

LUTHERAN

INTRODUCTION TO

SEXUAL

ORIENTATION,

GENDER IDENTITY,

& GENDER

EXPRESSION



ReconcilingWorks
LUTHERANS FOR FULL PARTICIPATION



SINCE 1974, ReconcilingWorks: Lutherans for Full Participation has advocated for the full welcome, inclusion, and equity of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, and asexual/ aromantic (LGBTQIA+) Lutherans in all aspects of the life of their faith community.

As a way to deepen and expand that welcome, we offer this resource as a basic introduction to sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression. Here are a few helpful tips on how to use this resource:

1. PEOPLE OVER DEFINITIONS

If you don't know which identity terms, pronouns or titles to use, and find yourself getting "stuck" on terms, re-center yourself on the fact you are talking about a person. It is also ok to ask which pronouns one prefers, or just avoid using gendered terms. Remember, all you need to welcome someone is their name.

2. CURIOSITY CONTINUUM

This resource teaches sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression continua. However, the curiosity continuum is equally important as we seek to extend welcome to our LGBTQIA+ neighbors.

HOSPITABLE CURIOSITY

LURID CURIOSITY

When getting to know someone or learning more about a people group, you are sure to have many questions. Before you inquire, ask yourself "Why am I asking?" or "Will this question help build a relationship of mutual trust and respect?" Does your question represent hospitable or lurid curiosity? Asking people about the details of their bodies not hospitable. The goal of this resource is to dismantle barriers between people, and the perception that LGBTQIA+ people are exotic oddities does not serve that goal.

3. SELF CARE

The SOGI (sexual orientation and gender identity) spectrum is a place where hopefully all people can find their reflection. But if you can not find yourself don't worry. Some identify off the spectrum. Some also experience a new awareness of themselves or loved ones, and it is important to practice self-care as someone continues in their learning.

WHY SHOULD WE SINGLE OUT LGBTQIA+ PEOPLE?

Many LGBTQIA+ people have learned by experience that they are not truly welcome in church, even in churches that state, "All are welcome here!" A general statement of welcome is often heard as meaning "everybody but me," so it can take a special

BISEXUALITY

[Not straight. Not gay.]

BISEXUAL is an identity term people use when they are physically and/or emotionally attracted to people of all gender identities. Some people prefer to use the terms pansexual or queer because bisexual has the connotation of “binary” with the “bi” language, although this was not the intention when the term was created for the community.



BI is an umbrella term to encompass bisexual, pansexual, queer, and other sexual orientations that are used to describe attraction to more than one gender identity. The colors of the bi flag are incorporated in this graphic.

SEXUAL ORIENTATION

is the term used to describe what gender(s) someone is physically and/or emotionally attracted to. Lesbian, gay, bisexual, pansexual, queer, and straight are all examples of sexual orientations. A person’s sexual orientation is distinct from a person’s gender identity and expression.

Of all Americans who identify as lesbian, bisexual, or gay, 17% identify as lesbian, 31% identify as gay, and **52% identify as bisexual.**

Movement Advancement Project
LGBTmap.org



PEOPLE OVER DEFINITIONS:

Sexual orientation isn’t contingent on being in any given relationship. It is about honoring a core and authentic part of oneself. Bisexual people are told by some heterosexual people, and even some gay and lesbian people, that they must choose to be heterosexual or gay/lesbian. Such messages reflect an inaccurate understanding of bisexuality. Bi identities are authentic and should be honored and supported as with heterosexual and gay/lesbian.

effort to communicate an authentic welcome to LGBTQIA+ people. The RIC program seeks to make known settings where people of all sexual orientations and gender identities are truly welcomed. Visit www.ReconcilingWorks.org/RIC for more info.

SO G I E S P E C T R U M

(Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity, and Gender Expression)

At the moment someone gives birth, there is a new-born, a doctor, and a question: “Is it a girl or a boy?” Most State Birth Certificates only have two boxes, and only one can be checked. This is an example of the gender binary system, where there are two, and only two, very distinct options. It is one or the other, male or female. And the way that question is answered has ramifications throughout one’s entire life. Future options, expectations, and opportunities all hinge on which box is checked. And interestingly, notice that the very question – “Is it...?” – withholds personhood until a gender is assigned.

Sex, gender identity, and gender expression can be experienced on a continuum, creating a nearly infinite combination of identities. The binary gender system says that there are only two genders. Here, we can see that gender is truly far more complex than this binary system.

SEX



Female

Intersex



Male

SEX is assigned at birth based on external genitalia, reproductive organs, chromosomes, and hormones. People with ambiguous genitalia or other biological complexities (such as an unusual chromosomal pattern or hormonal shifts) may identify as intersex.

GENDER IDENTITY

Woman

Genderqueer

Man

GENDER IDENTITY refers to a person's innate, deeply felt psychological identification as a man, woman or another gender, which may or may not correspond to the sex assigned to them at birth. Gender identity is different from the term "gender", which is typically used with reference to social and cultural differences rather than biological ones.

GENDER EXPRESSION

Feminine

Androgynous

Masculine

GENDER EXPRESSION refers to the external characteristics and behaviors that are socially defined as either masculine or feminine, such as dress, grooming, mannerisms, speech patterns and social interactions. These norms vary culturally.

SEXUAL ORIENTATION

Attracted to Men

Bisexual, Pansexual, Queer

Attracted to Women

SEXUAL ORIENTATION is the term used to describe what gender(s) someone is physically and/or emotionally attracted to. Lesbian, gay, bisexual, pansexual, queer, and straight are all examples of sexual orientations. A person's sexual orientation is distinct from a person's gender identity and expression.

Our lives are more complex than checkboxes.

These continua are an important reminder of putting people over definitions and practicing our Lutheran tradition of practicing hospitality and welcoming our neighbors.

TRANSGENDER AND GENDER NON-CONFORMING

[Not cisgender.]

TRANSGENDER is an identity many people use whose self-experienced gender does not match the sex they were assigned at birth. For example, a transgender person might be someone who identifies and lives as a woman but whose birth-assigned sex was male. Other transgender people identify as somewhere in between the societally recognized genders of man and woman, as neither, or as one gender at some times and another gender at other times.



TRANS can be an umbrella term used to refer to transgender, genderqueer, non-binary, and gender non-conforming people. The colors of the transgender flag are incorporated in this graphic.

GENDER NON-CONFORMING

people who hold gender identities that are the same as their birth-assigned sex, but do not express their gender identity in ways that conform to societal and/or cultural expectations.

GENDERQUEER can describe a person who does not subscribe to conventional gender distinctions but identifies with neither, both, or a combination of male and female genders.

CISGENDER describes a person whose birth-assigned sex and gender identity are the same. For example, a person whose assigned sex is female and who identifies as a woman is cisgender.



PEOPLE OVER DEFINITIONS:

When someone shares their identity, honor that self-understanding by using the words, pronouns, and identity terms they provide.

QUEER

*[Not queer as in a slur,
but queer as in someone's identity.]*

HISTORY OF TERM: In the late 1980s, the label “queer” began to be reclaimed by LGBTQIA+ people as a positive self-identifier. The term has also been reclaimed as an adjective to describe something in the LGBTQIA+ community that disrupts societal norms: queer bodies, queer art, queer theology.

QUEER can be an umbrella term for the LGBTQIA+ community. It can also refer to an individual's sexual orientation and/or gender identity. It is an identifier for all non-heterosexual orientations and non-cisgender identities. The colors of the LGBTQIA+ flag are incorporated in this graphic.



WHY USE QUEER?

People choose to use queer instead of lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender for a variety of reasons. Some people choose this term for themselves because they feel like they do not fit into the roles other labels imply. For some it can also mean they do not fit into societal norms and want an identity term to reflect who they really are.

PEOPLE OVER DEFINITIONS:

Some people prefer not to be grouped under this term or not have non-queer people use it when referring to them. Please use caution as you use the term to describe someone.

Not all queer people use he/him/his or she/her/hers pronouns. For some “they, them, theirs,” “xe, xem, xyrs,” or “ze, hir, hirs” are gender inclusive pronouns which most accurately reflect that person's identity. *Read more about personal pronouns on the next page.*

ACE & ARO SPECTRUMS

ASEXUAL (ACE) is a sexual orientation characterized by a lack of sexual attraction toward any gender. “Ace” is short for “asexual,” just like “bi” is short for bisexual and “trans” is short for “transgender.”

AROMANTICISM (ARO) is a romantic orientation, which describes people whose experience of romance is disconnected from normative societal expectations, often due to experiencing little to no romantic attraction, or sometimes feeling repulsed by romance or being uninterested in romantic relationships. “Aro” is short for “aromantic.”



ACE & ARO SPECTRUMS are two separate orientation spectrums—a sexual and a romantic one—with which to identify. These spectrums can create a multitude of identity combinations. “Ace” and “aro” are also umbrella terms used to refer to anyone with asexual and/or aromantic identities including demisexual and/or demiromantic and gray-a.

GRAY-A is considered the middle gray area between asexuality and sexuality on the sexual spectrum and between aromantic and romantic on the romantic spectrum. Demisexual and demiromantic identities fall underneath this “gray-a” identity.

DEMISEXUAL people can experience sexual attraction after a close emotional connection has formed.

DEMIROMANTIC people can experience romantic attraction after a close emotional connection has formed.



PEOPLE OVER DEFINITIONS:

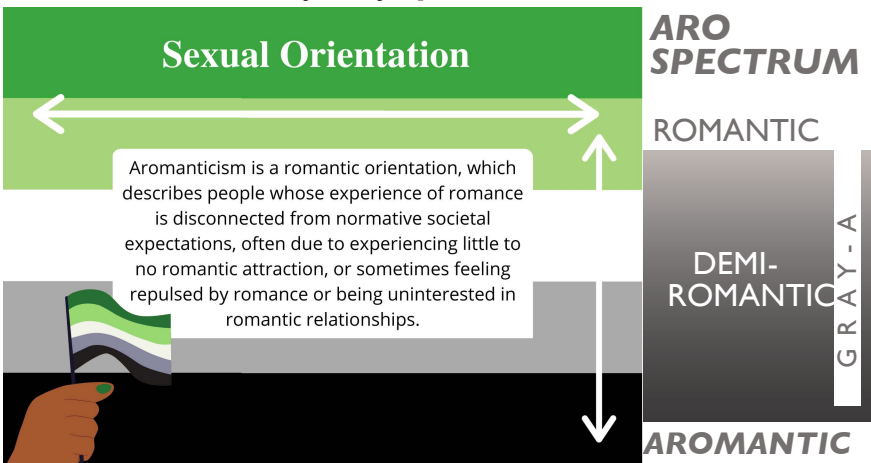
Asexuality and aromanticism are two of the more recent areas being explored, included, and named in the LGBTQIA+ community. In this work, it is important to remember: all identities are self-identified. Never ascribe an identity to someone else. Let them tell you how they choose to identify. Like gender identity and gender expression, ace and aro identities can change over time.

A NEW GRID:

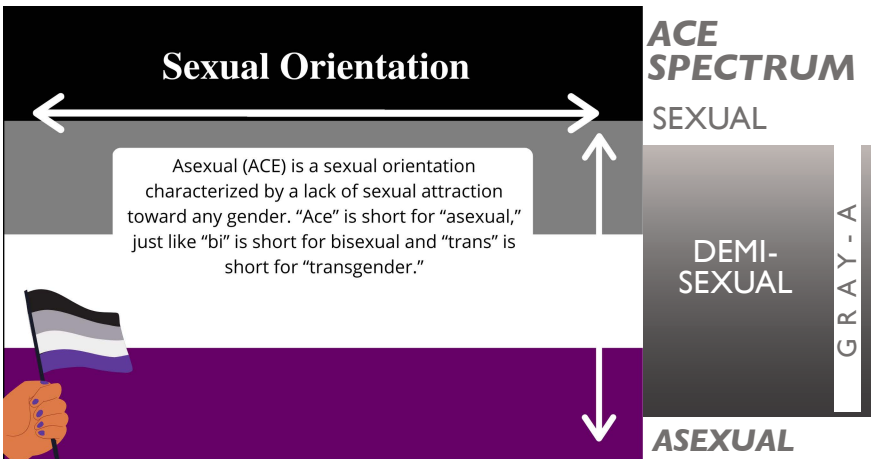
ADDING ASEXUAL AND AROMANTIC TO THE CONTINUUM

The horizontal spectrums represent the orientation of one's romantic or sexual desire. The vertical gray aro and ace spectrums represent the intensity of one's attraction toward that orientation. Although romantic orientation and sexual orientation might often correlate, they do not need to align. Plot yourself on each grid.

Aromantic (ARO) Spectrum



Asexual (ACE) Spectrum



SO GIE

TO LEARN MORE ABOUT



PHILLY PRIDE In 2017 the Rainbow Pride Flag was altered in Philadelphia to include a black and brown stripe at the top in recognition of our community's marginalized LGBTQIA+ people of color. The flag was coined the Philadelphia Pride Flag.



LESBIAN A female identifying person attracted to other female identified individuals.



BISEXUAL (BI) A person whose sexual or romantic attraction is not limited to people of one particular gender.



DEMISEXUAL (DEMI) A person who may experience sexual attraction after a close, emotional connection has formed.



ASEXUAL (ACE) A person whose sexual orientation is characterized by a lack of sexual attraction toward a person of any gender.



PANSEXUAL A person who is attracted to others regardless of their biological sex, gender identity, or gender expression.

DID YOU KNOW

Just as the LGBTQIA+ community is diverse in its sexual orientations, gender identities and expressions, as are the flags that represent each individual. There are many different flags to express the queer community, and at the 2018 ELCA National

FLAGS

OUR LGBTQIA+ SIBLINGS

TRANSGENDER (TRANS) A person whose self-experienced gender does not match the sex they were assigned at birth.



NON-BINARY A person who does not identify exclusively as a man or a woman.



GENDERQUEER A person who does not subscribe to conventional gender distinctions, but identifies with neither, both, or a combination of male and female genders.



INTERSEX A person who was born with a combination of male and female biological traits.



PROGRESS PRIDE FLAG In 2018, another update came to the Pride Flag. The Philly pride flag was reconfigured with the trans flag in the shape of an arrow, continuing the recognition of our marginalized LGBTQIA+ community.



ALLY Any straight, cis-gender person, who is supportive of the LGBTQIA+ community.



Youth Gathering, ReconcilingWorks saw firsthand just how much pride could be shared in claiming ones flag and identity as their own. These are but a few of the different flags that make up our beautifully diverse LGBTQIA+ siblings.

PERSONAL PRONOUNS

Personal pronouns are the set of pronouns a person wants others to use when talking to or about them. Understanding there is a difference between a person's sex, gender identity, and gender expressions makes the use of pronouns important. Asking someone "What pronouns do you use?" is a great way to hospitably see, name, and care for LGBTQIA+ people.

Here are a few helpful ways to use pronouns

1. Ask people what their pronouns are when you meet them. "I want to make sure I am using the proper pronouns for you, which pronoun do you use?"
2. Add them to the signature of your emails.
3. Make space for people to add their pronouns to name tags for events and gatherings.
4. If you make a mistake and someone corrects you, thank them for teaching you their personal pronouns.



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