

RECONCILING MINISTRIES NETWORK

Glossary of Terms

*Language for Belonging,
Justice, and Faith*



February 2026 Edition

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Introduction

Language is a gift we give one another and a currency for mutual understanding. It is fluid and ever-evolving. What we learn today may shift in the years to come as visibility increases, communities claim dignity, and knowledge deepens.

This glossary not only names harm, but also celebrates the beauty and diversity of the ways God creates human beings. These terms do not define a person. Rather, they offer language to help us share information about how we have been formed and how we might live more faithfully with one another.

Perfection matters less than posture – especially a posture of humility, curiosity, and care.

Umbrella Terms

Gender (n.)

Socially constructed norms, behaviors, and roles associated with being a woman, man, girl, boy, or another gender. Gender varies across cultures and can change over time.

Gender Expression (n.)

The external ways a person expresses gender through clothing, voice, behavior, or appearance.

Gender Identity (n.)

A person's internal understanding and experience of their own gender.

Sex Assigned at Birth (n.)

The classification given at birth—usually female, male, or intersex—based on anatomy or other physical traits.

Sexual Orientation (n.)

A person's enduring romantic or sexual attraction to others.

Sexual Orientation

Aromantic (adj.)

Experiencing little or no romantic attraction.

Asexual (adj.)

Experiencing little or no sexual attraction. Asexual people may still experience romantic attraction.

Bisexual (adj.)

Romantic or sexual attraction to more than one gender.

Demisexual (adj.)

Experiencing sexual attraction primarily after forming a deep emotional connection.



Sexual Orientation Continued...

Gay (adj.)

Romantic or sexual attraction to people of the same gender. Often used by men but may be used more broadly.

Heterosexual / Straight (adj.)

Romantic or sexual attraction to a different gender.

Lesbian (n., adj.)

A woman who is romantically or sexually attracted to other women.

Pansexual (adj.)

Attraction to people regardless of gender or gender identity.

Queer (adj., n.)

An umbrella term used by individuals who do not identify with traditional categories of sexual orientation or gender identity.

Same-Gender Loving (adj.)

A culturally specific term rooted in Black communities describing same-gender attraction.

Gender Identity

Agender (adj.)

A person who does not identify with any gender.

Bigender (adj.)

Identifying with two genders, either simultaneously or shifting between them.

Cisgender (adj.)

A gender identity that aligns with the sex assigned at birth.

Gender-neutral (adj.)

Language, spaces, or practices that do not specify gender and recognize gender diversity.

Genderfluid (adj.)

A gender identity that shifts over time or context.

Genderqueer (adj.)

An identity outside conventional gender distinctions.

Intersex (adj.)

Natural variations in sex characteristics that do not fit typical definitions of male or female bodies.

Nonbinary (adj.)

A gender identity outside the male/female binary.



Gender Identity *Continued...*

Questioning (adj.)

Exploring one's gender identity or sexual orientation.

Transfeminine (adj.)

A person assigned male at birth who identifies with femininity to a greater extent than masculinity.

Transgender (adj.)

A gender identity different from the sex assigned at birth.

Transmasculine (adj.)

A person assigned female at birth who identifies with masculinity to a greater extent than femininity.

Two-Spirit (adj.)

A culturally specific Indigenous identity encompassing gender, spirituality, and community roles. Not all Indigenous LGBTQ+ people use this term.

Gender Expression

Androgynous (adj.)

A blend of masculine and feminine traits or an appearance not easily categorized as either.

Feminine (adj.)

Traits, behaviors, or roles culturally associated with women or girls. People of any gender may express femininity.

Gender-creative (adj.)

Often used for children who express gender in ways that differ from societal expectations tied to sex assigned at birth.

Masculine (adj.)

Traits, behaviors, or roles culturally associated with men or boys. People of any gender may express masculinity.



Community & Cultural Terms

Affirming / Affirmation (adj., n.)

Actively supporting and celebrating LGBTQ+ identities in theology, policy, and practice.

Ally / Allyship (n.)

A person who actively supports and advocates for LGBTQ+ people, especially when not personally part of the community.

Beloved Community (n.)

A theological vision of shared life marked by justice, equity, dignity, and mutual care.

Chosen Family (n.)

Intentional networks of care and belonging formed outside biological or legal relationships, often central in LGBTQ+ life.

Coming Out (n., v.)

The personal and ongoing process of sharing one's sexual orientation or gender identity. For many, it is a movement toward authenticity and freedom.

Drag (n.)

A performance of stylized or exaggerated gender expression, often for artistic or cultural purposes.

Intersectionality (n.)

A framework recognizing that systems of oppression and privilege interact to shape lived experience.

Intra-community Discrimination (n.)

Bias or unequal treatment occurring within the LGBTQ+ community, often related to race, gender identity, class, or other differences.

Internalized Homophobia (n.)

When LGBTQ+ individuals absorb negative cultural messages about their own identity, sometimes leading to shame or harm toward themselves or others.

LGBTQ+ Community (n.)

A diverse global community of people with varied sexual orientations and gender identities who share cultural, social, and political experiences.

Pride (n.)

Affirmation, celebration, and joyful self-acceptance of LGBTQ+ identity in the face of historic shame and marginalization.

Privilege Dynamics (n.)

Recognition that some individuals hold social or cultural privilege within the LGBTQ+ community, which can shape power and access.

Racism in LGBTQ+ Communities (n.)

Instances where LGBTQ+ people of color experience racial discrimination within LGBTQ+ spaces.



Community & Cultural Terms Continued...

Transphobia within LGBTQ+ Spaces (n.)

Discrimination or exclusion of transgender individuals within LGBTQ+ communities.

Visibility (n.)

Openly living and naming one's identity. Visibility can foster belonging and cultural change.

Oppression & Harm

Acephobia / Arophobia (n.)

Prejudice or discrimination toward asexual or aromantic people.

Biphobia (n.)

Erasure, stigma, or discrimination directed toward bisexual people.

Cisnormativity (n.)

The assumption that being cisgender is normal or expected.

Cissexism (n.)

Systemic privileging of cisgender identities and bodies over transgender and nonbinary people.

Deadnaming (v.)

Using a transgender person's former name without consent.

Gaslighting (n., v.)

Manipulating someone into doubting their reality, identity, or experiences.

Heteronormativity (n.)

The assumption that heterosexuality is the default or preferred orientation.

Homophobia (n.)

Prejudice, fear, or discrimination toward gay people.

Lesbophobia (n.)

Prejudice or discrimination toward lesbians, most deeply rooted and shaped by sexism.

Microaggressions (n.)

Subtle, often unintentional comments or behaviors that communicate bias or exclusion.

Misgendering (v.)

Referring to someone using incorrect pronouns or gendered language.



Oppression & Harm Continued...

Outing (v.)

Revealing someone's sexual orientation or gender identity without their consent.

Queerphobia (n.)

Hostility toward queer identities broadly.

Religious Trauma (n.)

Psychological or emotional harm resulting from harmful religious experiences or teachings.

Spiritual Abuse (n.)

The misuse of religious authority, scripture, or belief to control, shame, or harm.

Transmisogyny (n.)

The intersection of transphobia and misogyny directed toward trans women and transfeminine people.

Transphobia (n.)

Prejudice, fear, or discrimination toward transgender people.

Structural Justice Terms

Ableism (n.)

Discrimination or exclusion directed toward disabled people.

Anti-Blackness (n.)

Systemic and cultural devaluation of Black life and humanity.

Classism (n.)

Discrimination based on economic status or social class.

Colonialism / Settler Colonialism (n.)

Systems of domination involving the displacement and control of Indigenous peoples and lands.

Oppression (n.)

Systemic or interpersonal patterns of unjust treatment or harm.

Patriarchy (n.)

Social systems that privilege men and masculinity over others.

White Supremacy / White Supremacy Culture (n.)

Systems and norms that center and advantage whiteness as dominant or superior.



Resources

Asexual Visibility and Education Network

<https://www.asexuality.org/>

Black Trans Advocacy Coalition

<https://blacktrans.org/>

Disability Visibility Project

<https://disabilityvisibilityproject.com/>

Gender Spectrum

<https://www.genderspectrum.org/>

GLAAD

<https://glaad.org/>

Human Rights Campaign

<https://www.hrc.org/>

National Black Justice Coalition

<https://nbjc.org/>

National Center for Transgender Equality

<https://transequality.org/>

PFLAG

<https://pflag.org/>

Reconciling Ministries Network

<https://rmnetwork.org/>

Religious Trauma Institute

<https://www.religioustraumainstitute.com/>

Safe Zone Project

<https://thesafezoneproject.com/>

Transgender Law Center

<https://transgenderlawcenter.org/>

The Trevor Project

<https://www.thetrevorproject.org/>

