

Paper E2

Affirming the human dignity of transgender, non-binary and gender non-conforming people

Equalities Committee

Basic information

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Action required	Decision.
Draft resolution(s)	Resolution 21 General Assembly: <ul style="list-style-type: none">a) affirms the human dignity of transgender, non-binary and gender non-conforming people and asserts their right, within and beyond the URC, to live without threat of violence and hatred.b) recognises the church's failure to challenge the norms on which transphobia is built and acknowledges that sometimes it has perpetuated these norms.c) commits to furthering the church's understanding of, and pastoral care for transgender, non-binary and gender non-conforming people in the church, both locally and across the denomination.

Summary of content

Subject and aim(s)	This paper calls upon Assembly to affirm the right of transgender, non-binary and gender non-conforming people to live without threat of violence and hatred and commits the church to provide pastoral care and support to people within these communities.
Main points	In the light of increasing hostility toward trans, non-binary and gender non-conforming people there is a need to affirm their right to dignity and respect in the life of the church and in wider society. To this end, there is a responsibility for the church to learn more about their lived realities, to offer care and to speak

	out against the threats of hatred and violence experienced by transgender, non-binary and gender non-conforming people.
Previous relevant documents	Assembly Executive November 2021, Emergency Resolution Conversion therapy: www.tinyurl.com/j328k9tt
Consultation has taken place with...	Children's and Youth Work Committee URC Youth Executive.

Summary of impact

Financial	None.
External (eg ecumenical)	

Background

1. Transgender, non-binary and gender non-conforming (GNC) people have always existed and are present in many societies throughout the world, from the Hijra people of India to the Waria people of Indonesia to the Two Spirit people of First Nation America.
2. Intersex people, i.e. people born with physical or chromosomal traits that do not fit typical binary characteristics of male or female bodies, are estimated to make up 1.7% of the global population (OHCHR, 2019).
3. Furthermore, there is an evolving scientific consensus of a biological basis for diverse gender identities. For example, evidence suggests that identical twins are more likely to both experience transgender identity as compared to non-identical twins, implying a genetic basis (Endocrine Society, 2020).

Hostility

4. There has been a growing hostility towards trans, non-binary and GNC people. One example of this is how access to gender appropriate spaces and healthcare has recently become a contentious issue. The Equality Act (2010) offers some protections to trans, non-binary and GNC people but these are being called into question with suggestions that the Act may be changed in ways that will have a negative impact on trans, non-binary and GNC people.
5. In response to the brutal killing of the trans teenager Brianna Ghey in February 2023, the Rt Hon Ben Bradshaw MP reported to parliament (March 2023) that there had been a 56% rise in hate crime against trans, non-binary and GNC people since last year.

The URC response

6. In April 2022, the Revd Clare Downing, as Moderator of General Assembly, endorsed a letter, produced by church leaders arguing that trans, non-binary and GNC people should be included in the government's planned ban on conversion therapy, reinforcing an emergency resolution of Assembly Executive in November 2021.
7. In 2022, St Columba's United Reformed Church in Oxford was the first church in the UK to appoint an outreach worker for the trans, intersex and GNC communities, funded by the local church, the Wessex Synod Trust, the Legacies Fund and Discipleship Development Fund of the United Reformed Church.

8. The URC has a clear imperative to oppose injustice wherever it is experienced, and trans, non-binary and GNC people have become under increasing attack in the media. The effect of this is that trans, non-binary and GNC people feel increasingly unsafe in their day-to-day lives. Churches should provide a safe haven for these communities and yet the perception, as well as the reality, for trans, non-binary and GNC people is, in some instances, far from certain.
9. This has been a live issue for URC Youth Executive and Youth Assembly for several years. Concerned about the discrimination that young people were experiencing because of their gender and sexual identity, Youth Assembly, in 2023, passed a resolution asking the Youth Executive to investigate the setting up of a centralised resource to provide support and care for anyone who identifies as part of the LGBT+ community in the URC, including trans, non-binary and GNC people who have experienced or are experiencing discrimination.
10. The Children's and Youth Work Committee would also welcome a joined-up conversation that enabled the whole church, across the breadth of theological views and experience, to move forward positively and embody Christ in our pastoral care for all.

References

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