

A Prayer for Courage to Seek Justice for Transgender People

Praying for Peace and Justice on May 7, 2023

Let us pray.

Holy One, we learn from the Bible that we are made in your image and so when we look around, we have to notice that you have many images including those that defy gender specification.

Our trans brothers and sisters need your help and we need your help in making our voices heard on their behalf, in seeing them, in respecting them, in loving them. May it be so. Amen.

Background

In 1997, Pat Conover preached a sermon at Seekers coming out as a transgender person. Pat received a warm reception for the sermon, with people noting the honesty, the courage, the vulnerability. Pat was dressed as a man.

When Pat began to come to Seekers dressed as a woman, Seekers struggled mightily to embrace the *experience* of transgender that Pat then embodied.

Many years later, Denise Leclair arrived at Seekers, a fully transitioned trans woman. Denise was warmly welcomed into the community and continues to be an important part of it, even though she no longer worships with us on Sundays.

Some in the community have children who have transitioned or who are experimenting with gender fluidity. My five-year old grandchild openly discusses which pronouns they want to use each day and what clothes they want to wear. Cynthia Dahlin lobbies in Richmond for trans rights and against trans-denying legislation.

I think we as a community have come a long way. I hope so.

I hope so because trans people need us – They need us to see them. To respect them for who they are and how they present themselves. To love them. And to protect them.

Between 2017 and 2021, the murder rate for trans people doubled, with a hugely disproportionate share of those murders being of black trans people. An AMA report from 2019 said that trans people are 2.5 times more likely to experience violence than cisgender people. A 2015 report stated that 40% of trans people attempt suicide.

While a few states have passed or are considering laws *protecting* trans people (Maryland is one of them), according to the Trans Legislation Tracker, 525 anti-trans bills have been introduced in 49 states this year, mostly targeting young trans people. This number is up from 174 in 2022. These bills focus primarily on restricting access to gender-affirming medical care, banning trans girls participation in school sports, requiring children to use the school bathroom of their birth-assigned gender and limiting how teachers and counselors can interact with trans youth. Both Maryland and Virginia are represented in the 49.

Medical associations oppose these legislative attempts to interfere with medical care; the North Carolina high school athletic association, with its own thoughtfully developed policies on trans participation in sports, opposes North Carolina's anti-trans sports legislation. These bills are solutions in search of a problem and their very existence is a

threat to the safety of trans people.