



Gender Identity: a Lutheran Pastoral Approach

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Preface

“For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places,” Ephesians 6:12. The aim of this essay is to give information to those seeking to understand gender identity issues in the western world today, and to encourage the baptized who are burdened by gender identity issues to live their baptismal regenerated life. Portions of this essay address those who seek to minister to people burdened and/or conflicted with gender dysphoria. My goal is to help all find purpose and understanding in the present life God has granted, right now, by His Word and Spirit. The concepts of perceived and actual identity addressed in this paper will hopefully give clarity to the dysphoria of assigned physical gender and conflicting feelings. I pray it brings new life and new joy to its readers and reminds them of their baptismal identity and encourages all who daily struggle against the confusing feelings held within the sin-filled flesh and blood.

Introduction: Why Here? Why Now?

A former church elder of mine and life-long active LCMS member, who had been married to the same woman for more than forty years and fathered two children, invited me over to his house and presented me with a letter. I will never forget the feeling as I read his well-prepared letter. It read:

Pastor, I would like to make a reconfirmation of my faith before the altar of our church, as a woman, on the Sunday after I declare my own independence as a woman on July 4th. I have been undergoing hormone therapy for the last year and a half to become a woman. I know that you won't understand my internal struggle and it is of no use to try. I'm just asking you to accept me the way I am. My therapist says it is the only option for me. If I don't do this, she says I will eventually kill myself and I think about that often. I know God doesn't want me

to commit suicide and he wants me to be happy. I know it is God's will for me to gender transition. He told me this on the day when our vicar preached on Jeremiah 1:5 for Life Sunday. God knew me as a woman in my mother's womb before I was born. Sin caused something wrong to happen after that and for sixty-four years I have been a woman trapped in a man's body. I contacted our Synod headquarters and they said that we have no statement against gender transition as a church body. I spoke with our congregation's visitation pastor and he didn't have anything to say about it other than that he urged me strongly to speak with you. So that is why my wife and I invited you over to our home this morning. Will you be my pastor and support me in my journey to become happy again as a woman?

Before I responded with the multitude of questions flying around in my mind, I set my face to prepare for the worst-case scenario. Unfortunately, after meeting for eight weeks and discussing Holy Scripture, together they handed me a letter of resignation of their membership from our church. We parted on civil terms and he has since come under the care of a Veterans Health Association endocrinologist for hormone therapy and VA gender transition counselor. It might be shocking to hear the VA giving priority to this form of health care over the multitude of other needs, but it is, evidently, the agenda priority of the day.

I recall being numb for about a week and feeling a bit sorry for myself wondering, why me, why here, why now? This occurred the Tuesday after Easter Sunday. Monday night, the night before my member presented me with his gender transition request, the visitation pastor I mentioned earlier was called to heavenly rest. I was up nearly the whole night with his widow and sons giving care to them. I caught a few hours of rest and planned the details of the funeral with them mid-morning. Immediately after that I was off to visit my elder and his wife only to have them surprise me with the aforementioned letter.

One does not bounce back from such surprising shocks as quickly as they come on and so this paper has been cathartic for me to work through over time. May the truth and comfort found in God's Word spring forth out of the darkness of the devil's deception and works of death and give way to the hope and security of the new life granted in Holy Baptism.

We are on a new frontier in pastoral care. In searching for LCMS resources to aid me in this endeavor of identifying the issues at play and specific strategies to share the Gospel, I found few to none. I have been asked to present on this topic on a few occasions since. The first time I presented this topic at a joint pastor's circuit conference,

I floored a few retired pastors in attendance. One pastor, though he tried, just could not wrap his mind around the presentation. This is a largely new issue for our church and for American society it truly is the next frontier.

The words I share in the remainder of this paper are for your benefit as well as for mine. May God grant to us His favor and supply us with all that we need to make our stand against the works of darkness. May He enable us to bring His saving Word and Sacrament to lighten the burden of the oppressed, to strengthen those distressed, and to breathe new life and meaning into our feeble flesh.

The Next Frontier

The cover of the June 9th, 2014 *TIME* magazine featured a photo of Laverne Cox, a star of the television series, *Orange Is the New Black*. She is one of an estimated 1.5 million Americans who identify themselves as transgender. That makes up about 0.5% of the American population. The title of the issue and the cover story is “The Transgender Tipping Point: America’s next civil rights frontier.” As I write this paper, my home state of South Dakota was named as the last state, along with North Dakota, to have their state’s constitutional amendments banning gay marriage challenged in court. Gay marriage and its full recognition and approval by all levels of government are but a few years away from conquest. So what is next on the civil rights frontier for those who wish to conquer American society and thought? I foresee upon the horizon a heated battle for the rights, recognition, and full approval of transgendered persons.

Emerging from the margins of society, like homosexuals three and four decades ago, are transgendered people and their advocates who are now beginning the fight for an equal and accepted place in society as the *Time* magazine article reflects.

“Almost one year after the Supreme Court ruled that Americans were free to marry the person they love, no matter their sex, another civil rights movement is poised to challenge long-held cultural norms and beliefs. Transgender people—those who identify with a gender other than the sex they were “assigned at birth,” to use the preferred phrase among the trans activists—are emerging from the margins to fight for an equal place in society. This new transparency is improving the lives of a long misunderstood minority and beginning to yield new policies, as trans activists and their supporters push for changes in schools, hospitals, workplaces, and the military.”¹

¹ Katie Steinmetz, “The Transgender Tipping Point: America’s next civil rights frontier,” *Time*, 9 June 2014, 40-41.

Often overlooked and understated in the classification of LGBT or LGBTQ (Lesbian, Gay, Bi-sexual, Transgender, Queer) is Transgender. In recent years the main focus of this minority classification has been on the rights of LGB, which comprises about three to three and a half percent of the American population, and it appears that fully recognized gay marriage will be the law of the land among all fifty states in short order. Media outlets are beginning to cover the new frontier of transgender rights in more progressive states like Colorado and in California, where 16-year old Cassidy Lynn Campbell proudly took a slice of homecoming history by becoming the first trans teen at Marina High School in Huntington Beach to win the title last year. Since that time trans teens have been crowned prom queens in Connecticut and Maryland. Don't think that just because you do not live in a progressive state that the battle over this new frontier won't come near to your conservative little town in the Bible-belt or the upper Midwest. The following is from the heartland of America.

A young couple from Tulsa, Oklahoma, named Arin Andrews and Katie Hill, grabbed far more attention in the United Kingdom and Australia last year than they did here in the United States.² Arin was born female and was named Emerald at birth and Katie was born male and named Luke. Katie, a university student, underwent her gender transition surgery at age 18, through a generous donation. Arin was able to have his gender reassignment surgery at age 17. They were featured on ABC's television show *20/20* and NBC's *The Trisha Goddard Show*, airing in the United States and the United Kingdom a few months later. According to their television interviews they both were unhappy with the sexual identification they were assigned at birth and both attempted to commit suicide due to the dissatisfaction with their lives and gender assignments. Katie, at age seven, attempted to drown herself, and after Arin was asked to leave his private Christian school upon suspicion of being gay, he attempted suicide by slitting his wrists.³ They dated for more than two years but have since broken off their relationship.

The hometown of these transgendered teens was not Las Vegas, where they say anything goes, but Tulsa, Oklahoma, a rather conservative city in the Midwest. I could cite other examples in other states or list LCMS pastors who have dealt first hand with this issue in their immediate family or even transitioned

² In 2011, Australia led the charge of gender inclusion by becoming the first country to include a third option for official governmental sex classification – Gender X.

³ “Transgender Teens: What if a Girl were a Guy and a Guy were a Girl?,” ABC News video, 9:26, posted June 28, 2013, <http://abcnews.go.com/2020/video/transgender-teens-girl-guy-guy-girl-19529634>

themselves, but I don't mean to belabor the point I'm trying to make. Those afflicted with gender dysphoria reside in your state, your town, your congregation, and even possibly even in your family. Seek to understand this issue and remain faithful, but do not expect an easy solution. Once the rationalization for homosexuality is established—and it has in our general American context—the circle of progression spreads out to embrace more and more of society to include its most innocent and vulnerable members: the teenagers and the children.

In addition to the imminence of the escalating battle to retain a godly sexual ethic, there is also a battle that will challenge those who seek to remain faithful. In regard to culpability, no longer is LGBT behavior viewed as deviant by the masses, but deviant now are those who oppose it. Thus, those viewed as culpable for the distress directed at those who suffer dysphoria over their assigned gender are the ones who oppose the social progression of the LGBT movement. Popular rationalization would go like this: if homosexuals and inclusive LGBT groupings are not intrinsically disordered—and are as well-adjusted and as normal as heterosexuals—then the suffering and alienation they experience must be caused by others, by the rejection of the society around them. Arin Andrews and Katie Hill have been seen as champion warriors upon the frontier, with the accounts of their personal battles against oppressive classmates, institutional rejection at school, misunderstanding family members, and even their own internal struggles to keep pressing on have marked them as heroes of the day. That is, insofar as they are portrayed on the television screen and their quotations in news articles.

Within that mindset, it is then not the homosexual or the transgendered who need change or to be changed, but the society at large, which is the frontier. It must be tamed. It must be conquered for our nation to progress, for humanity to progress, the one at fault—namely the society that oppresses the transgendered—must be conquered through change. Society currently is not right and it is a danger to the people of this nation as a whole. *It* is at fault. As the late Enrique Rueda noted in *The Homosexual Network*, "The problem with homosexuality came to be presented more as a question of society's way of dealing with homosexuals than with anything they did."⁴ This projection of their problems upon society is what drove the rationalization from the beginning: you are not going to change us; we are going to change you. And we will do that by

⁴ Enrique T. Rueda, *The Homosexual Network* (Old Greenwich, CN: The Devon-Adair Company, 1982), 106.

taking your understanding of the family and genders and conforming it to ourselves.

At a Human Rights Campaign dinner, which celebrated him as an LGBT civil rights hero, the late Franklin Kameny said, "I have tended not to adjust myself to society, but with considerable success have adjusted society to me, and society is much the better off for the adjustments I have administered."⁵ This issue and the agenda of the LGBT will not stop until society has been changed to conform to the adjustments they desire.

Surviving the Frontier

What shall we, as part of the Holy Christian Church, bought by the precious blood of the Son of God, baptized into His death and resurrection, and assumed into His new life given by the Holy Spirit, now do in the face of this seemingly new issue that threatens to tear God's order of creation apart? We stand firm upon God's Word, for His Word does not change at the whims of human feelings or at a new societal frontier. We bear one another's burdens and we speak the truth in love. We call out and expose the devil's work, and we proclaim the worth, value, and comfort that baptismal identity gives to those who believe its words and promises as the Word of God declares, especially to those who are burdened with gender dysphoria. All of this is in stark contrast to our Christian worldview that seeks to conform our flesh, not to its own changing desires, but to Christ and His cross. There in our baptism and in His cross all the sins and evil desires that ooze from sin-contaminated flesh are drowned and put to death so that new life in Christ might reign in our mortal flesh. It is His life and His order that is to reign and not our own desires and sin-filled wishes.

This new obedience that puts away the sins and evil desires that well up from the sin-filled flesh is the work of the Holy Spirit working through Word and Sacrament. The danger of living life one's own way apart from God—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—is that the person is leading a life toward destruction, for that person has made the will for his or her own desires a false god that strays away from the Triune God. As Luther states in his explanation of the first article of the Creed, everything that the Father has given us He still takes care of for our benefit, our sexuality included. Part of our benefit is to use those gifts of body, eyes, ears, all our members, our reason and all our senses for the purpose of His

⁵ "LGBT Civil Rights Hero Frank Kameny at HRC National Dinner", YouTube video, 2:07, posted by Human Rights Campaign, October 13, 2006, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j_4S_iQ3fEo

praise. To use our bodies to harm others in criminal actions does not bring Him praise. To use our eyes to view unholy images or our ears to hear vile discourses or to use the other members of our bodies for selfish purposes does not bring Him praise. To use our reason and good sense to rationalize making what God has called evil, good does not bring Him praise. Bringing Him praise means believing Him at His Word and striving to live our lives according to His will and not according to our own wills and desires that are stained by sin.

Although this battle upon the frontier may be shocking to us, it is not new. There is nothing new under the sun and Christ will not forget or neglect us. He cannot forget His bride, the Church, of which we are members. Societies and nations come and go, but Christ and the solid confession upon which His Church stands changes not.

*Swift to its close ebbs out life's little day;
Earth's joys grow dim, its glories pass away;
Change and decay in all around I see;
O Thou who changest not, abide with me.⁶*

Baptismal Identity

Amid the battle that is waged upon the frontier of American culture and Christianity, we are charged to stand firm and remain as faithful watchmen who keep watch and defend against dangers from within and without. The apostle Paul charged the Ephesians to put on the full armor of God so that they could take their stand. Today we are called to stand up for the real identity given to us by the Word of God. The Word that created physical forms out of nothing in Genesis and the Word that declares the realities of forgiveness, life, and salvation are granted through the Word and water of Holy Baptism.

Those who stand upon the frontier and refuse to aid in changing society's perception of physical gender and sexual identity will be called all sorts of names and accused of hate crimes. Immense pressure in forthcoming years will be put upon the church and its individual members to conform to the changes of society. As Christians who hold to orthodox Christianity and its view of Holy Scripture, we cannot conform. We are conformed alone to Christ through our Baptism and we are what *He* says we are, not what we simply feel we might be. Our conscience is to be bound to His Word and His Word alone, even as the devil seeks daily to change God's eternal Word through the conflict of the incongruence of our human feelings and what His Word declares.

⁶ Lutheran Service Book, "Abide With Me" 878:4.

Author of *Bearing Their Burden*, Tom Eckstein, gives an excellent reproof of a rightly bound conscience:

Finally, imagine a single man saying to me: “Who are you to judge me for having sex with prostitutes?! I’m not even breaking the law, because I only visit prostitutes in areas of Nevada where it is legal.... Here’s what I would say, “I’m a sinner just like you are! When I rebuke you for your sin of having sex with prostitutes I am merely pointing out that it is the Word of God that is judging and condemning your behavior. I realize that you visit prostitutes in areas of Nevada where it is legal. But just because a behavior is legal does not mean that God approves of it.””

It is important that we don’t get bogged down in terms and definitions that soften or seek to explain away the sinful condition, but call a thing what it is. Sin is sin and it is black and white. His Word clearly states that we were created male and female and our distinct chromosomal makeup attests to His creative works. As with any aspect of our human flesh, the fall into sin has caused what was ordered and clear to become disordered and unclear.

We thank God that Christians have been baptized and given a perfect identity not their own—a baptismal identity that is far more certain than any shifting place upon a spectrum. With that identity comes the certainty and confidence that, though doctors and mankind might not know exactly who this intersex person is, God knows and has called him or her in Baptism to be a son of God through faith in Christ. That identity is not tainted or deformed. There is no chromosomal abnormality in the promise of Holy Baptism. Christ is put on and they are made new. This new identity in Christ is given perfectly by the One who puts perfect garments of salvation upon the tainted and deformed. A new life and identity is given that is in Christ. It is none of their own doing. Baptism is only believed and even that belief is none of their own doing. It is all of God. He makes us who we are to be in Baptism, and that is enough.

Gender Issues and Classification

“Intersex” is a general term used for a variety of conditions in which a person is born with a reproductive or sexual anatomy that doesn’t seem to fit the typical definitions of

⁷ Tom Eckstein, *Bearing Their Burden (Galatians 6:1-2): Speaking the truth in love to people burdened by homosexuality*. (Raleigh, NC: Lulu, 2010), 207.

female or male. Intersex individuals may appear to be the exception of a solely binary understanding of sex and gender. Gender spectrum is becoming a more accepted way to reference what one's assigned sex might be. It is acceptable now more than ever for one to adjust their position upon the gender spectrum and much of that push has come from what are called the intersexed, those whose chromosomal irregularities blur the physical signifiers of one's sex.⁸

However, there is no physiological possibility for a human to be a true hermaphrodite with fully functioning reproductive organs of both sexes, even though surgery may reassign reproductive tissues. The truly gray area lies where an intersex individual is sterile due to chromosomal irregularities and shows no conclusive evidence of one sex over another. Sin in the fallen world makes all shades of gray out of what once was clear black and white, XX or XY chromosomal perfection. Chromosomal deformities exhibit themselves in other deformities with the most common effect being that of sterility in men and infertility in women. Not only is there the possible confusion of outward sex, but the loss of reproductive capabilities and the joy of children. Confusion and loss abound.

Over the years, the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM), which is used by psychologists and psychiatrists to diagnose disorders and other conditions, has altered the name and the definition of the general condition of gender incongruence as it has become either more prevalent in the whole of American society or as it has become more socially accepted as sexual issues become less taboo to discuss and present. For instance, in the 1980 edition of the DSM-III, this issue was defined as "Transsexualism" and described as an individual who demonstrated at least two years of continuous interest in removing their sexual anatomy and transforming their bodies and social roles. In 1994, the DSM-IV committee replaced the diagnosis of "Transsexualism" with "Gender Identity Disorder."

The latest edition DSM reveals a change in thinking on gender identity. The perspective change is similar to a decision made in 1973, when the American Psychiatric Association eliminated homosexuality from its list of recognized disorders. In the new edition of the DSM-V, released on May 22, 2013, the now-defunct diagnosis of Gender Identity Disorder (GID) receives a new name, Gender Dysphoria, which reflects a new emphasis and a change in sync with cultural demands. They would have removed the diagnosis altogether if not for the fact that insurance companies will not pay for counseling and surgeries without a diagnosis. Thus, the diagnosis remains in effect the same, but the classification is now downgraded from disorder to dysphoria. No longer

⁸ See chart of "Phenotypes of rare XX males and XY females" in Appendix.

is this condition considered out of normal physical or psychological order. It is now simply and only a problem of feelings and self-perception – a dysphoria.

One of the hardest concepts for many to comprehend is that "sex" and "gender" are now considered distinct and separate for people in American culture and certainly in the psychological field. For all recorded history of humanity the individual gender identity and behavior has been synchronous with the apparent physical sex. Today, a more simplistic understanding that is promulgated is "sex is between the legs; gender is between the ears." There is disunity in the understanding of sex and gender as they are no longer considered synonymous. Therefore, if a person according to the outwardly assigned sex is male, yet in his psyche understands himself to be of the female gender, he may wish to neutralize the disunity of his outward sex and inward psychological gender by presenting and transitioning to become outwardly and physically female.

For the individual with Gender Identity Disorder, as it was formerly officially titled, physical sex and psychological sex (i.e., "gender") are in some degree of conflict. Because this often leads to peripheral psychological disturbances and a general unhappiness with one's life, this condition is now alternatively referred to as "Gender Dysphoria," with dysphoria being the polar opposite of euphoria.

Both GID and Gender Dysphoria describe a condition in which someone is intensely uncomfortable with their biological gender and strongly identifies with and wants to be the opposite gender. Some of these people may live as their desired gender, and may even seek gender reassignment surgery that can allow them to trade, for example, a penis for a clitoris and a scrotum for a vagina.

In the old DSM-IV, GID focused on the "identity" issue—namely, the incongruity between someone's birth gender and the gender with which he or she identifies. While this incongruity is still crucial to Gender Dysphoria, the drafters of the new DSM-V wanted to emphasize the importance of *distress* about the incongruity for a diagnosis. (The DSM-V uses the term *gender* rather than *sex* to allow for those born with both male and female genitalia to have the condition.) This shift reflects recognition that the disagreement between birth gender and identity may not necessarily be pathological if it does not cause the individual distress. For instance, many transgender people—those who identify with a gender different than the one they were assigned at birth—are not distressed by their cross-gender identification and should not be diagnosed with Gender Dysphoria.

Transgender people and their allies have pointed out that distress in Gender Dysphoria is not an inherent part of being transgender. This sets it apart from many other

disorders in the DSM, because if someone is depressed, for example, he or she is, almost by definition, distressed as part of depression. In contrast, the understood distress that accompanies Gender Dysphoria arises not from within oneself, but because traditional culture stigmatizes people who do not conform to traditional gender norms. In this regard, the change in definition and classification resembles that of the elimination of homosexuality from the manual 40 years ago. The originating source of the disorder was moved from the person in distress on to traditionally held beliefs within society.

Gender identity issues in the western world today wrestle against the objective nature of physical flesh and blood, but at the heart of the struggle are not cells and chromosomes but the deception of what is objective and what is subjective. Despite the inclusion of Gender Identity Disorder under the classification of gender disorders in the (DSM-IV) and its counterpart, used by medical professionals, the International Classification of Diseases (ICD-10) these problems are rather confusingly not considered "mental illnesses" by the psychological community in the new and updated DSM-V. In short, the definition of the condition has softened to become a subjective dysphoria instead of a more objective disordered condition. Coinciding with the softening of the definition is the broadening of the classification and the lessening of the treatment, save transitioning to the desired other gender.

Issues for the Christian

Sin. Gender issues are a symptom of the Fall into sin in Genesis 3. The devil is a master of deception and distraction. Jesus calls him the "father of lies" in John 8:45 and his deceptive work is seen all throughout Scripture: the serpent in the Garden of Eden, King David's deception of pride with Bathsheba, the temptations of Jesus in the wilderness, the work of Judas Iscariot. The moment we put our guard down against the devil's schemes to go seek after a distraction, he attacks from the opposite flank. The devil does not just attack us at points where we are weak in order to burden our conscience, but also where it is strong. Life-long LCMS members, pastor's sons and daughters, even pastors themselves are attacked in this manner by the old evil foe causing them, at times, unbearable distress over their assigned gender.

Christians are attacked from both sides in the battle to maintain sexual roles as defined by Scripture. On the one side, popular liberal biblical scholarship uses Galatians 3:28, "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus," to state that, in the eyes of God, gender and sexual roles are not of great importance. Therefore, traditionally understood sexually identified roles are plastic in that they are flexible, malleable and elastic. They are moldable, changeable for the time and the culture of the day. And on the other side,

American culture and majority consensus have begun the process of redefining the role of gender apart from the distinct physical sexual qualities and functions as such.

As the culture continues to push the Word of God, which opposes the sinful nature of mankind, out of the public square, the more pastors and faithful laity will be put to the test on issues of sexuality. Postmodernity has created a culture where one's feelings are the highest authority and the greatest moral absolute. It is nearly impossible to argue in society the role of sexual identity as defined in Scripture because the orthodox Christian church is at odds with the heterodox Christian church and culture. And as the pendulum swings away from the natural knowledge of God to the god felt within, the orthodox church and its members reel in shock, dismay and silence against the attacks of the devil. This cannot be! We have been equipped with the armor of God to take a stand against the devil's schemes and to hold up the shield of faith for those whose flanks are being attacked. The darts of gender dysphoria are crafted, pointed and ready to be lit upon the battle lines of the next civil rights frontier.

What can pastors do today?

Pick up the sword of the Spirit and the shield of faith and go off to battle! We put on the full armor of God, as described in Ephesians chapter 6.

My father preached my ordination sermon on Jude 3-4, *"Beloved, although I was very eager to write to you about our common salvation, I found it necessary to write appealing to you to contend for the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints. For certain people have crept in unnoticed who long ago were designated for this condemnation, ungodly people, who pervert the grace of our God into sensuality and deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ."* I'm a hockey player, and so is my father. He took my hockey stick into the pulpit that day and instructed me to do two specific things; first, to defend the Holy Christian Church as a consummate defenseman, laying the lumber of the law down on anyone who tries to attack the goal of our faith, Jesus Christ, and secondly, to go with speed on the Gospel offensive with the sword of the Spirit.

As pastors, we are not psychologists nor are we politicians. We are seelsorgers who care for souls and the Word of God speaks with all perspicuity on the issue of gender and sexual roles. Though the Word is rejected by those who travel down the path of redefining sexual roles and identity, it still speaks the truth of the natural order of creation and the God-given conscience and that is powerful. It is a must, that we as pastors and proclaimers of the Gospel, go on the offensive against the devil's attacks on sex and gender and preach, with all the power given us by the Holy Spirit, the immense meanings of male and female, manhood and womanhood, marriage, and the blessings

of sex at every level of our instruction. The Word that is proclaimed will not return void, but will accomplish the purposes for which it is sent.

A quick review of the catholic epistles reveals to us that issues of perverted sexuality are nothing new. Men have been exchanging the will and order of God for their own desires and the order of the postmodern god felt within since the Garden of Eden. We cannot heal the dysfunction nor the dysphoria of the culture in which we live but we can take an incarnational approach as our Lord in His humiliation took with us. As our Lord took on the lowly form of a servant and became one of us to redeem us, so we can live out our vocation as little-Christes who bear His Name in a world that unknowingly lives in the darkness. We cannot save others for it is not we who do the saving, but rather the Word working through us as we live out our Christian vocation to love one another as we have been loved by God in Christ. What that would look like is a pastor, a friend, a family member who does not stop loving nor break off a relationship with a person burdened by gender dysphoria, but one who incessantly prays for them, constantly comes to them and serves them even though their love and service may be ignored. The words of that person ministering to the one burdened by the confusion and will of sin would not sound like the devil, the world, nor our repulsed human nature, but the clear directive truth of God's Word. The faithful proclamation of that Word will condemn the sin within the person while yet holding out unwavering compassion for the soul in the good fight against the works of darkness and deceptive feelings. This show of consummate care and love that speaks the hard truth of God's law, yet does not forsake the one in distress, is nothing less than how our Lord Jesus shows His divine care and consummate love toward us sinners.

Ephesians 4:15 bids us to speak the truth in love to our neighbor. Much easier said than done! There is the saying, "Ignorance is bliss" and it is so true. When Christ called us by our Baptism to follow Him, He gave us a cross to bear. A cross we do not carry alone. When we speak the truth in love, we proclaim the way, the truth, and the life—and when we get rejected it is not ourselves, but the Word of Christ, that is rejected. Yet His Word is proclaimed.

If you are faced with an issue like this, which the statistics say you will be at some point, your human emotions will be at the front of your lips. Be self-aware and guard what you say and how you act. Let Christ be your leader, your model of character, and your author of words. Become familiar with the issue in the psychological field, but approach it full force with your thorough theological background. Call a spade a spade, a sin a sin and continue in unending prayer.

There is an art to this task of faithfully proclaiming God's good order of creation in a world run amok with the effects of sin. It is likely that the full load of what God's Word has to say in regard to gender identity to the one who has transitioned or is considering transitioning will be received as an offense at first. The Law does rightly offend the sinful will but at the same time it is also a curb to keep us from greater harm. The challenge is to apply the medicine of God's Word in a dosage that the conflicted person can handle. Too little of it and you are not faithful and too much of it, you drive the person away. So what might be the right approach?

Job's friends listened to him for ten days before they began to give their bad advice. Maybe we should listen for a while before we speak, too, but instead give good advice. In attentive listening it is likely that the root of the issue will be revealed to you and you may very well see that the desire to transition is not the real spiritual disease, but a symptom of another condition. It is likely that condition may be easier to treat than the desire to outwardly transition genders. Keeping in mind that this desire to transition is not based on outward appearances or physical sexual assignment but instead the feelings within the psyche, attention should be given to understand the nature and origination of the feelings so as to speak the empirical Word of God into the feelings of the psyche.

To the post-modern mind, objective realities carry little weight. So it may appear that the objective truth of God's Word has little outward affect upon the nature of your situation, but that is precisely where the Holy Spirit works—through the Word. The Word declares sin unnatural. Chromosomal abnormalities, hormonal deficiencies, and feelings of desire to become something other than what God created us to be, as His children placed in the world for His purposes, is likewise unnatural. Unnatural is the dysphoria between the assigned outward sex and the inward sense of gender. Natural, on the other hand is the way God intended things to be in the garden before the Fall into sin, yet we are, by our fallen nature, sinful and unclean. The new nature of the baptized Christian is to renounce all sin and contend against all unnatural desires that do not bring glory to God. Bringing glory to God with the body and life can relieve the dysphoria, for then the conscience is clean because one is not living unto himself or herself, but unto the Lord.

John 1:14 states, *"And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen His glory, glory as of the one and only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth."* Christ came to dwell among sinners and called and rescued even the worst of them, as St. Paul states. As pastors, we are not Jesus Christ Himself, but the Word and the Sacrament we bring to the sinners in our midst is Jesus Himself. We have a great gift of true Gospel freedom that is meant to be incarnate among our little flocks. We may struggle to find right

words to say, yet the Word and His Church will prevail through the humble servants He has chosen and ordained to be incarnate amongst His flock of wandering sheep.

A letter to the one burdened by Gender Dysphoria

Dear _____, a dearly loved and redeemed baptized child of God. Grace, mercy, and peace to you from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

I don't know how you feel and don't know if I ever will know just exactly how you feel. But I do understand and I have seen what difficulty these feelings of inadequacy, confusion, and dissatisfaction can bring to a person. You may have struggled with these thoughts and feelings for years or they might be more recent for you. You may have your mind made up on what you are going to do to solve your problem or maybe you just want to know what the right thing is for a Christian to do. I don't know. All I know is that God the Father dearly loves you. His Word says so in a verse you may know by heart. *"For God so loved the world (and you are certainly a part of this world) that He gave His one and only Son (gave for you), that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life,"* John 3:16. In fact, He loves you *more* than His very own beloved Son, Jesus Christ. God the Father did not forsake and forget about you. He gave His only Son so that you, even amid your distress and struggles, could be redeemed and brought back and restored, body and mind, into a right relationship with Him. If you were the only human left on earth, God the Father would still have sent Jesus to redeem you, just you. St. Paul said, *"For one will scarcely die for a righteous person — though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die — but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us."* Romans 5:7-8. While we were still sinners Christ died for us, and that changes a lot of things.

From the standpoint of God's Word and His feelings toward you, it is clear. He gave His perfect Son in exchange for you. He loves you dearly — warts, wrinkles, sags, bags and all. Isn't that something? A holy and perfect God loving you, a person whose entire flesh is steeped in sin from head to toe. And He chose to love that messed up, odd-looking, funny feeling, sinful flesh, body and mind of yours even before you were born.

He made you in His image, but since the beginning when Adam and Eve sinned in the garden, that image has become a broken, distorted shadow of what once was perfect. Humanity has been thrown into sin and the results are clear. People die. Natural disasters happen. Relationships are ruined. Distinctly male and female features and feelings become blurred, the devil deceives us, and consciences are burdened. But remember, you are not left alone in your confusion and dysphoria. You are not forgotten or forsaken. You are forgiven and made new by the One who gave His life for

you. You are given a new identity, a new image in Christ that is distinct, perfectly shaped, bright and clear—you are a child of God and a brother or sister of Christ. You are baptized. You are baptized and now the image you bear and identity you declare is one not of your own achievement or lack thereof but the one given and placed over you in Holy Baptism (Galatians 3:27).

In your baptism you were joined to Christ and made a new creation. Your identity is now His identity. When God the Father sees you, He does not see your sin and offenses nor your imperfections but only the perfection of His beloved Son. He sees His perfect creation again in you because you have been covered in your flesh with Christ. In Baptism, Christ Jesus has enfolded you in His saving arms and placed His perfect garment of salvation upon you in your flesh for the sole purpose of bringing you near to His Father. That garment grants you access to heaven and that garment fits just right, and looks just right, and so it should because it has made you right—righteous in His sight.

In your Baptism you have been made entirely new from head to toe. The image you see in your bathroom mirror might make you feel uncomfortable in your own skin and understandably so; it isn't perfect. But why does that broken image of imperfect sinful flesh matter when you know that your true and real identity is the perfect identity given to you by these words, "*(insert your baptized name here), I baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.*"? At that moment, when your baptismal name was given, from the innermost recesses of your feelings tainted by sin to the outermost layer of your skin, the reality is that your entire being was made new in Christ. The old had gone (Satan's rule over you) and the new had come (new life in the Spirit).

You possess the strength of Christ—strength over death and the grave because of your baptismal identity. You can do all things through Christ who gives you strength. If you were born a woman, you can look into that bathroom mirror and know that you are beautiful and more perfect than a bride prepared for her wedding day because your groom, Jesus Christ, has chosen you in your Baptism and made you part of His bride, the Church. If you were born a man, you can look into that bathroom mirror and know that in your Baptism all of your inadequacies have been covered over by the all sufficient garment of Christ. If, because of chromosomal abnormalities, there is incongruence between what is deemed sex and gender, you have the promise that in the resurrection of all flesh on that last day, you will be made perfectly new. The promise of that upcoming joy is given you now in the remembrance of your Baptism that daily washes the unnatural sin away and rises perfectly dressed to live before God in righteousness.

If you have transitioned or are considering transitioning and your conscience is burdened or you feel despair, go to your pastor and tell him that you need spiritual care. Ask him to press his hands upon the head of your frail flesh and speak into your despairing heart the healing words of Holy Absolution, not just once or twice, but as much as you need to hold fast to the fact of your identity in God's sight. You are a dearly loved and forgiven child of God whom He has made distinct in every way to bring glory to His Holy Name. Repentance in this matter is simply the life of a Christian, no matter what the sin. Forgiveness of sins given by the One who died to win your forgiveness is the life of the Church. It's the same life at work within you to make you new. You are not alone in your Christian struggle. Your pastor will help you and be your ally against the confusion and despair within. With St. Peter we all can say, *"Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life,"* (John 6:68). So we go to Him for all health and healing, now and forevermore.

Prayer: Gracious Lord, Almighty Father, Your Word declares to me that You knew me in my mother's womb even before I was born. Your Word also informs me that this whole world has been thrown into the dysfunction of sin, my own body and mind included. Help me, dear Father, by Your Spirit to trust in Your promises and to live according to Your will. Forgive me of my sins and grant me strength to live the new life that You have so graciously afforded me in the person and work of Your only Son Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, One God, now and forever. Amen.

May God the Father who began His good work in you and for you even before you were born, may God the Son who took upon your flesh to redeem and save your body and soul, and may God the Holy Spirit who daily makes you anew by dying to sin and rising to live before God in righteousness, bring His work to completion now and in the day of Christ Jesus our Lord.

A letter to pastors counseling members with Gender Dysphoria

Dear brother in Christ,

St. Peter has a word for you, *"Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you. But rejoice insofar as you share Christ's sufferings, that you may also rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed,"* (1 Peter 4:12-13). It is a strange world in which we minister but sin is strange and so we expect the expected which is the unexpected. By that I mean the devil is an absolute master of deception and the father of all lies, but his next move is easy to predict for

there is nothing new under the sun. His plan of attack is always the same. Lie and distract you away from the central issue—faith in Christ.

How does one come to faith? Where is faith granted? Through the Word—through Holy Baptism. At the heart of Gender Dysphoria is a confusion or disbelief in the words and promises of Holy Baptism. That confusion may manifest itself in all shapes and forms of distractions such as birth defects, hormonal deficiencies, abuse at a formative age, early exposure to pornography, influence of peers, accompanying mental conditions and a whole host of other distractions. You are not a psychologist, nor an endocrinologist, nor a medical doctor. You are a pastor and you have been made a physician of souls to bring the healing balm of God's Word and Sacrament to the sin, shame, and pain of sorrowing hearts. You are called to silence the evil foe's work in your parishioner's life with the words and the promises of God's Holy Word. You are given the wisdom of God's Word to see and pry past the probable spiritual symptom of Gender Dysphoria to the root cause of despair and misbelief and there apply the baptismal therapy that confirms one's identity in Christ.

Luther gives to us the three rules of *Oratio*, *Meditatio*, and *Tentatio*. They are what make a theologian and it is good to go back to the basics of our craft when confronted with a new and fiery trial. Those who are counseled by gender transition counselors today are instructed to tell their relations and peers to not even try to understand the dysphoria they endure, but only accept and support them in their transition. They have one thing right—to despair of your own reason and understanding. You will not entirely understand their dysphoria because their dysphoria is located within their feelings, which you will never feel just the same. But there is One who can and will understand and that is our high priest, Jesus Christ, who was tempted in every way, yet remained without sin (Hebrews 4:15). Through this high priest and His Holy Spirit, you will be led and given the words to speak understanding into that which cannot be understood. You will bring the clear light of the Gospel to a conscience clouded and burdened by the effects of sin. By the Holy Spirit you will speak life and order into disorder and death.

Firstly, you should know that the Holy Scriptures constitute a book which turns the wisdom of all other books into foolishness, because not one teaches about eternal life except this one alone. Therefore you should straightway despair of your reason and understanding. With them you will not attain eternal life, but, on the contrary, your presumptuousness will plunge you and others with you out of heaven (as happened to Lucifer) into the abyss of hell. But kneel down in your little room [Matt. 6:6] and pray to God with real humility and earnestness, that he through his dear Son may give you his Holy Spirit, who will enlighten you, lead you, and give you understanding.

Thus you see how David keeps praying in the above-mentioned Psalm, “Teach me, Lord, instruct me, lead me, show me,” and many more words like these.¹⁰ Although he well knew and daily heard and read the text of Moses and other books besides, still he wants to lay hold of the real teacher of the Scriptures himself, so that he may not seize upon them pell-mell with his reason and become his own teacher. For such practice gives rise to factious spirits who allow themselves to nurture the delusion that the Scriptures are subject to them and can be easily grasped with their reason, as if they were *Markolf* or Aesop’s Fables, for which no Holy Spirit and no prayers are needed.

Secondly, you should meditate, that is, not only in your heart, but also externally, by actually repeating and comparing oral speech and literal words of the book, reading and rereading them with diligent attention and reflection, so that you may see what the Holy Spirit means by them. And take care that you do not grow weary or think that you have done enough when you have read, heard, and spoken them once or twice, and that you then have complete understanding. You will never be a particularly good theologian if you do that, for you will be like untimely fruit which falls to the ground before it is haft ripe.

Thus you see in this same Psalm how David constantly boasts that he will talk, meditate, speak, sing, hear, read, by day and night and always, about nothing except God’s Word and commandments. For God will not give you his Spirit without the external Word; so take your cue from that. His command to write, preach, read, hear, sing, speak, etc., outwardly¹² was not given in vain.

Thirdly, there is *tentatio, Anfechtung*. This is the touchstone which teaches you not only to know and understand, but also to experience how right, how true, how sweet, how lovely, how mighty, how comforting God’s Word is, wisdom beyond all wisdom.¹¹

When Christ our Lord was tempted by Satan in the wilderness, He did not reply to the devil’s schemes by stating the scientific consensus of the day regarding whether or not stones had the ability to become bread or current the psychological association’s understanding of what classified as bowing down and technically worshipping. He responded with the Word of God because He had meditated upon that divine Word since He was a child. In our Lord’s temptation we see what a theologian is: a man who combats the many and varied spiritual and physical challenges of the day with the clear teaching of Scripture.

¹⁰ Psalm 119.

¹¹ LW 34:285-287.

Meditation upon God's Holy Word will give you His Spirit and in turn the words to speak and apply. If your nose is only in the interesting cutting edge technology of how to turn stone to bread and not also in the Word of God, then the words you speak will not be the words given by His Spirit. You must know the issue of temptation, but more so the Word of God to speak into that temptation and that comes by means of His external Word and Sacrament. And you will see that, when you meditate upon the Lord's gifts of Word and Sacrament, you will in turn have gifts to give and it will be a joy.

The devil is still God's devil and God works all things for the good of those who love Him who have been called according to His purpose. You, my brother, have been called and Called according to His purpose. Though this situation may have surprised and shocked you at first, you are equipped by God's Word and Spirit to minister to your flock and, as you do, cause the devil and his minions to slink away from them by declaring what Christ has done for His beloved. Luther said that experience alone makes a theologian, but for the Christian, experience is never divorced from the Word, which gives meaning to all human experience. It is, therefore, the experience of Scripture in the ever shifting world that makes one see and understand and become a theologian.

Luther was comforted in times of *tentatio* and *anfechtung* by the promise of Christ's Word, but he knew he could not hold on to that comfort of the forgiveness of sins and life and salvation by his own strength. He remained forever dependent upon the power of God Himself, the Holy Spirit who brings us to faith and keeps us in the faith, to be able to overcome once again every new spiritual attack. You too know what comfort the promise of Christ's Word brings during times of trial and attack and you are made to be right where you are—baptized into Christ to be Christ to your little flock.

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Appendix

Phenotypes of rare male XX and female XY chromosomal pairings in the intersex condition:

Genotype	Sex	Phenotype	Phenotypic Features
XX	Female	Normal Female	Normal
XY	Male	Normal Male	Normal
XX	Male	de la Chapelle syndrome	[1:20,000] small testes, sterile, may have feminine characteristics (usually not)
XY	Female	Swyer syndrome	[1:30,000] Gonads nonfunctional (need surgical removal); no puberty; infertile, no secondary sexual characteristics
X	Female	Turner Syndrome (Monosomy X)	[1:3,000] 1 in 40 survive to birth; abnormal growth patterns, short, lack female secondary structural characteristics, sterile, possible mental retardation
Y	----- DOES NOT SURVIVE TO BIRTH -----		
XXX	Female	“47XXX”	[1:1,000] Normal development, fertile, taller than average, slender build, may have slight learning difficulties
YYY	Male	YYY Male	[1:1,000] Taller than average, prone to acne, produce more testosterone, fertile
XXY	Male	Klinefelter Syndrome	[1:600] Hypogonadism, infertility, tall, produce small amounts of testosterone
XXXXY	Male	49 XXXXY syndrome	[1:100,000] speech/learning disability, infertile, underdeveloped gonads, low muscle tone, heart/respiratory problems in adulthood

Glossary of Gender Identity Terms

Cross Dresser (CD): One (regardless of the motivation) who wears clothing, accessories, and/or cosmetics that are considered (by society) appropriate for the other sex, but not one's own. For example, may include people who enjoy the comfort of the clothing or who wear dramatic apparel for others' entertainment.

Electrolysis: Process of deadening hair follicles, especially of facial and neck hair.

F->M (Female to male), **M->F** (Male to female): Used to specify the direction of a sex or gender role change.

Gender Identity: How one thinks of one's own gender; whether one thinks of oneself as a man (masculine) or as a woman (feminine).

Gender Role: Arbitrary rules, assigned by society, that define what clothing, behaviors, thoughts, feelings, relationships, are considered appropriate and inappropriate for members of each sex.

Gender (identity) community: People who identify as transvestite, transsexual, or transgendered, or as members of that gender community.

Gender Dysphoria: (GD) *Working definition:* Unhappiness or discomfort experienced by one whose sexual organs do not match one's gender identity.

Technical criteria: DSM-V

1. APA: Diagnostic Criteria for Gender Dysphoria (in Adolescents or Adults)

A marked incongruence between one's experienced/expressed gender and assigned gender, of at least 6 months duration, as manifested by 2 or more of the following indicators.

- a. A marked incongruence between one's experienced/expressed gender and primary and/or secondary sex characteristics (or, in young adolescents, the anticipated secondary sex characteristics)
- b. A strong desire to be rid of one's primary and/or secondary sex characteristics because of a marked incongruence with one's experienced/expressed gender (or, in young adolescents, a desire to prevent the development of the anticipated secondary sex characteristics)
- c. A strong desire for the primary and/or secondary sex characteristics of the other gender

- d. A strong desire to be of the other gender (or some alternative gender different from one's assigned gender)
- e. A strong desire to be treated as the other gender (or some alternative gender different from one's assigned gender)
- f. A strong conviction that one has the typical feelings and reactions of the other gender (or some alternative gender different from one's assigned gender)
- The condition is associated with clinically significant distress or impairment in social, occupational, or other important areas of functioning, or with a significantly increased risk of suffering, such as distress or disability.

Subtypes: With a disorder of sex development. Without a disorder of sex development.

Specifier: Post-transition, i.e., the individual has transitioned to full-time living in the desired gender (with or without legalization of gender change) and has undergone (or is undergoing) at least one cross-sex medical procedure or treatment regimen, namely, regular cross-sex hormone treatment or gender reassignment surgery confirming the desired gender (e.g., penectomy, vaginoplasty in a natal male, mastectomy, phalloplasty in a natal female).

2. **APA: Diagnostic Criteria for Gender Dysphoria in Children**

A marked incongruence between one's experienced/expressed gender and assigned gender, of at least 6 months duration, as manifested by at least 6* of the following indicators.

- a. A strong desire to be of the other gender or an insistence that he or she is the other gender (or some alternative gender different from one's assigned gender)
- b. In boys, a strong preference for cross-dressing or simulating female attire; in girls, a strong preference for wearing only typical masculine clothing and a strong resistance to the wearing of typical feminine clothing
- c. A strong preference for cross-gender roles in make-believe or fantasy play
- d. A strong preference for the toys, games, or activities typical of the other gender
- e. A strong preference for playmates of the other gender
- f. In boys, a strong rejection of typically masculine toys, games, and activities and a strong avoidance of rough-and-tumble play; in girls, a strong rejection of typically feminine toys, games, and activities
- g. A strong dislike of one's sexual anatomy

- h. A strong desire for the primary and/or secondary sex characteristics that match one's experienced gender
- The condition is associated with clinically significant distress or impairment in social, occupational, or other important areas of functioning, or with a significantly increased risk of suffering, such as distress or disability.

Subtypes: With a disorder of sex development. Without a disorder of sex development.

Gender Identity Disorder: (GID) *Working definition:* People who experience significant discontent with the sex they were assigned at birth and/or the gender roles associated with that sex.

Technical criteria: DSM-IV diagnosis previously recognized by the American Psychiatric Association.

- a. A strong and persistent cross-gender identification (not merely a desire for any perceived cultural advantages of being the other sex). In adolescents and adults, the disturbance is manifested by symptoms such as stated desire to be the other sex, frequent passing as the other sex, desire to live or be treated as the other sex, or the conviction that he or she has the typical feelings and reactions of the other sex.
- b. Persistent discomfort with his or her sex or sense of inappropriateness in the gender role of that sex. In adolescents and adults, the disturbance is manifested by symptoms such as preoccupation with getting rid of primary and secondary sex characteristics (e.g., request for hormones, surgery, or other procedures to physically alter sexual characteristics to simulate the other sex) or belief that he or she was born the wrong sex.
- c. The disturbance is not concurrent with a physical intersex condition.
- d. The disturbance causes *clinically significant distress or impairment* in social, occupational, or other important areas of functioning.

Specify if (for sexually mature individuals): Sexually attracted to males, females, both, neither.

Gender Neutral: Clothing, behaviors, thoughts, feelings, relationships that are considered appropriate for members of both sexes.

Genetic Male/Female: One who was considered male/female from birth, regardless of one's present sex or gender identity.

Hormone Therapy: Used to change secondary sex characteristics, including breast size, weight distribution, and facial hair growth.

Identify/ied (as): To think of oneself as having a particular sexual identity or gender identity. To emphasize that an identity term refers to one's internal reality, versus what others think or observe ("How do you self-identify?").

Intersexual: Someone whose genetic organization of the "sex chromosomes" is other than XX or XY. Intersexual genitals may look nearly female (with a large clitoris, or with some degree of posterior labial fusion); nearly male (with a small penis, or with hypospadias); or truly "right in the middle" (with a phallus that can be considered either a large clitoris or a small penis, with a structure that might be a split, empty scrotum, or outer labia, and with a small vagina that opens into the urethra rather than into the perineum).

LGBTQ Community: Contraction of "Lesbian, Bisexual, Gay, Transgendered, Queer or Questioning." Colloquial term for the sexual minority community or its members.

Male/Female: Term that refers to one's biological sex.

Monosexual: One who has significant sexual and romantic attractions primarily to members of one sex.

Pre-Operative Transsexual (Pre-op TS): One who is actively planning to switch physical sexes, mostly to relieve *gender dysphoria*. Probably, but not necessarily, *cross dresses*, takes *hormone therapy*, or receives *electrolysis* (only male to female).

Sex: Refers to one's biological anatomy, or genetic sex. Sex chromosomes determine the differentiation of the gonads into ovaries, testes, ova-testes, or nonfunctioning streaks. The hormones produced by the fetal gonads determine the differentiation of the *external genitalia* into male, female, or intermediate (intersexual) morphology.

Sexual Identity: refers to how one thinks of oneself in terms of who one is sexually and romantically attracted to, specifically whether one is attracted to members of the same gender, opposite gender, or both.

Sexual Reassignment Surgery (SRS): A surgical procedure that changes one's primary sexual organs from one sex to another (penis to vagina or vagina to penis).

Transgendered (TG): One who switches gender roles, whether just once, or many times

at will. Often an inclusive term for transsexuals and transvestites.

Transsexual (TS): One who switches physical sexes (usually just once, but there are exceptions). Primary sex change is accomplished by surgery. Hormone therapy, electrolysis, additional surgery, and other treatments may change secondary sex characteristics.

Transvestite (TV): One who mainly cross dresses for pleasure in the appearance and sensation. The pleasure may or may not be directly erotic. It may be empowering, rebellious, or something else. May feel comfortable in a focused transgender role or experience gender dysphoria while cross dressed.

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