

# Paper P2

## Keeping Trans people safe

### Wessex Synod

#### Basic information

<b>Contact name and email address</b>	Michael Hopkins moderator@urcwessex.org.uk
<b>Action required</b>	Decision
<b>Draft resolution(s)</b>	<p><b>Resolution 53</b> General Assembly notes that following the statement agreed at General Assembly 2023, transgender, nonbinary, and gender nonconforming people in the UK find that they are living in an increasingly hostile environment, which means that it is even more important that the church welcomes them, and has appropriate safeguarding measures in place.</p> <p><b>Resolution 54</b> General Assembly notes that St Columba's URC Oxford has therefore agreed that it is important to affirm its commitment to the 2023 resolution, and to publicise this on their church website.</p> <p><b>Resolution 55</b> General Assembly invites other local churches to make similar affirmations, and to indicate their support to the Offices of the General Assembly as part of the Annual Return for publication on the URC website within the “Find a church” tool.</p>

#### Summary of content

<b>Subject and aim(s)</b>	To invite the General Assembly to support clear voluntary signposting by local churches of their commitment to the 2023 Assembly statement on transgender, nonbinary, and gender nonconforming people, as a matter of welcome, safeguarding, and clarity.
<b>Main points</b>	This proposal is a practical safeguarding and welcome measure. It does not seek to reopen debate or persuade any local church to adopt a particular view, but invites those churches which wish to do so to make clear their support for the 2023 General Assembly statement on transgender, nonbinary, and gender nonconforming people. By enabling churches to indicate this through the Annual Return for publication in the “Find a church” tool, the proposal would provide clearer signposting for those seeking a church and

	help reduce the risk of vulnerable people inadvertently entering spaces they may experience as unsafe.
<b>Previous relevant documents</b>	Resolutions 21a-21d of General Assembly 2023, and the associated report of the Equalities Committee.
<b>Consultation has taken place with...</b>	n/a

## Summary of impact

<b>Financial</b>	n/a
<b>External (eg ecumenical)</b>	Greater clarity which reduces risks of misunderstanding and associated harm.

1. The Wessex Synod, following a proposal from the Church Meeting of St Columba's URC in Oxford, asks the General Assembly to consider these resolutions in the light of the statement agreed by General Assembly in 2023 concerning transgender, nonbinary, and gender nonconforming people. The impetus for this proposal is not to reopen the debates which led to the 2023 statement, nor to persuade any local church or minister to adopt a view different from that which they already hold, nor to create any new policy beyond that already expressed by General Assembly. It is simply to address a practical question of keeping people safe, of welcome and of clarity.
2. In recent years, transgender, nonbinary, and gender nonconforming people in the United Kingdom are living in a social climate which many experience as increasingly hostile. For some, especially younger people, that hostility is not abstract. Unsupportive settings can become places of profound distress and, in some cases, serious risk to wellbeing and safety. Concern has been expressed that, where churches give no clear indication of their commitment to the 2023 Assembly statement, people may inadvertently enter spaces which feel unsafe or exposing. Even where no harm is intended, uncertainty itself can be harmful.
3. Research consistently shows that transgender, nonbinary, and gender nonconforming people are at significantly increased risk of suicidal thoughts, self-harm, and suicide attempts, and that unsupportive environments can intensify that risk. In the UK, Stonewall has reported that 46% of trans people had thought about taking their own life in the previous year<sup>1</sup>, and that more than two in five trans young people had attempted to take their own life at some point.<sup>2</sup>
4. This proposal therefore arises from a safeguarding concern. It is about helping vulnerable people know, in advance, where they will be received with care, dignity, and clarity. It is also about enabling congregations that do support the 2023 Assembly statement to say so plainly and publicly, so that those seeking a church are not left to guess.
5. St Columba's URC, Oxford, has already concluded that it is important to affirm publicly its commitment to the 2023 resolution and to make that commitment

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.stonewall.org.uk/resources/lgbt-britain-health-2018>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.stonewall.org.uk/resources/school-report-2017>

visible on its church website. The church believes that such signposting is a simple but significant act of welcome and pastoral responsibility. It does not settle every question, nor does it remove the need for appropriate local safeguarding practice, but it does help people identify safer spaces and approach churches with greater confidence.

6. The Synod brings this matter to General Assembly not because there is unanimity on every aspect of these questions, nor in order to persuade anyone to change their mind, but because it believes that clear public affirmation can serve the Church's pastoral and safeguarding responsibilities. The proposal does not ask Assembly to create an onerous new process. Rather, it invites churches which are willing to do so to make similar affirmations, and to indicate that support through the Annual Return, so that this information may be made available through the denomination's existing "Find a church" tool.
7. This would be a proportionate and practical step. It would not require every local church to make the same declaration, nor would it encourage any local church to make a particular decision. It would, however, allow those churches which do wish to signal their welcome and commitment to safeguarding to do so in a way that is visible and accessible. In this way, the Church would help people avoid unsafe uncertainty, while giving concrete expression to the commitment already affirmed by General Assembly in 2023.