



OPINION

Guest Opinion: We Must Reaffirm All of God's Children with Expansive Love

By The Rev. Dr. Kristopher D. Schondelmeyer

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In a moment when the lives and dignity of LGBTQIA+ individuals are once again threatened by governmental actions that seek to erase their identities, we, as people of faith, must reaffirm our commitment to justice, compassion, and the full inclusion of all of God's children.

The recent executive order that seeks to define humanity in narrow, binary terms, stands in direct opposition to the expansive love and boundless grace that the gospel proclaims. As Christians, we are called to recognize and affirm the truth of each person as they are, honoring the sacredness of their bodies, their identities, and their experiences. To claim that only two genders exist is to ignore the scientific complexities of human diversity that God has woven into the fabric of creation.

As people of faith in the Presbyterian Church (USA), and a member of the Covenant Network of Presbyterians, First Presbyterian Church, Davenport, Iowa, declares that God's creation is not limited by human concepts or categories. Gender, like other aspects of human life, is not fixed in the ways that political or social systems would like to define it. As the creator has made us each unique and beloved, our identities — whether they align with societal norms or transcend them — are gifts to be cherished, not suppressed. This is why we, as a faith community, reject any policy or rhetoric that seeks to invalidate the lived experiences of transgender, non-binary, and gender-expansive individuals. We must not stand by while people are forced to conform to rigid definitions that harm their spiritual, emotional and psychological well-being.

The gospel invites us into a different way of seeing the world. It teaches us that we are all created in the image of God (Genesis 1:27), and that this divine image is as diverse as creation itself. In the life of Jesus Christ, we see the radical affirmation of those whom society often marginalizes — the poor, the outcast, the sinner, the foreigner, and,

yes, the gender-diverse. Jesus did not offer a narrow, exclusionary view of the world; he welcomed all who sought healing and wholeness, regardless of their identities, gender expressions or life circumstances.

The church must stand in this same place — on the side of the marginalized, the oppressed and the excluded. We must work to create safe and sacred space for all God's children. The words of the prophet Isaiah ring true: "Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine" (Isaiah 43:1). This declaration of God's unshakable love extends to persons of all genders, sexual orientations or identities. When the world insists on defining who belongs and who does not, we must remember that God's love is boundless, and so, too, should be our acceptance.

In this time of challenge, let us not be swayed by fear or political rhetoric, but let us stand firm in the truth that God's justice and love are greater than any decree of division or exclusion. In the spirit of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., we will continue to speak out against all forms of discrimination and work toward a society where all people — especially those who have been historically marginalized — can live freely and authentically. We will continue to work to create beloved community where all are welcome.

To our LGBTQIA+ siblings, we want you to know that you are beloved. You are seen. You are valued. Your existence is holy. And we, at First Presbyterian Church of Davenport, stand with you.

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