Saint Andrew's Lutheran Church Adult Discipleship Education Hour Forum 2/14/2021

"Love is Love: Introduction to the History of the LGBTQ+ Community in Society and the Church."

Hosted by: LGBTQ+ Task Force*

Guest Speaker: Pastor Rick Pribbernow, Open Door Ministries

Background Information:

Saint Andrew's is, with the guidance of the LGBTQ+ Task Force, is beginning the educational process of becoming a Reconciled in Christ (RIC) congregation. This means publicly affirming that we welcome the LGBTQ+ community into our congregation. Of the 109 congregations in the Pacific NW, 51 are "RIC" with another 3 in process.

Working in consultation with us is Pastor Rick Pribbernow, director and chaplain of Open Door Ministries. Established nearly 30 years ago by then-Bishop Lowell Knutson as a synod ministry, Open Door is a Lutheran Ministry of consultation and inclusion for individuals working through sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression issues, including assisting with health-related issues.

Important Historical Struggles and Milestones in the LGBTQ+ Community:

Prior to 1890s: Being gay was a crime punishable by death. Homosexual men were often mutilated and/or burned at the stake.

1895: English author and playwright Oscar Wilde was imprisoned for sodomy. Imprisonment was the standard punishment, but it no longer carried a death sentence.

1930s-50s: Homosexuality was considered a mental illness, resulting in imprisonment or commitment to institutions. People were "outed" without their permission, fired from their jobs, evicted from homes, and had their lives ruined. During WWII, in Nazi Germany, Adolf Hitler labeled homosexuals "dissidents" and they were consigned to concentration camps. Their clothing was marked with an inverted pink triangle, similar but distinct from the Jewish Star of David, and they were kept apart from other prisoners. The men were forced to do the worst jobs in the camp and the women were the subjects of experimentation. In modern times, the pink triangle has been reappropriated from the Holocaust and is now a symbol of gay pride and unity. It is commonly used in schools by the Safe Schools Coalition as a signifier that a student is safe to discuss issues of sexuality and gender identity.

1969: The Stonewall Uprising. Until 1966, it was illegal in New York City to sell alcohol to a "known homosexual." The gay community established private clubs so they could dance and socialize with friends, as "homosexual activity" was still illegal after 1966. These clubs were routinely raided by police with owners and patrons being arrested. In late June of 1969, another raid took place, during a memorialization of the recently deceased Judy Garland. On this occasion, however, the patrons fought back, resulting in a riot that lasted six days. Many view this as the first gay rights action and Gay Pride month is in June for this reason. The Stonewall Inn is now a national landmark (designated by President Obama).

1970: First Gay Pride March took place in San Francisco.

1971: The Gay Pride rainbow flag was introduced.

1973: The American Psychiatric Association (APA) removed the diagnosis of "homosexuality" from the second edition of its Diagnostic and Statistical Manual (DSM)[1].

1980s: HIV/AIDS epidemic takes hold in US. Seen initially as a "gay cancer," the gay community is further stigmatized, marginalized, and victimized. As of 2016, more than 675,000[2] people, both gay and straight, have died of HIV/AIDS in the US, including men, women, and children. Great strides have been made in the prevention and treatment of HIV/AIDS, and it is no longer the imminent death sentence it used to be. A greater challenge now is the toxicity from the cocktail of medications required.

1985: The idea for the NAMES quilt was created, with the project officially beginning in 1987, to honor and memorialize those who died from AIDS-related causes. As of 2020, it is the largest piece of community folk-art in the world, weighing an estimated 54 tons.

2009: ELCA permits ordination of gay clergy so long as they are in a committed, monogamous relationship. No such restriction is placed on straight clergy. Prior to this, the synod's policy was more akin to "don't ask, don't tell" with most gay clergy remaining closeted.

2012: The Marriage Equality Act is passed in Washington State, legalizing Same Sex Marriage, making us one of the first states to do so via popular vote.

2015: The US Supreme Court legalized same sex marriage on June 26, 2015.

LGBTQ+ Issues and Race—Questions asked and answered:

Pastor Rick was asked a question during the session regarding other cultures/countries and their "take" on LGBTQ+ issues and experiences. Although not discussed during the session, I have since learned that, as of 2019, 70 countries continue to criminalize homosexual behavior between consenting adults and six of these use the death penalty as punishment. (Forbes, May 17, 2020)

Pastor Rick touched on a training several years ago by LifeLong. (LifeLong/Chicken Soup Brigade is a local organization that provides health and food services to marginalized and underserved individuals, particularly but not exclusively, to those living with HIV/AIDS. Until the pandemic closed our doors, Saint Andrew's was a delivery hub for food deliveries.) Rick gave a broad overview of how different cultures within America view and respond to homosexuality. These were stereotypes often attributed to non-whites, typically by whites, and were not meant as explanations. It is important to note that the BIPOC community (Black, Indigenous & People of Color) have a variety of views on the topic, just as different regions in our country or faith practices across the globe do.

For example, as Rick mentioned, for some in the African American community, it is less acceptable to be a gay male, and engaging in such behavior is referred to as being on "the down-low" or DL, as in secret, but it does not necessarily mean you are homosexual. In the Latin community, some feel that if you are the man who is the "top," meaning the person performing the sex act, you are not actually gay. However, if you are the "bottom" and the recipient of the sex act, you are assuming the "female" position in the relationship, and therefore you are gay. In many Arabic-speaking cultures, it is viewed as a state of immaturity and "boy play," but the idea of a man being gay is completely dismissed as if

homosexuality does not even exist. It essentially boils down to the cultural emphasis and importance of masculinity and male-ness as the dominant identity.

Conversely, many Indigenous tribes in the US hold a belief system that allows for "two-spirit" individuals. In some Northern Plain tribes this is referred to as *berdache*. This is not the same as Gay, which is about being attracted to someone of the same sex. Two-spirit is more about the embodiment of two genders residing within the same person and it was and is considered as a gift. Such people were felt to have strong curing powers and to bring good luck and were often included in large war parties. "Gender and sexuality in Indian cultures allowed a wide range of variation and the concept of the berdache simply shows that cultures exist which allow a great deal of freedom with regard to gender identity." (www.Nativeamericanroots.net) Not until colonization by white settlers did this tradition become forbidden and pushed underground. It is now seeing a resurgence of acceptance and celebration in modern indigenous culture.[3]

It is critical that the white community avoid and fight against harmful stereotyping and overgeneralization regarding the culture, beliefs, and practices of another race or ethnic group. There is much we can learn and discuss on this topic as it relates to social justice in all forms and our job is to confront our own biases and prejudices; unfortunately, a single Sunday Forum will not cover it. Please continue to educate yourself and have these sometimes-difficult conversations!

Please feel free to contact any of us with questions or comments:

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GLOSSARY OF TERMS[4]

BIPOC	Acronym for Black, Indigenous, and People of Color
Cisgender	A term used to describe a person whose gender identity aligns with those typically associated with the sex assigned to them at birth and how they present to the world.
"Deadnaming" (Old Name)	When someone, intentionally or not, refers to a transgender person by the name they used before they transitioned. It may also be described as referring to someone by their "birth name" or "given name." However, these descriptions invalidate the individual's choice and could even possibly "out" them as transgender. (See "Outing" and "Microaggressions" below.)
Drag	A drag queen is a person, usually male, who uses clothing and makeup to imitate and often exaggerate female gender signifiers and gender roles for entertainment purposes. Historically, most drag queens have been men dressing as women. In modern times, drag queens are associated with gay men and gay culture, but they can be of any gender and sexual identity.
Gender Dysphoria	Clinically significant distress caused when a person's assigned birth gender is not the same as the one with which they identify. This is still listed in the DSM V as a mental illness for purposes of diagnosis, treatment, and insurance coverage.
Gender Expression	External appearance of one's gender identity, usually expressed through behavior, clothing, body characteristics or voice, which may or may not conform to socially defined behaviors and characteristics typically associated with being either masculine or feminine.
Gender Identity	One's innermost concept of self as male, female, a blend of both or neither—how individuals perceive themselves and what they call themselves. One's gender identity can be the same as or different from their sex assigned at birth.
Gender Non-conforming	A broad term referring to people who do not identify or behave in a way that conforms to the traditional expectations of their gender, or whose gender expression does not fit neatly into the category. While many also identify as transgender, not all gender non-conforming people do.
Gender Transition	A process some transgender people undergo to match their gender identity more closely with their outward appearance. This can include changing clothes, names, or pronouns to fit their gender identity. It may also include healthcare needs such as hormones or surgeries.

HIV/AIDS	Human Immunodeficiency Virus, the virus that causes AIDS, or Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome. HIV can be transmitted through blood, semen, vaginal secretions, and breast milk.
Homophobia	The fear and hatred of or discomfort with people who are attracted to members of the same sex.
Intersectionality	A concept to describe the ways in which oppressive institutions (racism, sexism, homophobia, transphobia, ableism, xenophobia, classism, etc.) are interconnected and overlapping to compound discrimination and disadvantage. The term was first coined by Kimberle Crenshaw in 1989.[6]
LGBTQI+AA	• **Lesbian:** a female identifying person attracted to other female identified individuals. • **Gay:** a male identifying person attracted to other male identified individuals. (Gay is also used by women and non-binary people to describe themselves.) • **Bisexual** (or Bi): a person whose sexual or romantic attraction is not limited to people of one particular gender. • **Transgender (or Trans):** a person whose self-experienced gender does not match the sex they were assigned at birth. • **Queer:** a person who does not subscribe to conventional gender distinctions, but identifies with neither, both, or a combination of male and female genders. This term has been used as a slur but has been reclaimed by the LGBTQ community. The "Q" can also stand for Questioning. • **Intersex:** a person who was born with a combination of male and female biological traits. A child who does not go through puberty or someone who, later in life, develops secondary characteristics, e.g., a woman who grows a full beard or a man who lactates. This term has replaced the archaic "hermaphrodite." • **Asexual (or Ace):** A person whose sexual orientation is characterized by a lack of sexual attraction toward a person of any gender. • **Ally:** Any straight, cisgender person who is supportive of the LGBTQIA+ community.
Microaggression	A statement, action, or incident regarded as an instance of indirect, subtle, or unintentional discrimination against members of a marginalized group. For example, using slang, the wrong pronouns, or the wrong name. (See "Pronoun Usage")
Non-binary	A person who does not identify exclusively as a man or woman.
Outing	Exposing someone's LGBTQ+ identity to others without their permission.

	Outing someone can have serious repercussions on employment, economic stability, personal safety, or religious and family situations.
PrEp	Short for Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis, PrEp is a once-daily pill that reduces the risk of acquiring HIV. It is an FDA-approved medication and sold under the brand name Truvada.
Pronoun Usage	Pronouns in the English language are gender-based (he/she), but this is not always accurate for a person who does not identify as their sex as assigned at birth. When someone asks you to use their preferred pronouns, they are asking you to respect their identity. When someone refers to another person using the wrong pronouns, especially on purpose, that can lead to feelings of disrespect, dysphoria, exclusion, and alienation. Cisgender individuals can normalize the stating of preferred pronouns by including their own in correspondence and conversation. Examples of preferred pronouns beyond he/him and she/her are they/them and xi/xir (pronounced zee/zer).
Sex/Gender Assigned at Birth	The sex (male or female) given to a child at birth, most often based on the child's external anatomy.
Sexual Confirmation Surgery or Gender Affirming Surgery	Hormonal and sometimes surgical procedures that a transgender person may choose to undergo to obtain the physical characteristics that match their gender identity. (Previously referred to as a "sex change" or "sexual reassignment.")
Sexual Orientation	An inherent or immutable enduring emotional, romantic, or sexual attraction to other people. Note: an individual's sexual orientation is independent of their gender identity.
Transvestite	Outdated and usually derogatory term to describe someone who prefers to dress in the clothing usually associated with the other sex. Cross-dressing is the more preferred term. This should not be confused with transgender.

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 that you are talking to a person. It is also OK to ask which pronouns one prefers, just to avoid using gendered terms. Remember, all you need to welcome someone is their name.[5]

Sources:

1 www.Psychiatry.org

2 https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/

3 www.indiancountrytoday.com; www.nativeamericanroots.net

4 Human Rights Campaign website (www.hrc.org), Oxford Dictionary, and booklet “Lutheran Introduction to our Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer Neighbors.”

5 Booklet “Lutheran Introduction to Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Gender Expression,” by Reconciling Works

6 Oxford Dictionary and Geek Feminism website https://geekfeminism.wikia.org/