

Transgender Day of Remembrance

Tuesday, November 20, 2018

6:00 p.m.

November 20 is set aside each year as the International Transgender Day of Remembrance. Started in 1998 by Gwendolyn Ann Smith, transgender activist, as a way to memorialize Rita Hester, who was violently murdered in Allston, Massachusetts. The day has evolved and grown such that it is now marked internationally in more than 185 cities in 20 countries.

The Transgender Day of Remembrance has historically been a day to remember those who have been murdered as the result of ignorance and transphobia. It is a day set aside to call attention to the violence, extreme discrimination, and alienation towards those in society who are transgender.

PRAYER OF MEDITATION

As the people gather before the service begins, we encourage you to use the following prayer for meditation.

On this Transgender Day of Remembrance, we remember those who have been murdered for being who they are, those who face violence on a daily basis, those who have lost loved ones, and those who worry for loved ones.

May we come to a time when we cease to shame children around gender roles and expression, where we allow for freedom and exploration of identity and expression, and to a world that operates from love especially when things are difficult and confusing. May all of us who live with the threat of violence find support, strength, community, hope, and safety from violence.

— Sunshine Jeremiah Wolfe

Candles are distributed and lit in silence.

CALL TO WORSHIP

Minister: Be with us, loving God in all of our journeys.
 People: From near and from far and histories unknown.

Minister: Be with us, kind God in strength and in weakness.
 People: The lost and forsaken, the proud and the strong.

Minister: Be with us, creative God in all of our beings.
 People: Where life in our genders can truly belong.

Minister: Be with us, supporting God in all of our actions.
 People: Fulfilling your kindom where all people come.

Minister: Be with us, loving God in all of our wishes.
 People: That rest in your love, when all are as one.

COLLECT OF TRANSGENDER DAY OF REMEMBRANCE

Minister: God dwells in you.
 People: And also in you.
 Minister: Let us pray.

Remain standing; silence is kept.

Minister: God of all creation, whose wisdom and love is boundless. You have many names and you are beyond all divisions of gender. We have many names for our sexual and gender identities. We give you thanks for the diversity of sexuality and gender. At times we deny that diversity by holding too strongly and tightly to the divisions that we ourselves create.

As we come together to remember those transgender people who have been killed, taken their own lives or been injured, help us to honor their identities, and the identities of all people. Help us to create a world where everyone can live with authenticity and dignity.

Help us all, who belong to every sexuality and gender, to live our own lives in true fulfillment of our different identities, in fellowship with each other and in the Love of Christ.

Amen.

READINGS

A Reading from the book of Genesis.

Then God said, "Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the wild animals of the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth." So God created humankind in God's image.

A Reading from *Transforming: The Bible and the Lives of Transgender Christians* by Austen Hartke.

When parents attend churches that teach that being transgender is sinful, they are much more likely to reject their child, once that child comes out; in turn, a child who is rejected is more likely to suffer from mental health issues and to commit suicide. This sad fact was made visible for many in the death of Leelah Alcorn, who stepped out in front of a truck in December 2014 after experiencing negative faith-based reactions from her parents and being forced to attend Christian conversion therapy to "cure" her of her gender identity.

Christianity has been dominated by the voices of those who speak out against the existence, the well-being, and the humanity of transgender people. These voices have sunk into the fabric of American culture, and the result has been a rash of murders that causes no religious outrage, no demand for justice from those who should have cared for the wounded ones on the side of the road. We have closed our ears to the cry of the parents who have lost their children because of toxic theology; we have turned away from the tears of the youth who ask if Jesus can love them just as they are. Too many of those questioning their gender identity have been made to feel that they must choose between God and an authentic and healthy life. Not all of the people forced into that decision make it out alive.

This is where transgender Christians have been forced to live: out on the edges. They walk the fine line between acceptance and rejection, between God's love and the church's judgment. But this is also where God begins to bring life out of death, because although religious affiliation in families has been connected to rejection of LGBT children, faith can also be one of the largest contributors to well-being in youth if their religious community supports them. We know that family acceptance and the creation of a refuge in homes and communities is incredibly important to the health of transgender people, and so we must ask, is it time for God's house to truly become a house of prayer for all people? Will we hear the words of Scripture, and the stories of the trans Christians in our midst, and allow our sanctuaries to become the spaces they were always meant to be?

PRAYER

Minister: God full of mercy, bless the souls of all who are in our hearts on this Transgender Day of Remembrance. We call to mind today young and old, of every race, faith, and gender experience, who have died by violence. We remember those who have died because they would not hide, or did not pass, or did pass, or stood too proud. Today we name them: the reluctant activist; the fiery hurler of heels; the warrior for quiet truth; the one whom no one really knew.

As many as we can name, there are thousands more whom we cannot, and for whom no prayers may have been said. We mourn their senseless deaths, and give thanks for their lives, for their teaching, and for the brief glow of each holy flame. We pray for the strength to carry on their legacy of vision, bravery, and love.

And as we remember them, we remember with them the thousands more who have taken their own lives. We pray for resolve to root out the injustice, ignorance, and cruelty that grow despair. And we pray, God, that all those who perpetrate hate and violence will speedily come to understand that Your creation has many faces, many genders, many holy expressions.

People: Blessed are they, who have allowed their divine image to shine in the world.
Blessed is God, in whom no light is extinguished. Amen.

– Rabbi Ruben Zellman

LITANY OF TRANSCFAITH

Minister: We praise you, Holy One, for the gift of life: precious, stubborn, fragile and beautiful.

People: We are grateful for the time we have to live upon the earth, to love, to grow, to be.

Minister: We remember those who have been taken by the devastation of violence.

People: We claim the opportunity to build lives of wholeness in their honor.

Minister: Inspire us to challenge and stand strong against unjust laws, repression, stigma and fear.

People: Into your care, we trust and lift up the hundreds of souls who have been tortured and murdered.

Minister: We give you thanks for the partners, friends, allies and families who have been steadfast in their love.

People: For the people who, with passion and commitment, support all expressions of gender.

Minister: We give thanks for the science that has led to new life-giving procedures.

People: For those who have acted to provide health care.

Minister: We give you thanks for those whose prejudice and judgment have yielded to understanding.

People: For those who have overcome fear to embrace a life of compassion.

Minister: We lift up the hundreds of souls who have been tortured and murdered.

People: We cherish the memories of those we have lost.

Silence is kept.

We gather in the name of God, Creator, Redeemer, and Sustainer, to name and remember before God those who have died as the result of transphobic violence in the last 12 months.

Vontashia Bell	Catalina Christina James
Amia Tyrae Berryman	Phylicia Mitchell
Ciara Minaj Carter Frazier	London Moore
Antash'a-English	Gigi Pierce
Nikki Enriquez	Dejanay Stanton
Carla Patricia Flores-Pavon	Christa Leigh Steele-Knudslie
Nino Fortson	Diamond Stephens
Zakaria Fry	Shantee Tucker
Sasha Garden	Celine Walker
Vicky Gutierrez	Sasha Wall
Tonya Harvey	Keisha Wells

And I invite you to add your own intentions, spoken or held in the silence of your hearts.

INTERCESSIONS

Minister: Let us pray for all those who have been killed or died because they have not conformed to the gender roles that society expects. Grant them peace and bring to those they leave behind them your comfort in the knowledge that all people, irrespective of gender identity or sexual orientation are enfolded and are precious in the Love of Christ. God in your wisdom,

People: Hear our prayer.

Minister: As we reflect on this list of names and the deaths of so many people, help us God to think afresh about what it means to belong to our own gender and to be transgender; for we are all as one in your love. As far as we are able to, help us to listen, and to learn to understand what it means to be transgender, so that we and all people of trans experience always, and in harmony, live to the full, the Gospel of Love in our everyday lives. God in your wisdom,

People: Hear our prayer.

Minister: We acknowledge the harm that our prejudice and ignorance has sometimes unknowingly created. We recognize the feelings of guilt and self-loathing that transgender people themselves feel when they apply these negative messages about transgender people in general to themselves. It is your love that transcends all genders. Grant us wisdom care and concern that all of us, whatever our genders and backgrounds are companions on our journeys, and that we are all equally accepted for who we are in the Love of Christ. God in your wisdom,

People: Hear our prayer.

Minister: For transgender people the journey across genders crosses many divides. Help not only transgender people, but their friends, spouses and supporters make that journey together to find a true meeting place beyond these divides. For transgender people who are rejected by their families or lack social support we ask you to give all people involved, the strength and understanding to overcome these obstacles, and to bring new opportunities for relationships to be restored. God in your wisdom,

People: Hear our prayer.

Minister: Despite gender equality legislation, discrimination still occurs. People of trans experience find it difficult to gain employment. Unemployment rates are high. The attitudes of others may make it impossible to continue in any employment that is held. People of trans experience are vulnerable to attacks on their homes and on the streets. Verbal abuse is common. God we ask you to grant wisdom, care and compassion to all people who engage in these disruptive activities; so that we may all live together in peace. God in your wisdom,

People: Hear our prayer.

Minister: God, we have all failed in our understanding by embracing the historic presumptions and traditional teaching that people of trans experience are following a lifestyle choice in pursuit of sexual rewards; and not of identity instead. We have failed in the treatment and management methods that have been prescribed because of the medical misdiagnoses that have been made. We recognize the harm that this has brought. Help all of us God, to create a greater understanding in society and to promote a future which is not bound to the attitudes of the past but, one which can move forward to promote the fullness of life in all in the world. God in your wisdom,

People: Hear our prayer.

Minister: Loving God, Creator of the Universe, you know our inner hearts. Too often we have failed to follow your ways. Forgive us for our past failures. Grant us fresh hearts and new minds so that we can celebrate the full richness and diversity of human experience in the Love of Christ.

People: Amen.

CONCLUDING COLLECT

Minister: God of all mercy and consolation,
Come to the help of your people as we mourn the loss of the dead on this Transgender Day of Remembrance. Turn us from our pity, despair and fear toward full relationship with you and all of our neighbors.

Give us the courage to challenge oppression, both gender-based or based on our other ways of dividing and conquering. Love us into including all of our neighbors. Give us the light to examine ourselves, our comfort, privilege and fear, and turn us toward relationship.

May your Holy Spirit lead us to open our hearts to you and one another in confession, and be opened to your forgiveness and renewal.

People: Amen.

BLESSING

May the blessings of God's Love
And the joy of God's Peace
Be found in us all
Now and Always
Amen.

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Community Resources

Trans Lifeline- Counselor hotline and suicide prevention run by the trans community for trans* and gender nonconforming people:
www.translifeline.org

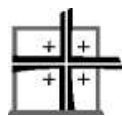
Queer Theology - Founded by a trans priest, explores a queer reading of scripture, helps build healthy queer theologies, and provides a robust online community to those that are closeted, exploring, or isolated from safe queer spaces:
www.queertheology.com

ProjectQ Community Center is a non-profit organization that provides safe space for LGBTQIA homeless youth in Los Angeles. At the Community Center, LGBTQIA homeless youth can receive free mentorship classes and workshops, along with free gender affirming haircuts.

The Trevor Project is the leading national organization providing crisis intervention and suicide prevention services to lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, queer & questioning (LGBTQ) young people under 25. You can reach out for support 24/7 by calling the Trevor lifeline at 1.866.488.7386

enfleshed was created out of a deep longing for spiritual resources that speak in our time to the things that matter most. With a commitment to spiritual and theological depth and the centering of marginalized experiences, conversations, and communities, enfleshed seeks to provide liturgy, devotionals, curriculum, preaching, training, and pastoral care that addresses honestly, tenderly, and directly, the beauty and pain of living enfleshed lives.
enfleshed.com

Trans Can Work: Building a culture nationwide for transgender people to thrive in the workplace.
https://transcanwork.org/



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