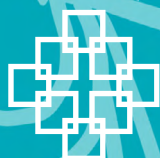
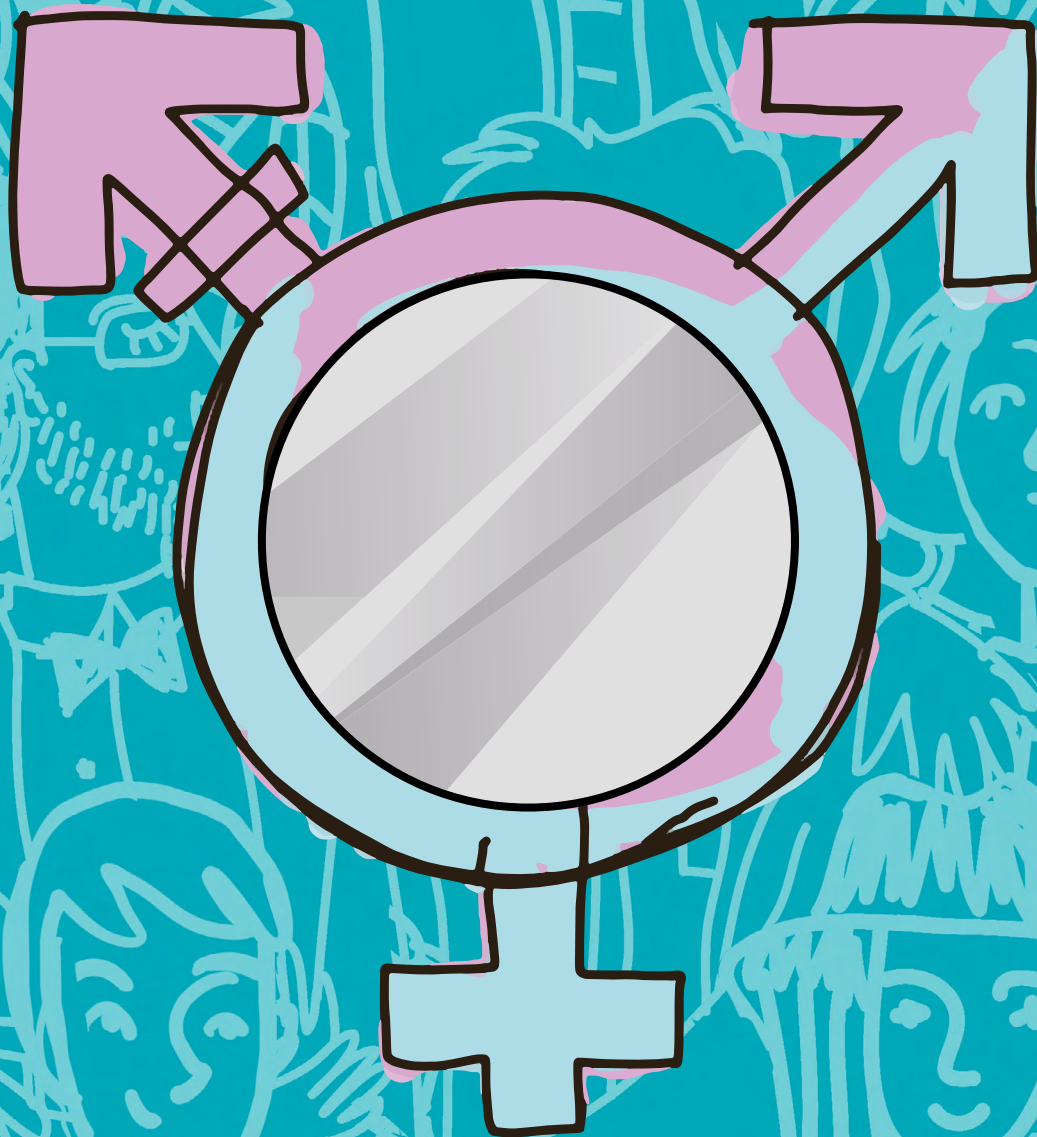


Made in the Image of God: Transsexuality in Church



PROTESTANT CHURCH
IN HESSE-NASSAU



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Preface written by the church president

Some time ago, our church's youth organization encouraged and demanded that we as a church deal more intensively with the situation of transsexual people, rightfully pointing out our own aspiration. As a church, we want everyone to be able to participate in our everyday congregational life irrespectively of their sex/gender, which is why gender diversity is a challenge for the activities of the church and church governance.

A first step is to become aware of sex/gender diversity. For many, this involves a change of mindset. Perception of gender diversity requires opening one's horizons and reassessing one's own thought patterns.

According to current **estimations**, there are more than 100,000 transsexual people in Germany. How are they perceived and what do they experience? It is the Christians' commitment to be particularly attentive to those who are marginalized. But do transsexual people in church and parish experience that they are really accepted?

This requires the understanding that there are people in between or beyond a life being defined as binary regarding sex and gender – not because they chose or decided to live that way, but because that is who they are. This is part of the diversity in which God has created us.

Anyone who affirms this can contribute to ending discrimination based on sex/gender and sexual orientation. I am convinced that, in this respect, we must not fall short of the aspiration to help people live a life of dignity and freedom out of the power of the Gospel.

On top of that, approving human diversity and variety can enrich both church and society. Initiating a process of mutual understanding will encourage appreciative and fruitful encounters with people and their personal histories. This may also help to better understand and live one's own life.

"Perception of gender diversity requires opening one's horizons"

In order to achieve all of that, it is necessary to take account of human experiences. Education and information on scientific knowledge are needed – as well as theological reflection. Therefore, the church governance has decided to set up a professional group dealing with gender justice, which has developed the handout you are reading right now.

The text deliberately includes detailed descriptions of individual experiences, which might be unfamiliar and sometimes irritating to the reader at first sight. These experiences are put into perspective presenting information on scientific findings. Theological, legal, and practical questions are presented and discussed. The church governance gives thanks to the professional group for their intensive work and the text at hand, publishing it in hopes that it will encourage valuable discussions on transsexuality both in church and society. May this handout especially contribute to a development that enables transsexual people to say:
“I enjoy being a member of my church.”



Dr. Dr. h.c. Volker Jung

Church president of the Protestant Church of Hesse-Nassau

Instructions for use

– Why this handout exists –

Dear readers,

This handout developed by the EKHN section for gender justice informs you about a subject that has barely been addressed until now: transsexuality and church.

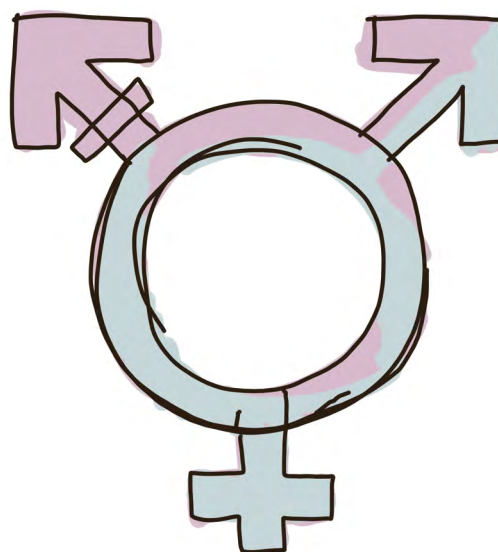
Genderless people seem to be unimaginable. Most people's gender self-perception and their physical condition match up, but for many people this is not (completely) the case. The fact that this does not just concern a tiny minority of the population has been clarified by the results of the legacy study carried out by the ZEIT magazine between July and October 2015.

Regarding the gender role that describes them best, 3.3 percent of the interviewees stated a gender deviating from the personal information they had been using in order to register for the survey.

Everyone perceives their own and other people's gender differently. Despite many commonalities, those individual perceptions sometimes even appear to mutually exclude each other.

In any case, everyone's individual, subjective gender self-perception deserves respect and recognition, even if some degree of generalization is inevitable in this handout.

Transidentity, transsexuality, transgender, trans*, trans, non-binary, genderqueer, transwoman, transman, trans*person, agender, queer etc. are examples of the variety of descriptive and classificatory terms that have developed from the multitude of perceptions and political intentions. There is no generally acknowledged definition of these terms, which basically all describe one circumstance: the deviation of a person's gender self-perception from the gender assigned at birth and ascribed in the further course of life. However, this handout does not focus on terms, but on these facts. Accordingly, different terms are used in the various chapters.



Trans* people are still often marginalized and discriminated, and the church has not implemented its aspiration of equal participation of everyone either. This handout aims to initiate the engagement with transsexuality in church. It addresses persons working in church as employees and volunteers as well as those interested in the subject.

The goal of this handout is

- ✘ to introduce new and possibly unfamiliar perspectives to you;
- ✘ to convey knowledge on sex/gender and connected processes, phenomena and theories;
- ✘ and to encourage activities to design an inclusive and gender-sensitive church for everyone.

The handout has been developed by an expert group consisting of volunteers, theologians, and church representatives. The church governance of the Protestant Church in Hesse-Nassau is responsible for the publication of the text of the expert group.

Each chapter enlarges upon particular aspects: personal testimonials, theological contextualizations, scientific and humanistic theories; the situation of children and teenagers; everyday experiences in the parish; medical and legal ways, and questions of everyday life. As with a modular system, you can select chapters that are helpful and relevant for you. To enhance the reading flow, we decided not to include references in the form of footnotes.

Let this brochure inspire you. Set out to find creative solutions for other fields of practice regarding parish, deanship, and the church as a whole. Stay in discussion with staff and volunteers. Address the subject in parish councils, in deanery councils, and in the church synod.

Feel free to contact us, the members of the professional group, in case of questions. Let us know your good ideas and share your experiences so we can include them in the next edition of this handout.

We hope that you will enjoy this reading, finding it inspiring and interesting!



Gender-sensitive language

The asterisk, as in “trans*” for instance (also called gender star; it stems from computer language, functioning as a wildcard for all kinds of endings in digital search systems) symbolizes space for persons who cannot or do not want to see themselves represented within the binary sex/gender system. All kinds of different identities, including nonbinary trans people, are meant to be included within the asterisk in “trans*”.

Interviews

What is it like to be trans*? Listening, inquiring, and understanding is the basis of serious examination with the subject and of living together successfully. Therefore, some trans* people were asked about their personal experiences for this brochure. Some of their names have been altered.

Mattheus

27, North Hesse, student of theology

How did you realize you are trans*?

I used to be an ordinary smalltown kid who thought of “transsexuals” as cranks typical of Berlin. It wasn’t until I met a trans* man who entrusted his story to me that I realized this exists in “real” life and can concern anybody. It was only then that I understood what trans* actually means and dared to think the unthinkable: I do not have to be a woman just because I have a body that has been categorized as “female”. As soon as I achieved that freedom of thinking, I almost instantly realized that I wasn’t a woman.

The realization that my body does not determine me has freed me from all role images in my head that I didn’t live up to and that put me under pressure. Yes, I always used to play with boys and hated shopping, and I never put on any make-up. But I also loved to wear dresses and I used to dance ballet for many years. You cannot measure being trans* by any clichés. It’s about something more profound. It’s about my self-conception. If I grant myself the freedom to be who I am – be it during prayer or meditation –, then I just know it.



How does that feel? How do you feel about it?

During the very first week following my unexpected realization that I am not a woman – that I don’t have to be a woman –, I was incredibly relieved. It was like my feet were placed in a wide space. There was a vastness that made me breathe freely at last. It was a feeling as though I had landed one level deeper within myself. Shaking her head in wonder, my mother once said, “You look so real!” And that’s what it feels like, too: simply right and totally normal.

The other people, however, did not react to my joyful discovery by saying, “That’s great!”, as I had expected, but rather by remarking, “Oh! I see. Huh? But ...” And so it happened that I found and still find myself justifying myself for my identity. There are indeed some people who think they know better who I am than I know myself. That is exhausting, and it makes me sad because it separates me from those people. Nevertheless! I’m glad that I am who I am, and I’m certain that I can rest assured of God’s infinite love just as well.

What have you experienced in your church about being trans*?

I guess the following experience was the most impressive one: I was new in the parish and in the mood to join in the gospel choir. Coincidentally, I sat right next to the choir master during service, and I asked her whether they were presently looking for any alto singers, to which she replied, “Yes, we’re desperately looking for female altos! I just heard you singing, and that’d be great! What’s your name?” – “Mattheus.“ Short pause. “We’re a Christian choir.” They did not want me, so that matter was defeated.

What exactly should your church do with respect to sex/gender diversity?

My church shouldn’t exclude people who are different – whether they’re parish members or people in the street – but accept and include them lovingly. I wish the church would precede society and help destigmatize gender diversity by addressing it, educating people about it, helping it become normal, thus dissolving people’s insecurity and prejudices. I wish LGBTTIQ people not to have to be afraid of christening, confirmation, or wedding, but instead the christening of an intersex child or the marriage of a same-sex couple, for instance, and maybe even the transition of a trans* person can be celebrated in church.

LGBTTIQ

LGBTTIQ

Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, transsexual, intersex and queer people

➔ Also see chapter “Sex and Gender”, page 12

TRANS*

gender diversity

Simon

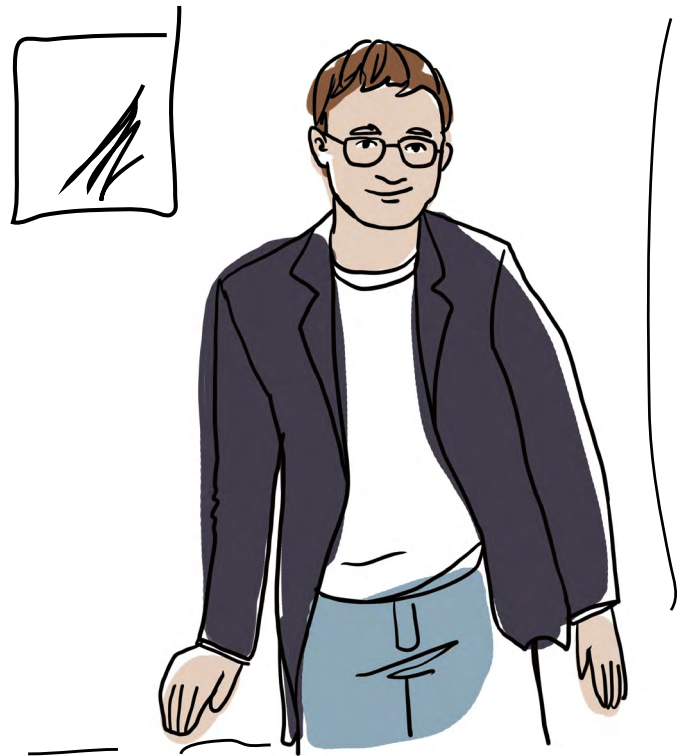
32, North Germany, pastor

How did you realize you are trans*?

During kindergarten, I did not realize it at all – rather, I was just who I wanted to be. The first time it became difficult was when I faced specific expectations from adults regarding my gender role. From that point onwards until the transition, I couldn't get rid of the special status. By the time I hit puberty, it became obvious to me that the way my body was changing did not match up with me at all and I strongly wished not to physically become a woman but a man. Then when I found out that trans identity doesn't only exist as male-to-female trans identity, but also as female-to-male trans identity, I knew that this was true for me.

How does that feel? How do you feel about it?

Whenever I am alone, it does not feel like anything specific, but I am just the way I am, and I'm so absorbed in my work or my hobbies that I obliviously just don't think about it and have no awareness of any problem. Prior to my transition, I often wondered if there would ever be a future worth living for me, or if I would constantly have to bear and endure my life. At each step of the transition, I experienced relief, liberation, and almost salvation, and my life got easier, less burdened, and inherently more livable. Now that my transition is complete, everything feels very right and harmonious – sometimes I am amazed at the fact that everything is done, while otherwhile, I am empowered by knowing that I was able to complete this seemingly impossible undertaking.



What have you experienced in your church about being trans*?

As someone who works in church, I used to wonder if and how the executives in the personnel department and the church governance would support that. I had been very worried about that – completely unnecessarily! Fortunately, as soon as the church governance indicated that they did not have any issue with my trans identity, but that they were very determined to support me, it was fortunately no longer a question for everyone else either.

What exactly should your church do with respect to sex / gender diversity?

It would be great if the established regional churches were willing to support the view that persons who are beyond the sex / gender binary and heteronormativity are simply recognized as a self-evident part of the multifaceted Christian community – which is already partly the case. Also, I would wish for non-executives who are theologically educated to express a little bit more of Lutheranism, i.e., courage: Go for it if you sense spiritually that's it is about a good thing, and if you can justify it theologically.

Asta

39, Rhineland-Palatinate,
media design graduate, mother

How did you realize you are trans*?

I simply felt it, although back then, I could not quite pin it down. As time went by, however, I gained more insight about myself and I knew: "I'm not a boy but a girl, even though my body gives a different impression". By the time of puberty at the latest, I was absolutely certain – even though I did not even know the expression "trans*" at the time and only learned at the age of 18 that there is a thing called transsexuality/trans identity and that I'm not crazy.

How does that feel? How do you feel about it?

At first, it simply was a dissonance, which is difficult to describe. As a teenager, I did not feel good about it because I couldn't pin it down and did not know I wasn't the only one who felt that way. To learn that I'm not the only one feeling this way gave me some relief. I knew what the case with me was but there was still the anxiousness what would happen if I showed myself and came out. Thus, I suppressed my true self for many years, stopped an attempt to come out and continued to suppress my self. After some time going on this way however, I was more and more miserable.

I had to choose between being broken or coming out at last. I opted for the latter, and since that time I've been doing way better!



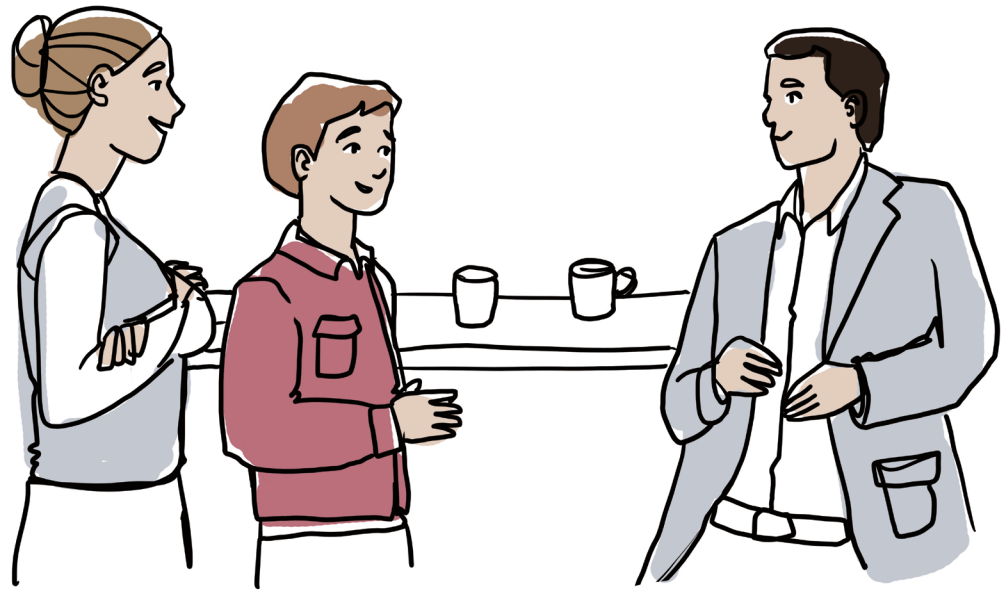
What have you experienced in your church about being trans*?

Interestingly, nothing specific. I was accepted the way I am, actually just like everywhere – including my children's kindergarten and in clubs or associations. In fact, there was more interest and inclination for talk than expected – a positive inclination for talk, a genuine interest.

What exactly should your church do with respect to sex / gender diversity?

Continue to show openness, be open to all – and consistently represent this to skeptics.

"I'm not a boy, I'm a girl, even if my body makes people think otherwise."



Sex and gender

Gender is a human property which fundamentally determines one's individual thinking, feelings, and behavior. All cultures have their concept of gender. In our culture, gender is nearly exclusively defined by the human body (sex), more specifically with "male" and "female" as each other's counterparts. One's sex is assigned at birth due to body features (genitalia), and in the further course of life it is associated with certain experiences, concepts, and idealizations. Whenever someone's sex/gender appears ambiguous or does not "match" the first appearance, the prevalent expectations are baffled. Many people react with insecurity and resistance, and quite often they more or less consciously try to figure out the "real" sex/gender of the other person.

Sex/gender as fact and construction

The division of humans into exactly two sexes/genders, "male" and "female", is not just a characteristic of our every-day awareness but also serves as a basis of the existing social and legal system. One's social role and status are determined by one's gender, which is shown by gender-typical professions and gender-specific rules and restraints. This regulatory scheme structures and arranges our social world's diversity, the underlying assumption being that people are either "male" or "female" only, thus leaving no place for a position in between or an ambiguity of sex/gender.

That is because sex is regarded as a clearly determinable condition fixed from birth onwards by the genitals, which are regarded as the crucial indicator.

However, the classification of human beings into two mutually exclusive, but complementary sexes does not only ignore the diversity of human bodies, but also the complexity of sex.

In scientific respect, it is also completely impossible to confirm this concept. In each individual case, sex/gender is a unique combination of several entirely different characteristics at an individual (biological, psychological) and social level. The binary sex/gender model, which the existing social and legal system and also traditional conceptions of the human being are based on, turns out as a simplifying construct.

There are not just two possible types of sexual bodies, but there is a spectrum of sex characteristics blending into each other, which differ from person to person. In addition, there are the external perception by other people in the social environment as well as the classifications made by others. The crucial quality is one's sex/gender-related sense of self, which can be contradictory to the sex assigned at birth or attributed by other people. This describes the condition of a discrepancy of the sexual body referred to as transsexuality.

Aspects of biological sex

- (1) Chromosomal/genetic sex (XX, XY, etc.)
- (2) Gonadal sex (gonads: testicles, ovaries)
- (3) Genital sex (external sex organs: penis, scrotum, vulva etc.)
- (4) Gonoductal sex (internal sex organs: epididymis, uterine tube etc.)
- (5) Cerebral sex/brain sex (neurohormonal activity, neuroanatomical differences)

Binary sex model

This model assumes that sex only exists as either "male" or "female"; intermediate positions or ambiguities are inexistent.

Sexual body

The respective individual characteristics of the human body, which manifest themselves through various genitals, but also through body structure (hips, shoulders), face, hands etc.

Discrepancy of the sexual body

Deviation of a person's sexual self-identification from the sex assigned at birth based on their external physical features.

"One cannot divide the world into goats and sheep. Things are not either black or white. It is a fundamental of taxonomy that nature rarely deals with discrete categories. Only the human mind invents categories and tries to force facts into separate pigeon-holes. The living world is a continuum in each and every one of its aspects."

- Alfred C. Kinsey, US-American sexologist,
1894 - 1956

“Why are we so unsettled when God does not abide by the rules made by humans?”
(Regina Aumicht Quinu, theologian, University of Tübingen, b 1957)

Transsexuality

Transsexuality is an inherent difference between one's sex/gender-related self-perception and the sex assigned at birth (“midwife sex”). It may involve the urgent need to align one's way of life and body to the inwardly dominating sex/gender. For a long time, transsexuality was considered a serious mental disorder – a misjudgment which led to massive discrimination and violence against transsexual people. However, due to neuroscientific and bioscientific research, a change of paradigm has taken place throughout the past two decades. Transsexuality is not a mental disorder but an individual variation of human sexuality. The process of becoming aware of this sexual body discrepancy can go along with substantial suffering for those affected. Frequently, this results in serious adverse effects for example on partnership and family. Moreover, regarding the realization of their special matter, transsexual people are dependent on doctors and psychologists, who quite often lack the necessary respect for their sexual and gender self-determination and their esteem that is to be expected based on the dignity of every human being.

A challenge for theology and church

Without a doubt, the shift in perspective regarding sex and gender represents an enormous challenge for theology and church, given that the assumption of the human sex/gender binary and the resulting dualism of “man” and “woman” make up a seemingly God-given and therefore fundamental determination of the traditional Christian conception of the human being. Church and theology want to provide orientation for the process of dealing with today's tasks and challenges. Thus, they do not ignore contemporary extra-theological knowledge and social realities but include them into theological and ethical questions. Persons who stand and live beyond or in between the two sex/gender groups and have been ignored or excluded so far, are not to be regarded as flawed deviations of “normality” but are to be understood as an expression of the diversity of creation.

CREATION



Theological perspectives

Read from a new viewpoint – Biblical texts for a better understanding of sex and gender diversity

The bible is a library of scriptures from many centuries and most various societal situations offering different standpoints and perspectives. The Bible is also read in different situations – therefore providing a variety of different answers. And yet, the Bible has a center: God’s encounter with humans and her*his liberating commitment to those being marginalized socially, economically, or culturally. Law and justice are God’s essential hallmark both in the Old and in the New Testament – and therefore his*her loving support for those who are (still) powerless. It is essential to discover the Bible’s great potential of hope and liberation for all human beings.

The human as a bodily being

The biblical scriptures positively hold on to the human being’s bodiliness. The human being is made of “dust of the ground” (Genesis 2:7) and does not become a purely spiritual being at any historical point in time. Humans are vulnerable and evanescent, with all their experiences, sensations, relationships, their reasoning, and not least their love and compassion being shaped by their body (Hebrews 13:3: “Remember those who are in chains, as if imprisoned with them, and those who are ill-treated, since you are also in the body.”). One’s body is a part of one’s identity and far more than merely an instrument of the mind or the soul. Building a good relationship with your own body and your environment is part of being human.

Genesis 1:27 in selected translations

“God created the human being in his own image, in the image of God created he him. Male and female created he them.” (*Revised Ecumenical Bible translation, 2017*)

“So, God created Adam, the humans, as a divine image; in God’s image they were created; male and female did he, did she, God, create them.” (*Bible in Inclusive Language, 2006*)

“And God created the human being in his image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.” (*Schlachter Bible, 1951*)

“God created the human being in his image, in the image of God he created him, male, female he created them.” (*Buber-Rosenzweig 1929*)

The human being as God’s image

“And God created the human being as his image; as God’s image he created him; and created them as man and woman.” (*Genesis 1:27; cited from: Luther Bible, 2017*)

For a long time, that Bible verse has been interpreted as a normatively restrictive determination of the human being limited to two sexes instead of understanding it as an explanatory description of two characteristics.

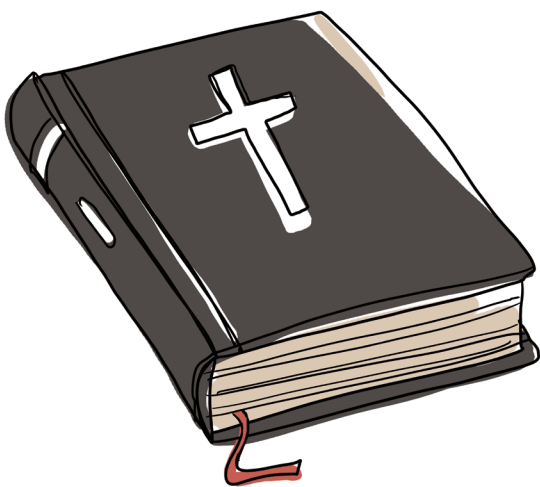
In the tradition of biblical exegesis, the limiting translation as “man and woman” (while the Hebrew wording complies with, “[...] male and female he created them”) has promoted a focus which cannot fully appreciate the content of the message of this text – neither at the level of content nor language. For it is only in a second step that the determination of the human being as God’s image (*Genesis 1:27 a + b*) is linked to the statement that the genus entity ‘human being’ was created “male and female” (*Genesis 1:27 c*).

From a Christian point of view, a new approach to interpret this influential Bible passage can include Christological aspects (*e.g., Galatians 3:28*). Furthermore, one can also take the abundance of varieties within its reception history into account. In this context, on the one hand, one could think of early Jewish and rabbinical speculation on the prehistoric human’s androgyny. The Midrasch Bereschit Rabba from the fifth century, for example, states that “when the Holy One, who is blessed, created the first human being – he created him androgynous because it is said: male and female he created them” (BerR 8:1). On the other hand, one can take account of the distinction of a “duplicate” or “double creation” of the human being, as found in the theology of the early Eastern Church. According to Gregory of Nyssa (approx. 335-394), for instance, the human being was initially created as an androgynous spiritual entity, only subsequently to be created in their corporeality and sexuality. The image of God is seen in the androgynous human being which is not yet differentiated in sexual respect (*Essay on the human’s equipment [De opificio hominis], ch. 16*).

BROADENING THE PERSPECTIVE

Thus, the creation of the human being as God's image can be interpreted quite differently:

- ✘ Just like in God, femininity and masculinity can also be found in a single individual.
- ✘ It is said about all other living beings that they are created "according to their kinds". The human being, however, is created "in the image of God": God starts a history with the human being. Thereby, the creation story does not (sexually) define the human being in any final way, but it relates his open future. According to God's will, 'nature' does not dictate human life. This also becomes apparent in the numerous biblical stories in which God makes use of nature or surmounts natural laws in order to free people.
- ✘ Diversity is intended: Genesis 1:27 remarks that there are differences between humans but also raises the question how these many different people can represent the image of God's unity. From the beginning, human beings are jointly created into a movement that aims for atonement and becoming one – which therefore aims at overcoming separation and relations of power and dominance.



Recreation in Christ

According to Paul, the separations and hierarchies between humans are already overcome in Christ. In a text that is visionary to the present day, he describes the recreation as follows: "Since all you who were baptized into the Messiah have put on the Messiah. There is not Jewish or Greek, there is not enslaved or free, there is not male and female: for all of you are one united with the Messiah Jesus." (*Galatias 3:27, cited from: Bible in Inclusive Language*). In the Christian community, Paul sees the Kingdom of God shining up, in which the former limits are overcome: national and cultural, social limits – and even those regarding sex / gender. Even if he himself does not fulfill this claim consistently, he lays the conceptual basis in order to break up rigid images of women and men and to free human beings from the restrictions of roles and patterns of sex / gender, marriage, and parenthood. The degree to which Paulus has an open mind becomes obvious only some verses later, when he applies the image of a female body to himself by writing: "My dear children, for whom I am again in the pains of childbirth" (*Galatias 4:19*).

"What we will be has not yet been made known ..."
(*1 John 3:2*)

The authors of the Bible expect something to be due in the future of mankind. They experience – and so do we – the existing world as a calamity. Dominance, suppression, and exploitation characterize the treatment of the earth and the coexistence of human beings. Many people, including those who do not fit (gender) norms, suffer from these conditions, which stand in contrast to the hope for a world in which humans are given complete expression, while they respect and support each other.

RESPECT

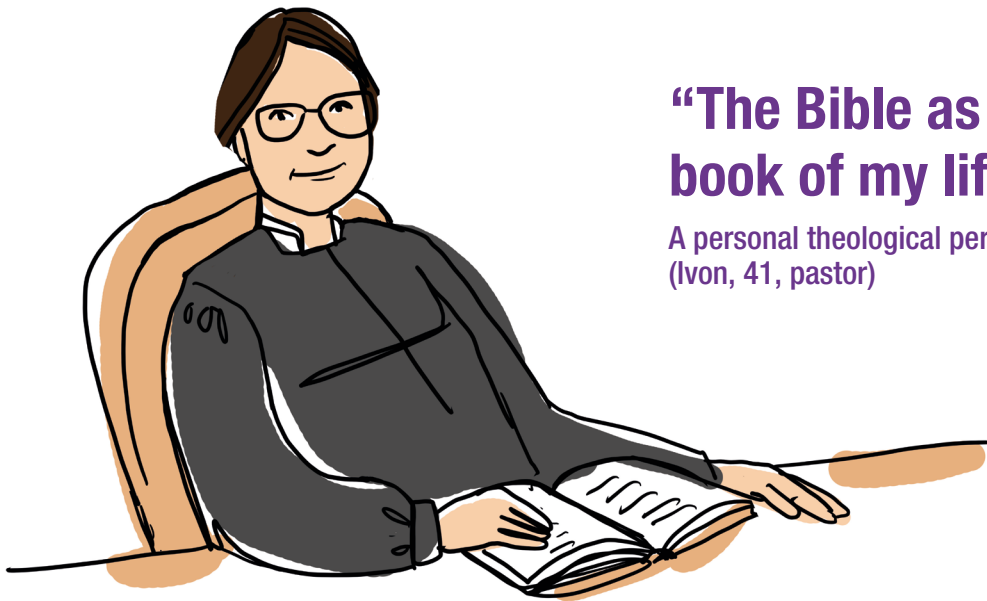
Those who do not fit into (gender) norms are witnesses to the fact that God does not abide by the rules of human beings – but has created everyone in a wonderfully unique way. They are not sick, strange or odd, but represent an impulse for necessary changes in church and society. Mutual interest, respect, and appreciation of being different are the cornerstones on the way to a more salutary world.

Eunuchs – an example of sexual diversity in the Bible

In fact, also the Bible contains reports about humans who do not fit into a strictly binary sexual pattern of woman and man. The Old and New Testament write about “eunuchs”, i.e., men who have been made infertile. At first, they were not fully recognized members of the Israelite society (*5 Genesis 23:2 f.*). In a later discussion of the violence suffered by eunuchs who had been forcibly castrated and were childless against their own will, they were rehabilitated however: Human beings who were made infertile by force are not to say: “I am only a dry tree.”

Thus, God speaks: “To the eunuchs who keep my Sabbaths, who choose what pleases me and hold fast to my covenant to them I will give within my temple and its walls a memorial and a name better than sons and daughters; I will give them an everlasting name that will endure forever.” (*Isaiah 56: 3-5, acc. to New International Version of the Bible*). The New Testament presents eunuchs in a surprisingly positive way. Jesus regards eunuchs with complete equality speaking of them as “eunuchs who were born that way”, as “eunuchs who have been made eunuchs by others” and of “those who choose to live like eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom of heaven” (*Matthew 19:12, NIV*).

The record of the ancient Christian attitude towards eunuchs is truly liberating, even if it might be idealized: In Acts 8:26-39 Philip does not hesitate for a moment to baptize an Ethiopian eunuch – thus, a visibly “different” person – both in terms of darker skin color and as a “feminine” man. This episode gives reason to believe that the ancient Christian congregation obviously tended to welcome human beings particularly in their diversity – be it a difference regarding language, skin color, social provenance, or sex/gender.



“The Bible as the book of my life.”

A personal theological perspective
(Ivon, 41, pastor)

Since I discovered that I did not fit into the “predetermined” gender patterns, I not only suffered from the obvious tendency to make me fit into the pattern, but also from the feeling: The Bible is against me. “There it is written: God created them male and female. Full stop. Nothing in between. And only man and woman may live together as a couple. God only represents their love in the world. Again, full stop.”

And even if I was told that God would love me, this seemed to be an insipid love according to the principle: First you must change before you are really lovable in the eyes of God. The Bible had meant a lot to me until then – so I wanted to expect something from it. I immersed myself more deeply in the subject, I learned by studying liberation theology, feminist, queer, Judaic and social historic literature. And I rediscovered the Bible as the book of my life as well.

In my studies I learned various things which helped me very much, for instance:

- ✘ The Bible has something like an inner center: God, who wants to liberate suppressed and suffering human beings, who sides with the disenfranchised, who fights death and the forces of death – and whose goal is: healing, peace, love, life for all human beings. Whether in the larger themes or in little episodes: this center radiates again and again. And this means that all texts may or even have to be evaluated based on the question whether they serve this center.
- ✘ The Bible does not follow one line but is many-voiced. There is an inner biblical conversation, sometimes even contradiction – for example, there is the inner structure of Thora and prophecy, of commandment and critical renewal of the commandment. What serves life at a specific point in time, can be an obstacle at another time in life. The Scripture even includes this discussion and invites us to take part in the talk with our own experiences. Again and again, it becomes evident that the Scripture must not be used as a weapon against others, that it defends itself against being instrumentalized.

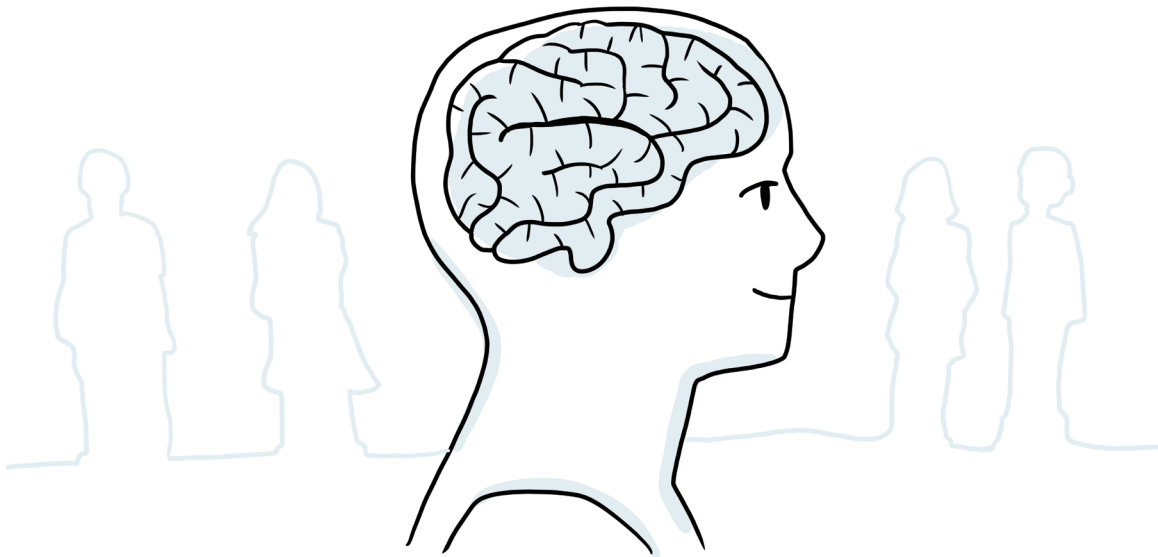
I also found out that particularly those texts which were always used against me or against LGBTTIQ can be interpreted differently and then even create an unimagined potential of liberation and a new beauty. I felt this way about Genesis 1:27, for example (the verse from which for many centuries a so-called “order of creation” was derived, which puts down all LGBTTIQ life). The way the Bible substantiates the dignity of all human beings by them being made in the image of God, the way it makes clear with this one verse alone that no human being can doubt the dignity of another – that’s what impresses me.

Scripture has become my conversational partner and permanent companion. It scrutinizes me and allows me to scrutinize it. And again and again, I marvel at its beauty and wisdom:

- ✘ It fights against suppressing structures and for the liberation of human beings.
- ✘ It discusses subjects like family, sex/gender, passing on of life in a versatile way including frictions between position.
- ✘ It takes our human experiences serious and assures us that “God has heard our cry and seen our misery”.
- ✘ It calls on us to take part in transforming the world.
- ✘ It proclaims the Messiah as the one who stands by us and endures our life with us.

And thus, it encourages me again and again: I may take part in the dialog with the Scripture and also in the messianic space of the congregation, with my inner conflicts and also with my competences gained from them. And if at first, I represent an “offense” for some members of the congregation – not only regarding this subject – then this is a good thing, as an offense brings about movement – and I believe: It is God who wants to bring church into movement again and again!

➡ *About LGBTTIQ see page 9*



Transsexuality from the perspective of brain research

Mysterious

Medicine has always been struggling with phenomena that are mysterious and inexplicable at first sight. This is particularly true for those phenomena which relate to the brain/nervous system. Frequently, patients are admitted to psychiatry. The latter has intensely marked the phenomenon of transsexuality. For decades, persons with a transsexual background were diagnosed with a mental illness or disorder.

The neuroscientific turnaround

In the mid-1990s a new development emerged in medicine. This was initiated by research of the neurosciences (“brain research”), but also by an increasingly stronger self-help movement (communities and networks): Those “affected” were no longer willing to be pigeon-holed as mentally troubled and incurably ill. They joined together in networks and associations to fight against medical paternalism, pathologization and social discrimination.

The neurosciences began to revolutionize the scientific concepts about transsexuality. The phenomenon was now understood as an innate biological sex/gender variant.

Researchers such as Milton Diamond, Dick Swaab, Frank Kruijver, Mark Solms and Vilayanur Ramachandran developed a new approach: They regarded transsexuality as a sexual-biological particularity of the nervous system in mismatch (“discrepancy” or “incongruence”) to other sexual organs. In particular, researchers found out that the nervous system has its own “sex” and that this “sex” of the nervous system does not correspond to the genitalia (e.g., penis, vagina) or gonads (e.g., testicles, ovaries) in the case of persons with a transsexual background. In the 1970s, Milton Diamond in particular was already able to elaborate that transsexuality is a form of “intersexuality” and distinguished two possibilities in this context: (1) The nervous system has a female orientation, the genitalia are male, or (2) vice versa: male nervous system and female genitalia. Thus, in the case of transsexuality there are two different sexes in one organism: cerebral sex (brain sex) combined with a “discrepant” (“unmatching”) genital sex.

The medical body of evidence for this concept is sound, there are robust studies, which is however contested by some sexual psychiatrists and psychologists, who continue to stick to the interpretation of transsexuality as a psychological disorder ("gender dysphoria") in a strict opposition to the affected persons' self-perception of their body.

The brain is a sort of "central organ", which regulates the entire organism and determines our life. The brain/nervous system dominates daily life, our activities, and our self-conception. If this organ "functions" in a sexually female way, with the genitalia being male in contrast, the "affected persons" tend to say about their own sex, despite their male genitalia: "I am a woman, I perceive myself as female". Therefore, strictly speaking the person in question is a woman with a penis. In contrast, if the brain „functions" in a sexually male way (despite female genitalia), the person will make the self-related statement: "I am a man, I perceive myself as male". Thus, it is a man with a vagina.

Therefore, according to Diamond, it makes more sense not to regard the person's sex as determined shortly after birth by looking at the genitals and by assigning it, but to wait until the brain/nervous system has developed to the point that the individual human being is able to perceive his/her own sex. For Diamond, particularly the self-related statements "I am a man", "I am a woman" or "I am somehow both" are essential with respect to the determination of the personal sex, since sex "sits between the ears", as Diamond succinctly expressed it.

"I am a woman.
I perceive myself
as female."

I am a man

Sensation of a sex/gender discrepancy

The innate mismatch between "brain sex" and physical sex can first be latent for years and decades before a clear discomfort becomes noticeable. A transsexual woman, Olivia, describes: One morning, in the beginning of my puberty, I woke up with a slight dragging pain in my breast. I immediately asked my mother if this was normal. She remarked humorously that I probably developed breasts. I felt a slight glimpse of hope inside myself, thinking after all I might partly develop into a girl. I sensed my nipples and really got the impression something was growing there. But after a week the dream was over, the breast remained flat, and soon after I had my voice break.

Besides this body-related discomfort (e.g., "something is missing"/"there is something that should not be there") there are various other individual patterns of such sexual discrepancies. This becomes evident, for instance, when men with a transsexual background describe that their ("feminine") physical shape was extremely irritating, and they were appalled by the typical female curvatures, breast, buttocks, and hips. Even internal organs can be sensed as irritating and consuming space internally. A typical description in this context: A man illustrates the severe discomfort to perceive his womb as torturingly superfluous and "space-consuming". For a long time, it had been mere guesswork how these sexual, body-related sensations of discrepancies might arise.

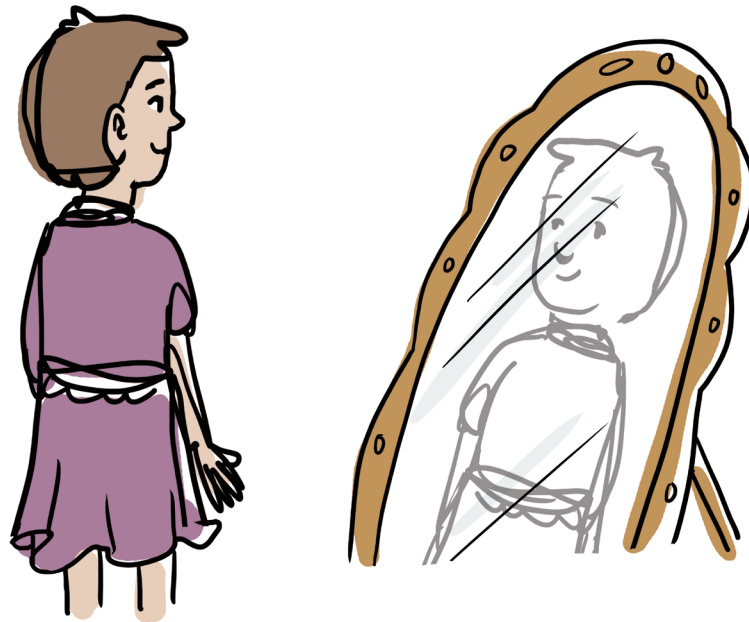
The renowned brain researcher Vilayanur Ramachandran succeeded in solving this “mystery” in 2008. Through a study with persons who experience such discrepancy sensations he found out that many of them have perceptions and experiences of phantom limbs. Sandra, a transsexual woman, describes: *My phantom breasts are somehow mysterious. They appear and soon disappear again. On my breast I temporarily sense a nebulous, partly light grey “smoky” soft and non-tangible texture. I can see the non-existing breast with my inner eye, and when I slowly move my upper body, I can even roughly assess the size of the breasts.*

Body maps – phantom penis and phantom breasts

From neurology we know that phantom limbs are perceived if the nervous system, particularly the brain, “expects” elements of the body although they do not exist (for instance, after an amputation of the upper thigh, the leg is no more present, but its image is still present in the brain). That is to say, in the brain there are body maps of the entire body, which allow the individual to keep a spatial bearing of the respective parts of the body.

A transsexual woman, Alexia, pondered about these research findings of Ramachandran and writes: Basically, a body map in the brain serves as an orientation of one’s own body. Thanks to the map I know where my feet are in relation to other body parts, and I can run without having to match every single movement with the environment. I am also able to guide the tip of the index finger in a wide circle to the tip of my nose with eyes closed. So, the “body map” is the map of my physical body that exists in my head. Now about sex / gender: *These body maps in the brain can vary just like sexual aspects of the physical appearance. They may correspond to the visual aspects, but don’t necessarily. They may be unambiguous in sexual respect, but don’t necessarily. Thus, this body map in the head tells me that an arm HAS TO be here and a leg there. If something is missing, I get phantom sensations. This body map might also say that there HAS TO be a female breast attached to the chest. If it is not to be found there, a discrepancy arises, which can lead to a discomfort.*

“The most important sex organ is not between the legs ; it’s between the ears.”
- Milton Diamond, US sexologist of the University of Hawaii, *1934



“Leib” (subjective body) and body using the example of transsexuality

Sexual Leib-body discrepancies

In the medicine of the 20th century, two fundamentally different perspectives with respect to the human organism have been developed. The organism can be regarded as corporal (“leiblich”) in the sense of being “incarnate”, animate and inspired, and/or in a classically scientific way as “purely” physical. It is the same phenomenon (principle of the “Leib-body unity”), just regarded from different perspectives.

The physical body aspect can be delimited, observed, and categorized. The physical body is something solid, circumscribable. In contrast, corporal in the sense of “Leib” is rather subjectively perceptible, not precisely delimitable, for ME it is difficult to categorize the Leib (aspect) precisely. You have a body, but it’s ME who is corporal-animate (“incarnate”) – the body is referred to in the 3rd person, while MY Leib is mentioned in the 1st person/I form. The body can be observed, sensed, heard (voice!) with each of the five senses, but I rather sense MY Leib in a holistic way with all senses as a whole. Body and limbs can be measured, but it is me who experiences “Leib” as rather “diffuse”, non-measurable islands.

According to these perspectives sexual discrepancies can be recognized/perceived “physically”, but also sensed in a “corporal” way (by myself). “One” permanently and systematically observes whether the hormone therapy already “shows effects” and the beard hair has become thinner. The scarf is supposed to hide the prominent Adam’s apple. These discrepancies are perceived very specifically, “one” has them visibly “as part of the body”. However, I (and only I) can also sense sexual discrepancies (according to the “Leib” aspect): From the Leib perspective, the discrepancies are more or less a component and characteristic of the personal self-perception. In the self-view it becomes evident: This is ME. The discrepancies are a part of me, they are my personal “hallmark”.

Here I don't perceive anything in a distanced way, but I sense myself as sexually coherent or dissonant. Quotations from persons who describe their Leib discrepancy:

- ✘ “My” penis irritates me by its permanent distressing-embarrassing presence.
- ✘ I experience “my” – rather: the – Adam’s apple as strange and irritating.
- ✘ The uterus makes me feel “overburdened like with something alien”.
- ✘ The missing breast makes me feel sad and depressed.

The suffering from such discrepancies can be severe, it can destroy, undermine, even etiolate, emotionally deaden or deeply disturb the entire existence. “Leib” (extended corporeality) and body are no opposites but form a coherent unity. Humans with transsexuality need a fundamental, basal harmony of sexual Leib and body: I experience my sexual Leib-body discrepancies as fundamentally and in many regards dissonant. The numerous fundamental sexual Leib-body discrepancies spoil MY life. It is not about beauty ideals (enhancement) or fashion trends, but about existential necessity.

What's also important: The “incarnate”, lively sexual Leib aspect always includes societal-psychological aspects, male roles, female roles (“gender”), but also accessories, clothes, attire, cosmetics. These are to be included in the consideration or already considered when we use the term “Leib”. Specifically, this means that sexual Leib-body discrepancies are also experienced and altered with respect to clothes, name, behavior etc.

Sexual Leib-body congruency and congruency dynamics

Peculiar, positively experienced phenomena manifest themselves relatively early in the biographies of those “affected”. These become evident, for instance, when children that seem to be “boys” already try on the mother’s or sister’s clothes at a young age, experiencing astounding feelings of bliss never felt before. These trial activities are initiated impulsively, they leave a profound mark and are a pacemaker for further spontaneous “testing” activities, during which the persons experience harmony and happiness. They get an impression of what sexual Leib-body congruency is.

These markedly positive feelings when acting spontaneously generate some sort of “dynamics” from which the flow of further spontaneous actions arises directly. The experiences of joy become imprinting, leave a profound imprint in the brain and can thus function as a pacemaker (“craving for congruency”) for the further course. The feelings of bliss experienced during the actions are signposts for the further development, as they form an inextinguishable memory.

Congruency intentions – transition

The spontaneous actions that create bliss unfold their inherent positive dynamics more and more. With congruency dynamics, realization, knowledge, and reflection grow simultaneously. In the further course, this often leads to the plan to improve the sexual coherence by means of rational reasoning and realization of a medical sex reassignment. Sexual reassignment measures and adjustments (transition) can be implemented at two levels:

Level 1 – Changes in daily life: During the reassignment process changes in the way of life and the environment are implemented. This can entail: Stepping out of the assigned gender lifestyle by changing the first name and changes in the individual daily behavioral patterns (e.g., communication, appearance, clothes).

Level 2 – Medical-physical sex reassignment: This is realized by specific medical steps and measures such as hormonotherapy and surgeries. The indicator for a successful transition is the feeling of coherence and healthiness, i.e., the degree of congruency dynamics. A woman called Sabine illustrates:

After the official change and the surgeries everything was flowing together. I experienced times during which everything felt incredibly easy. Life and the daily routine appeared to be the perfect reward. There were no more goals, I just WAS. My SELF, that had been so important before, seemed to play no more role. Everything flowed, my body felt good and coherent. Body, mind and soul appeared fused.

TRANSITION

Body, mind and soul



Children and teenagers

In the past years an increased medial visibility of trans* children and teenagers is to be observed. Revealing the experiences of trans* children and adolescents as well as their families to the public enables others to feel empathically with them – or to recognize oneself in these. Especially on the internet helpful information can be found these days. This leads to a greater sensitivity towards trans* children and teenagers.

As trans* is an unchangeable innate imprinting, not only adults, but also children and youngsters experience their sex/gender as deviating from the sex/gender assigned at birth. Children and adolescents are entitled to sexual self-determination. They alone know which sex/gender they (don't) assign themselves to, they are experts of themselves. Never can anybody else assess a person's sex/gender competently. Some children and teenagers perceive their sex/gender as clearly "male" or "female", others hesitate for a relatively long time or are beyond the binary system.

➔ See chapter
"Sex and Gender", page 12

Statements by children and teenagers

Some children and teenagers explicitly talk about their gender by referring to themselves as "girl" or "boy" in opposition to their assigned gender. However, nonverbal behavioral patterns are more frequent: For instance, trans* children and adolescents often prefer clothes, hairstyles, activities, or friends which correspond to their sexual sense of self. In this context, a high degree of sensitivity is crucial, as evidently not every girl with short hair is a trans* boy, and not every boy who likes to wear dresses is a trans* girl. In the sense of personality development and gender-sensitive pedagogics, all children and teenagers are to be supported and encouraged in finding and living out their gender.

Children often tend to express their gender in a spontaneous, natural way, adolescents, in contrast, go through the process of trans* self-awareness autonomously, find information, support and advice on the internet or at various contact points.

Interview with Paula (7, Southern Hesse, pupil)

Paula is a trans* girl. Her physical features are masculine, and her parents raised her as a son in the beginning. However, from an early stage onwards she has been aware that she is a girl and wants to live as such. With her parents' support she changed the social role from "boy" to "girl". In this way she apparently also learned to use the term trans* for self-reference.

How did you realize you are trans*?

I noticed because everyone called me a boy but I mostly liked to wear dresses. I have always felt like a girl at heart.

How does that feel? How do you feel about the situation?

Sometimes I feel a bit awkward as others laugh at me or don't understand me. But actually, it is a good feeling that I am a girl.

What experiences have you made with your church regarding trans*?

In the children's choir I told all the children. The conductor knew it already, but I wanted to tell it to the children myself so that they don't learn about it from others. I really like being in the children's choir of the parish, no one laughs about me, and we all stick together. The protestant children's choir is one of my favorite places.

What should your church do in the field of gender diversity?

In my parish they have already done everything they can do for me. They accept and support me. In the service, the pastors can say that people who are trans are as valuable as everyone else.



TSG

Reactions of the environment

The reactions of parents and environment vary extremely when children and teenagers show a norm-variant behavior with respect to sex/ gender or come out as trans*. For the environment, a transition often involves grief, insecurity, and anxiety at first. They first have to abandon their sex/ gender-specific ideas about the children and teenagers in order to get to know them “in a new way”.

Some parents support their children in the sense of the encouragement mentioned above and allow them to freely choose clothes, hobbies etc. They talk to their child about his or her gender in an open and appreciative way, accompany and support him/ her through the steps of transition, for example when deciding about a new forename, and help the child assert his/ her right of self-determination towards family, school etc. This is the only approach proven not to harm the children. Other parents are afraid of social exclusion and mobbing so that they allow their child to act according to his/ her sexual sense of self only within a protected environment (e.g., at home). Another group of parents ignore and negate their children’s expression. These parents enforce a preferably norm-conforming life corresponding to the assigned sex. By doing so, they harm their children, since it is impossible to change a person’s experienced gender – even through so-called “conversion therapies”.

Ways of transitioning

Just like adult trans* persons, children and teenagers suffer if they are not able to live according to their sexual sense of self. The following measures can help trans* children and adolescents:

- ✘ Social transition: This refers to starting to use a new forename (informally at first) and changing to a different gender role. The person begins to live as a “boy”/ “girl”.
- ✘ Official change of forename and civil status: The Transsexuellengesetz (TSG) itself does not state a minimum age, therefore children and adolescents can also have their forename and civil status changed judicially according to the TSG procedure; medical measures are mostly not advisable before onset of puberty.
- ✘ The puberty “into the wrong direction” can be postponed by means of pharmaceuticals, thanks to which teenagers do not develop the “wrong” sex characteristics such as breasts, puberty vocal change etc. At a later stage, adolescents can start a gender-confirming (“cross-sex”) hormone therapy, i.e., they pass through that puberty which corresponds to their gender. Adolescents from 16 years of age onwards can undergo sex/ gender reassignment surgeries (e.g., mastectomy), genital surgeries are only performed for adults. A corresponding medical indication is a prerequisite for all medical interventions.

SELF-PERCEPTION

Support

Children and teenagers often experience trans* as a burden. They suffer from existing in the “wrong” sex/gender, experience themselves as “different” and isolated in the peer group with their peculiar experiences. At the same time, especially teenagers are afraid of coming out, fear rejection, discrimination, and violence. All youngsters are highly challenged by the task of development with respect to identity formation and autonomy, however trans* teenagers face a particularly massive challenge.

In fact, many trans* children and adolescents experience discrimination and violence and are often psychologically burdened. This is especially the case if they enjoy no support from their families or experience discrimination on several levels. Thus, supporting trans* children and adolescents is an important task! Direct, personal and possibly confidential agreements and conversations with respect to trans* are crucial.

It is also essential to inform children and teenagers about trans* in an adequate and age-appropriate way and to enable them to get in touch with other trans* persons.

Trans* children and adolescents as well as their parents require childcare workers in nurseries, teachers, pedagogues in youth centers, volunteers in children’s and youth work, who are briefed about trans* and have an attitude which supports the children’s and teenagers’ right to self-determination in every respect. Training courses and educational events about this subject are indispensable in this context. Irrespective of the specific individual case, there should be an appreciative and plurality-friendly atmosphere based on the idea of inclusion. Inclusion means abolishing “normal” and mutually acknowledging individual diverseness instead.

Assigned sex

Neutral, non-judgmental term that refers to the sex the child was assigned to based on the genitals at birth.

Conversion (reparative) therapy

Methods of psychotherapy by which persons are supposedly to be “healed” from homosexuality / trans*. Due to the provenly harming effect, such methods are rejected by all major international psychiatric and psychological expert associations.



Dealing with transsexuality in the everyday churchly life

In many fields of work in church and social services (Diakonie) the presence of transsexual persons is ignored. The following section illustrates some exemplary fields in which transsexuals are overlooked, not considered and definitely not mentioned and presents strategies for doing justice to sexual / gender diversity in a more sensitive way.

Pastoral care

Those active in pastoral care need knowledge about transsexuality. They need to know that the sexual sense of self can differ from the assigned sex and that human beings have a right of sexual self-determination. If at all, this is only marginally addressed within the pastoral care education.

Pastoral care encourages acceptance of gender self-awareness and exercising the right to gender self-determination. It supports human beings and takes their part in defending them against hostility, mobbing, and bar-room clichés. In case pastoral care cannot be ensured in this way, the pastor refers to a competent colleague.

Service

The service is designed to express God's love of mankind, the humans' likeness of God and their variety. Those attending service feel that they are welcome. However, liturgists often exclusively reproduce strictly binary gender norms. For instance, when praying psalms alternately by men and women. In such a situation, transsexual persons who have not yet come out are urged to assign themselves openly in a way that either contradicts their sense of self or forces them to reveal their sex / gender. Persons who prefer not to assign themselves to a binary sex are pressed to make a decision.

In fact, alternative arrangements are also conceivable. Traditionally, the liturgist reads one part, and the congregation answers. However, many new creative arrangements can be found: long-term residents and those who moved to the parish recently; members of the christening party and others; the green-eyed and the non-green-eyed etc.

In sermon and liturgy, one should take the opportunity to address the diversity of genders and to present it as desired, accepted and loved by God, e.g., as contained in Lectionary 3:

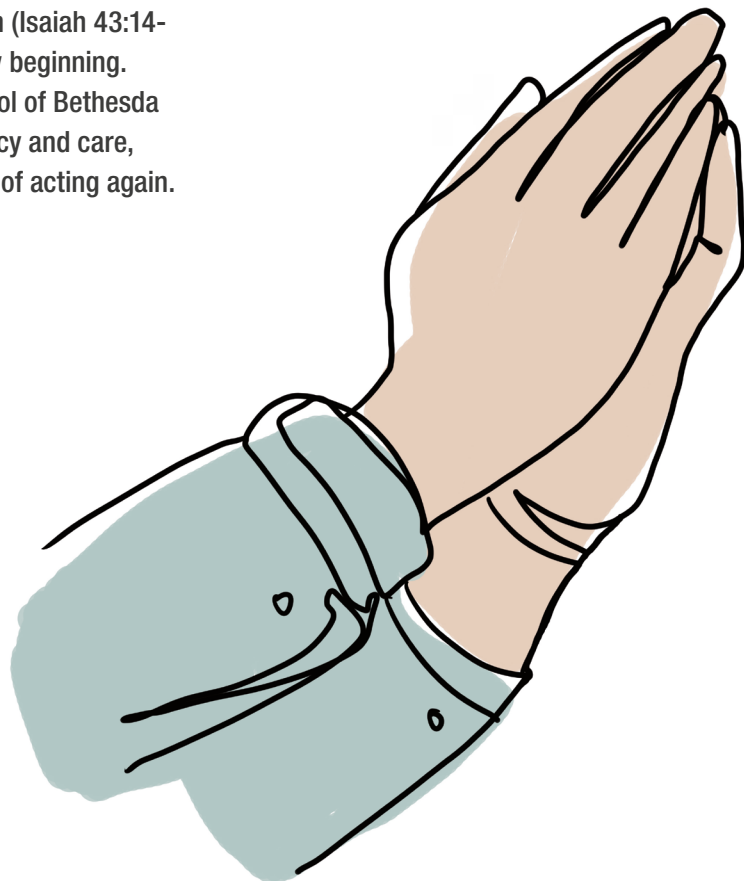
- ✘ Whit Monday: Genesis 11:1-9: “Tower of Babel” regarding the aspect “What divides us human beings”.
- ✘ 10th Sunday after Trinity Sunday: John 2:13-22: “the temple of the body”.
- ✘ Penance Day: Matthew 12:33-35: “The humans have to give account of the good and evil that they have spoken”.

Further possible texts for sermons:

- ✘ God’s bond with Abraham (Genesis 17:1-5): God gives Abram and Sarai a task and new names, he assures his company.
- ✘ Jacob wrestling at the Jabbok (Genesis 32:22-32): Jacob wants to turn his life to good account, he repents, wrestles, a wound remains.
- ✘ God leads his people out of Babylon (Isaiah 43:14-21): God liberates and allows a new beginning.
- ✘ The healing of a sick man at the pool of Bethesda (John 5:1-9a): Thanks to God’s mercy and care, man becomes healthy and capable of acting again.

In the confession of sin – also in the Lord’s supper liturgy – it can be mentioned that church and society deprive humans of their sexual self-determination. Within a christening sermon, in addition to the parents’ and godparents’ decision to have a child christened, it is to be expressed that one should look at what this child will discover in the course of his/her growing up, how he/she sees, describes and defines him-/herself, in an attitude of awe, love and gratitude.

➔ *Regarding retreats for children and teenagers see chapter “Legal aspects”, page 37*



Lord, your wisdom, your deeds and above all your love are so inexpressibly huge, too huge to ever comprehend them or put them into words. We do not always understand what great things you have in store for us. I am presently on the verge of beginning to understand that what you have in store for me is something uniquely wonderful. Not everyone is able to see this in the same positive light. I ask you, please help us recognize that your plan is often greater than our understanding. Teach us to have confidence that you mean well with us. Therefore, I will confess to all the world that you are my God, and I will praise your name out loud.

Amen.

God, I lament the darkness in which you put me. I am heavy-hearted about what I have had to give up. And I thank you for the light that you let shine on me: (people, friends, family, coherent self/bodily feeling, new certainty, insights). I thank you for giving me the insights about myself. I thank you for showing me a way. I thank you that I can live in my own way. And I ask you to continue to accompany and guide me.

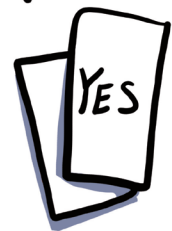
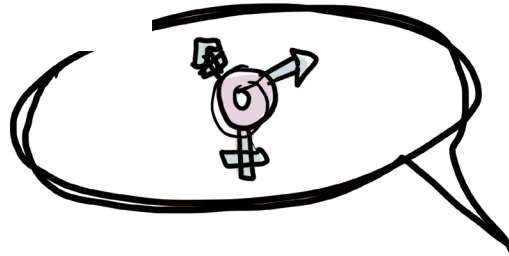
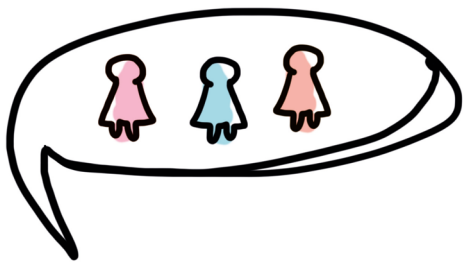
Amen.

Lord, I thank you from my heart that I am now called ...! An important step on the way towards coherence, on the way to my true self! Help the people close to me to accept my new name easily, help them to go with me on the path of my transition, so that I am embedded in a family and a circle of friends who stand by me. Thank you, Lord, that you are by my side along this way!

Amen.

God, I stand before you as ...! A name is more than a mere word, a denotation, my name describes myself. You know my story and me ...! My new name is designed to include what belongs to me and to exclude what I am not and never was. I stand before you as the human being who you intended and created.

Amen.



More questions?

An acquaintance's coming out has irritated me – how do I handle it?

Every coming out is a vote of confidence. As a first reaction, you could congratulate the person for having taken this brave step, listen to what he*she wants to tell you and possibly ask questions you have about it.

I have many questions – can I ask them?

In principle, one can ask anything of course. Like all people, trans* persons have privacy, too. Maybe there is a lot of curiosity, but respect requires considering the person's privacy. This depends on the situation and the relationship with the person.

Am I dealing with a different person now?

No. He*she is the same person as before.

How do I address my counterpart now?

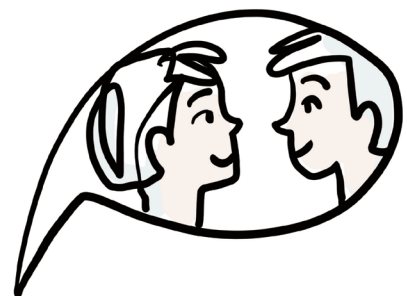
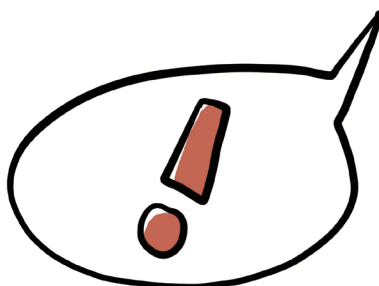
The way he*she wants it and has specified to be addressed: with the new forename and the adequate pronoun.

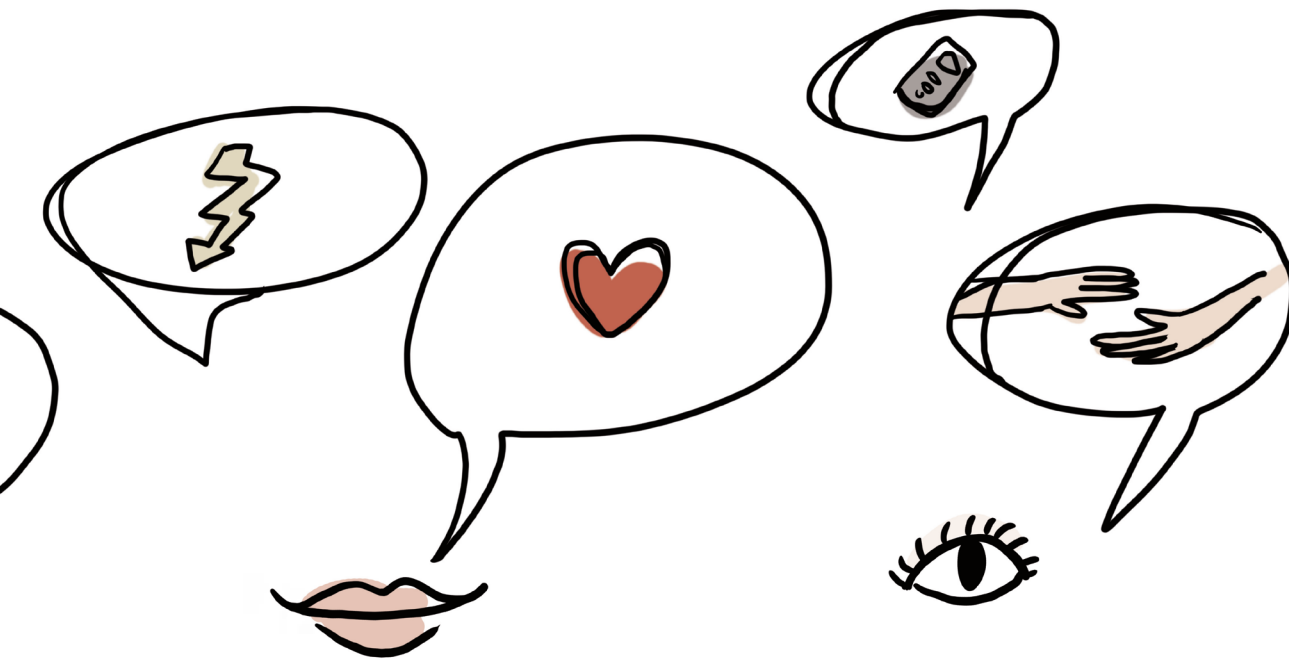
Which restrooms does he*she use now?

The restrooms he*she feels suitable.

Is it a problem if I sometimes use the old gender by habit?

Yes, it is. Avoid this by all means! If it happens nevertheless, apologize explicitly. This is better and more sincere than to just ignore it. Wait for the apology to be accepted.





How do I talk about the past when he*she still lived in another gender?

According to the new gender or in a gender-neutral way. The best way is to ask.

My counterpart wants to be addressed with his*her new first name – is he*she allowed to demand this just like that?

Yes! One is entitled to ask to be addressed according to one's preference. However, one cannot change official documents yourself such as the identity card, the master file data at the bank and the police clearance certificate.

Does my counterpart need help? Is he*she possibly ill?

Trans* is not an illness. However, it can be a burdening life situation in some cases. Should you have the impression that the counterpart might not feel well, you can address this. Privacy needs to be respected!

How can I help with coming out?

Ask the trans* person whether help is wanted and in what way.

What do we tell our relatives, friends, and workmates?

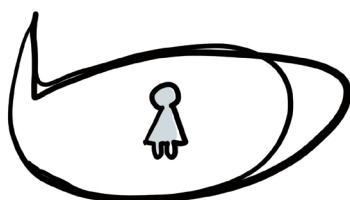
First ask the trans* person whether the matter can be passed on and in what way. If he*she does not want it to be passed on, don't do so in any case! If the trans* person has no problem with passing it on: refer to it in an undramatic way and as positively as possible.

Can't the colleague first come out to a limited extent so that the entire team is not completely irritated?

One can indeed come out step by step. The trans* person will choose a way that appears adequate to him*her.

How can I as a superior /colleague support my employee?

As a superior you have to consider the needs of the trans* person as well as the other employees at the same time. The trans* person has a right to be protected from discrimination. In the interest of the working atmosphere, you should support all employees in their further development.



Possible medical interventions*

Medical case management

The adjustment / reassignment is an extremely complex process, which has to be planned carefully. Frequently, many problems occur during implementation such as job loss, separation from the partner, discrimination. A case manager can help and advise on the planning and implementation of the transition. Unfortunately, the instrument of case management is still not used to a sufficient extent. Since many medical options can be compensated by the health insurance, clients often require medico-actuarial support, e.g., in order to clarify compensation by the insurance.

The case management can be provided by any general practitioner, medical specialist, psychologist, or social worker.

Hormone treatment

The hormone which is used therapeutically for feminization is called estradiol. It belongs to the group of estrogens and can be applied in the form of injections, pills, patches, or gel. Estradiol changes the body, it becomes more feminine.

The hormone which is used therapeutically for masculinization is called testosterone. Testosterone is available as a gel for application on the skin or as an injection. Face and body become more masculine as a whole.

However, it has to be considered that these changes vary individually and do not develop to the same extent in everyone.

Logopedics

The logopedic treatment is particularly essential with respect to the corporal feminization. For this purpose, a specific voice training is carried out.

Feminization surgeries

The breast can also be enlarged surgically by means of implants (surgical breast enlargement). During the genital surgery, testicles and penis are removed, their tissue being used to form a vulva, clitoris as well as



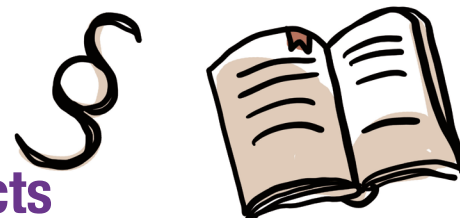
outer and inner labia. The change towards a more feminine voice can be advanced through a voice surgery of the vocal folds or the larynx cartilages. Another option is a facial feminization surgery involving various techniques aiming at a more feminine look of the face, particularly through changes of the facial bones such as chin and cheekbones. A prominent Adam's apple can be surgically grind down to reduce it.

Masculinization surgeries

The breasts can be removed surgically, forming a male breast at the same time. Often uterus and ovaries are removed. Furthermore, various extremely complex surgeries allow the construction of a penis.

These steps can be taken by trans¹ persons to reassign their body. Usually, the costs are covered by the health insurance. It is an individual decision whether surgical steps are taken and which ones.

¹ Transgender Network Switzerland (TGNS): Trans¹. Eine Informationsbroschüre von Transmenschen für Transmenschen und alle anderen. Zürich 2017



Legal aspects

Transsexuellengesetz (TSG; "Transsexuals Act")

This law was enacted on January 1, 1981; it regulates the change of the forename and civil status in special cases. For this purpose, trans* persons are obliged to submit an application at the district court and "prove" that they are trans* by means of two psychiatric reports. The Federal Constitutional Court (Bundesverfassungsgericht) has ruled numerous provisions of TSG to be unconstitutional and invalid. The need to reform the law is therefore largely acknowledged, so that it is to be replaced by a simple application procedure (sexual self-determination in the sense of a self-declaration without any further burdens of proof), as recent draft bills show.

Prohibition of disclosure

When a change of civil status and forename according to TSG has been completed, a prohibition of disclosure is effective, according to which it is not allowed to disclose any information about the person's previous gender status (e.g., the former name) in order to protect privacy. The person is entitled to demand the deletion of the former name and gender from computer systems and the reissue of documents and certificates true to the original.

Without an official change of forename and civil status

If no change of forename and civil status according to TSG has been made, the name and gender can neither be changed in the digital church registration nor in the parish register, as conformity with the registry office and state registration data must be maintained. Of course, the new name can be used in oral conversation as well in writing, for example in protocols and publications.

Bedrooms regarding trips with teenagers

During trips the participants are usually accommodated in bedrooms separated according to gender, thereby preventing sexual acts and violence. This results from the duty of supervision and the prohibition of advancing sexual acts of minors according to § 180 StGB (German criminal code).

The duty of supervision and the prohibition of advancing sexual acts of minors according to § 180 StGB applies to all trips. If teenagers are accommodated in gender-separated bedrooms accordingly, a legal uncertainty arises for a trans* person who has passed through social transition but has not completed a change of civil status and forename according to TSG. In which of the bedrooms shall the person be accommodated? The legally solid way would be to use a single room. However, this would be perceived as segregating and stigmatizing in many cases. The person in charge may also accept the legal uncertainty and find an individual solution together with the trans* person and possibly other participants of the trip for this challenge and others. Possibly there are friends who are willing to share a room.

Third gender entry

Human beings are entitled to an official gender which corresponds to their sex / gender. This also applies to persons whose sexual development represents a variant with respect to female or male sex / gender and who permanently assign themselves neither to the male nor to the female sex / gender. This was ruled by the First Senate of the Federal Constitutional Court (Bundesverfassungsgericht) on Oct 10, 2017 (reference: 1 BvR 2019/16).

Based on the law regarding the change of specifications to be entered into the register of births ("Gesetz zur Änderung der in das Geburtenregister einzutragenden Angaben"), which took effect on Dec 22, 2018, the legislator subsequently created the option to enter a third positive designation of gender besides "male" or "female" into the register of births. The corresponding paragraph of Personenstandsgesetz (PStG, Civil Status Act) now says: If the child can neither be assigned to the female nor to the male sex / gender, the civil status case can also be entered into the register of births without such a designation or with the designation 'diverse' (§ 22 para. 3 PStG). For the time being, the present legal regulation is exclusively designed for intersexual persons.

However, this regulation does not change anything about the fact that the assigned gender of a human being remains the result of an external ascription by others. Furthermore, interest groups and institutions have criticized that persons with variants of sexual development according to § 45b para. 3 PStG have to provide evidence about the existence of a variant of sexual development in the form of a medical certificate if they request "diverse" to be entered into the register of births. A self-declaration of the person is not sufficient. Thus, there is further need for action since the right of sexual self-determination is not yet granted to all humans.



Further Information

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- Diverse Identität. Interdisziplinäre Annäherungen an das Phänomen Intersexualität*, edited by Julia Koll, Jantine Nierop and Gerhard Schreiber, Hannover: Studienzentrum der EKD für Genderfragen in Kirche und Theologie 2018 (*Schriften zu Genderfragen in Kirche und Theologie*, vol. 4). (90 p.)

Links

- www.dgti.org (Deutsche Gesellschaft für Transidentität und Intersexualität e.V.)
- www.bv-trans.de (Bundesverband Trans* e.V.)
- www.tur2017.de (Project “Reformation für alle* – Transidentität/Transsexualität und Kirche“)
- www.quikt.de (Queer in church and theology: Service on the occasion of a transition – blessing of trans* persons, liturgic material)
- www.trans-kinder-netz.de (association of parents of minor trans* children)
- www.transjaund.de (project for more visibility and against discrimination of young trans* and persons who live a gender-diverse life)
- www.transmann.de (TransMann e.V. is a German-wide (support) association)
- www.die-erklaerung.de (“Stuttgarter Erklärung” – Stuttgart declaration about human rights aspects of medical-therapeutic care)
- www.transgender-network.ch (Transgender Network Switzerland)
- www.kreuzweise-miteinander.de (Kreuzweise-Miteinander e.V.)

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Epilogue

Our motto: Working together for minorities

www.kreuzweise-miteinander.de

Focal points of work:

- Counselling work for queer refugees in Rhineland-Palatinate (Contact/Info: Peter Bögeholz),
- Translation projects to reduce prejudice (Info: Dorothea Zwölfer)

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May this translation help to overcome hatred, violence and prejudice against transsexual people.

Peter Bögeholz / Dorothea Zwölfer

(Chairwoman of the association Kreuzweise-Miteinander e.V.)

P.S.: If you want to support our association with further translations, you can find more information in various languages on our website www.kreuzweise-miteinander.de or www.kr19.de



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This handout is available via the contacts mentioned above.

It is also available for download on the internet: unsere.ekhn.de/transsexualitaet

