of all to the house of God*

Psalms 8: *God's divine majesty and human dignity*

Psalms 23: *The Lord is my Shepherd*

Psalms 96: *Sing to the Lord a new song*

Psalms 139: *O Lord you have searched me out and known me*

Matthew 5.1–11: *The Beatitudes*

Matthew 7.7–11: *Ask and it shall be given*

Matthew 16.13–19: *Peter's declaration about Jesus and upon Peter God will build God's church*

Matthew 22.37–40: *Jesus' Summary of the Law*

Luke 15.11–32: *The Prodigal Son*

John 20.11–18: *The risen Lord calls Mary by name*

John 20.19–29: *Blessed are those who have not seen but believe*

John 12.27–36: *When Jesus is lifted up, he will draw all people to himself*

Romans 8.12–22: *All who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God*

2 Corinthians 5.14–21: *In Christ, there is a new creation*

Galatians 3.27–4.7: *In baptism into Christ there is no longer male and female*

Galatians 4.1–7: *God sent God's Son that we might receive adoption as children*

Philippians 3.4a–end: *Our citizenship is in heaven*

1 John 3.1–3: *What we will be has not yet been revealed*

1 John 3.18–23: *Little children, let us love, not in word or speech, but in truth and action*

1 John 4.18–5.6: *There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear*

Revelation 21.1–6: *The new heaven and the new earth*

Presentation of the Candidates

7. When the candidate is presented there is an opportunity, should the person so wish, to share testimony (see note, *CW:CI* p.30). This could provide both the candidate and congregation with an opportunity both to understand the person's Christian journey and to affirm them in their identity. Testimony may culminate with the president inviting the whole congregation to welcome and uphold the candidate in their life in Christ.

Water

8. In commemoration of their baptism, the president may sprinkle candidates, or invite them to sign themselves with water from the font. As in other circumstances, it is important not to give the impression of a second baptism.

Use of the Name

9. In response to the candidate's affirmation of baptismal faith, the Rite makes provision for the president to lay his/her hand on each candidate, saying:

N, may God renew his life within you
that you may confess his name this day and for ever.
10. For a trans person to be addressed liturgically by the minister for the first time by their chosen name may be a powerful moment in the service. Some trans people may not wish their former name or gender to be mentioned. It should be noted that the giving or adoption of a new name has a long history in the Judeo-Christian tradition as may be evidenced from Scripture. In some Christian circles, for example, it is customary for candidates to adopt an additional or saint's name at their confirmation. In monastic communities it is not unusual for a person, either on receiving the habit or at profession, to take a new name.

Anointing

11. The Rite for the Affirmation of Baptismal Faith makes provision for the candidate to be anointed with the oil of chrism (*CW:CI*, pp.347-348). The use of oil may allow those involved to enter into a wealth of biblical imagery about the blessings of the Messianic age.

Giving of gifts

12. The service may conclude with the giving of gifts or a copy of the Bible (which could be inscribed with the person's new name. See *CW:CI* p.30).

Certification

13. As with all public services, a record of the service should be entered in the parish register. It may be appropriate for the minister to provide the person with a record of the event. This does not constitute a certified copy of an entry in a baptism register (which legally cannot be changed) but in the story of a trans person, such recognition may be pastorally appropriate because it constitutes a

public recognition of their identity and welcome in the life of God's church. A possible form of wording may be:

This is to certify that on [date of affirmation] *N.* reaffirmed the promises first made at their baptism.

An appropriate prayer such as

God of mercy, by whose grace alone we are accepted and equipped for your service: stir up in us the gifts of your Holy Spirit and make us worthy of our calling; that we may bring forth the fruit of the Spirit in love and joy and peace.

may be added to the certificate.