

CALL ME MALCOLM

DVD Study Guide Outline

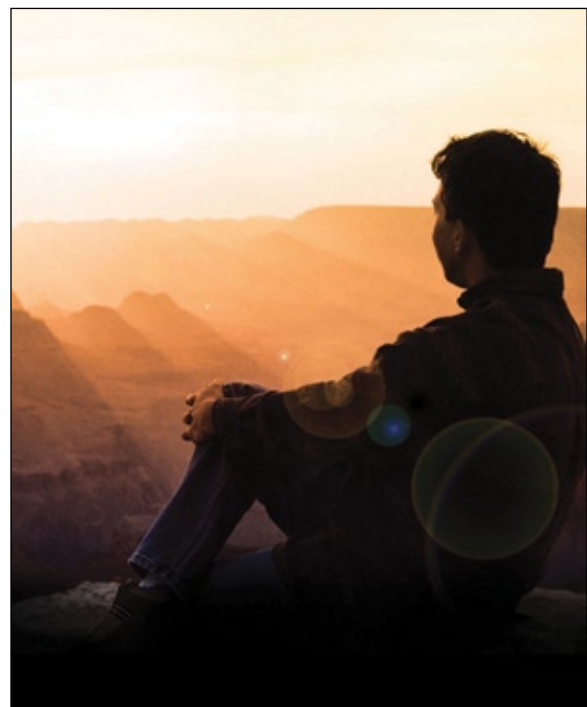
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Call Me Malcolm
A documentary film

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www.CallMeMalcolm.com



Introduction

You can't say the word transgender and people really know what you're talking about. But anybody who says the word transgender means something different by it anyway, so it really is a story and not just a label. — Malcolm

Call Me Malcolm is a story of the human spirit and God's spirit, and the liberating struggle to realize and express with confidence the marvelous gift of one's truest sense of self. The film is a journey of discovery. Through his own story and through the stories of those we meet along the way, Malcolm offers us a glimpse into the real lives of real people who are transgender. But it is only a glimpse. There are many stories to be told and Malcolm helps us to make connections with our own stories and encourages us to share them. That may seem daunting in a culture which has done more to heap shame on persons who identify as transgender. But the good news in this film is that shame and fear are overcome by grace, compassion and knowledge.



In his book, *Transgender Good News*, Pat Conover writes,

A passion for truth is one of the marks of the Holy Spirit welling up into individual and shared lives, a welcoming of consciousness to help form our minds. For those who dare drink from this stream, other questions soon arise: What shall I do with my understanding of the truth? What is beautiful and fulfilling? How will this truth affect the ways I lovingly relate to others? What does this mean for fairness and justice in social institutions?

*... Affirming all that is life-giving in masculinity and femininity allows us to respect and explore the best potentials made available to us in creation and encourages us to build bridges so that we can more deeply discover and appreciate each other.**

Conover's words capture the essence of what I hope you will get out of the film and this study resource—affirming all that is life-giving and building bridges to deeper discovery and appreciation of each other. I pray that you will come to a deeper understanding of faith, love, and gender identity, and by doing so will arrive at a deeper understanding of your own journey.

— The Rev. Mike Schuenemeyer

* Conover, Pat, *Transgender Good News*, 2002 New Wineskins Press, p.525

IMPLEMENTING THE STUDY GUIDE

Suggested settings in which to use this resource

This resource was developed with many different settings in mind: college classes, agency trainings or support groups, adult study groups in faith communities, groups of high school youth in schools or faith communities, just to name a few. It was prepared with prayer and gratitude for all those doing the challenging work of building understanding and community within diversity.

Each session runs 1-1½ hours, or 1 ½-2 hours if you incorporate the additional material for faith communities. The program can be done in a six-week class or study group. It also is possible to use the entire resource in a three-day retreat. If you plan to use it that way, we encourage you to make sure you build in free time and group movement time between sessions so people can fully process the experience of each session before moving on to the next one.

Tips for facilitators

Preparation

We strongly suggest facilitators read through this entire study guide, and watch the DVD before you begin the sessions. Identify issues that are uncomfortable for you personally and give yourself some time to reflect and work through your own feelings before you jump into facilitating the group discussion. This program may bring up painful memories, or strong feelings for members of the group. There may be participants who have witnessed or experienced transgender targeted abuse or violence. It is helpful for you as a facilitator to know ahead of time the resources in your community that you can recommend to these participants.

Group trust and dynamics

We suggest that you take time in the first session to establish ground rules or a group covenant. As part of that process remind people that there may be multiple viewpoints, and that each person's experience and thoughts are to be listened to and respected even if there is direct disagreement.

Another way to increase the emotional safety in the room is to arrange the seating in such a way that participants can both hear and see each other during the discussion. However, avoid a tight circle, which can feel too personal for some participants.

Answering “question-box” questions (see part 7, page 6)

Some facilitators of this program may indeed be experts on transgender issues, for the most part, facilitators will not be. If you don't know the answer to a question, please look at the resources and websites in the appendix for help. It is also possible to answer, “I can't find the answer. Would someone like to do further research on this question?” We have recommended that you invite local transgender persons, who do educational speaking, to help you as resource people. Be sure they have copies of the questions ahead of time so they can prepare their answers.

Potential challenges in discussion facilitation

Chances are your group will be made up of people with a variety of different personalities and comfort levels in sharing their ideas, reflections, and questions. If you have a person, or several people who are dominating the conversation it may be helpful to simply ask, “Is there anyone who hasn't shared who would like to say something?” This gives the talkers a chance to listen, and the quieter ones the opening to share without being personally put on the spot.

People may have very different opinions during the discussion. As a facilitator you can stop and remind them of your initial ground rules if someone becomes verbally abusive or personally attacks you or another participant if the discussion heats up.

Additional tips for facilitators when including senior high youth in the program

If you are doing the program specifically with high school age youth, or have some high school age youth in your group, you might consider getting permission from their parents/guardians for their participation. It is likely the rating on this film would probably be PG-13 and be generally acceptable for teens.

If you are doing this program as part of a school or faith community youth group, you could invite the parents/guardians to an orientation where you can show the documentary and use the briefer study guide packaged with the DVD. This can help affirm that the parents/guardians are the primary sexuality educators of their youth. It helps reinforce that the program facilitators are there to support parents/guardians in that role.

Having said that, many transgender youth are no longer living with, or connected to their parents or guardians, or have not come out to their parents and/or guardians and involving those adults may cause difficulties for the youth. Youth-only showings may be appropriate in your case.

STUDY GUIDE STRUCTURE

Session Layout (finding your way around the sessions)

Most of the sessions in this study guide are divided into these eight parts:

Part 1: Overview of issues to be explored will give you a quick summary of the key topic and points brought up in this session.

Part 2: Preparation for session will give you a list of materials needed for that session. Included in the list of materials for each session is a small table with a colored cloth and Focus Symbols. Focus Symbols are visual reminders of the issues to be explored. We suggest you place the table where all the participants in the room can see it. You may even want to invite participants to bring symbols each week on the issues to be explored.



The preparation section will also have the DVD chapter cue(s) for that session.

Cueing the DVD

1. From the main menu of the DVD, select “Chapter Menu”
2. Select or click on the chapter identified in the DVD chapter cues (“Watch the film”).
3. Stop the DVD at the end of the section identified in the DVD chapter cues. **Please note:** Until you press “Stop,” the DVD will continue to play to the end of the film.

We also encourage you to invite transgender people from your local community, who do educational speaking, to help you with sessions 4 and 6. The Question Box explanation (part 7) and the preparation section in Tips for Facilitators will give you further information on that.

Part 3: Opening

Gives the participants a chance to introduce themselves (if the study group doesn’t already know one another) and move from their busy lives into the session. You may want to light a candle as a symbol of learning and knowledge, and for people of faith, the presence of the Sacred.

Part 4: Watching part of the film

Sessions 1-5 focus on different parts of the film to spark discussion. By session 5 the group will have seen the entire film and so, in session 6, more time will be allotted to discussion and strategizing ways they as individuals and a group can make your community more welcoming and safer for transgender people.

Part 5: Writing reflections and thoughts on the discussion questions

Each participant will be given a handout of the Session Discussion Questions and invited to spend 10 minutes writing their personal reflections and answers. It has been said, “Introverts think to talk, and extroverts talk to think.” Taking some time for all the participants to write down their thoughts and reflections from the handout may help everyone in the room have an equal opportunity to share their thoughts and insights. These handouts will not be “turned in” they are for the participant’s own use. During the discussion they can choose to share none, some, or all of what they write.

Part 6: Discussion

Participants will be invited to share their thoughts and insights on the discussion questions. Note that session three is structured slightly different, with five small groups looking at different scenarios and then reporting back to the whole group, and that Session four focuses on the question box questions (see below) instead of discussion questions.

Part 7: Question Box

We invite you to create a “Question Box” in which participants may drop anonymous questions

that they may have about issues that were brought up in the session, or in their own experience. Do let them know that direct personal questions about people in the group or others are not appropriate in this setting (but could be appropriate in support groups and with close friends). Encourage them to write questions during sessions 1-5 which will be answered during sessions 4 and 6.

For sessions 4 and 6 you may want to invite local transgender folks who would be willing to act as resources and help you answer question box questions. Invite your resource people ahead of time and make sure they have copies of the question box questions so that they can prepare answers. Assure them that participants have been told that direct personal questions are not appropriate.

Part 8: Closing

This section invites the participants to reflect on what they have experienced in the session.

Resources for faith communities

This study guide also has additional material for the opening, discussion questions, and closing for faith communities.

Why it is appropriate to do this study within a faith community

Many of the issues brought up in this study guide, are at the core of faith. It asks questions like, how are all peoples created in God's image? How are faith communities to act on the call within their holy scriptures to heal the wounded and cherish all children of God? How does a faith community define itself and its members?

Why the sidebar information for faith communities may be useful in a secular setting

While you may decide that the additional material for faith communities may be inappropriate to use in your setting, it may be helpful as a facilitator to be familiar with them. There may be transgender persons in your group who have been emotionally or spiritually wounded by the faith communities in which they were raised. Helping them understand that there may be alternate interpretations of scripture, and faith communities that are welcoming and affirming, may be very healing. Similarly, there may be non-transgender persons in your group who have been taught that transgender persons are not welcome within the faith community. These people may also benefit from knowing that there are faith communities that do affirm and welcome transgender persons.

STUDY GUIDE SESSIONS

Session 1: Listening to Stories of Change and Transformation

Overview of issues to be explored

This session is designed to begin to build community among participants. It then invites participants to explore how change in their own lives, and the lives of those presented in the film, are held in the larger community of family and friends.

Preparation for session

Focus Symbols – we suggest that you cover your table with a cloth color that to you symbolizes change, and place objects on the table that symbolize gender, and transformation or change.

- ◆ Materials
- ◆ Audio/visual equipment required to view the DVD Study Guide
- ◆ Table and Focus Symbols
- ◆ Newsprint for ground rules/group covenant
- ◆ Pens or pencils
- ◆ Handout copy of discussion questions for each participant
- ◆ Extra paper for discussion questions
- ◆ Question box – blank white index cards



DVD cues: Play from beginning of film through end of scene 7, “Mrs. Neely”

Opening (15 minutes)

Introductions

If this is not a group that already knows one another, take some time at the beginning to go around the room and have each person briefly introduce themselves by telling their name and one thing about who they are (e.g. the kind of work they do, a hobby they enjoy, a gift or talent they have).

Ground rules/group covenant

Invite the group to brainstorm ground rules for making this a safe place for everyone to share their thoughts, ideas, and opinions. Make sure the following are included in the list:

- ◆ Confidentiality – what’s said in the group stays in the group. **Note:** If there are minors in the group, you will need to qualify the confidentiality statement by letting them know that if someone shares that they are in physical danger, or have been abused, you as the facilitator will need to work with them to let the appropriate people know about it so that they can become safer.
- ◆ Welcome a diversity of ideas and opinions.
- ◆ Each person has the right to pass in a discussion.
- ◆ Use “I” statements.
- ◆ A direct question about the sexuality of another person in the group is not appropriate in this setting.

Watch the film (32 minutes)



Play: From beginning of film.
Stop: At end of Scene 7,
“Mrs. Neely”

Writing reflections and thoughts on the discussion questions (10 minutes)

Remind participants that these handouts will not be “turned in.” They are for the participant’s own use and during the discussion they can choose to share none, some, or all of what they write.



Discussion Questions

1. Have you made a significant change in your own life? How did your family and friends react to your change?
2. Malcolm talks about how his parents reacted to the gender change in his life. Everyone experiences many different changes throughout their lives. Has someone close to you made a significant change of any kind in their life? How did that affect you?
3. Sometime family and friends can support changes, but still grieve the loss of who you used to be. How can people show support, but still acknowledge their grief or sadness at the loss of what was?
4. Malcolm spoke with Dr. Tinker about the way his culture looked at gender. What did you learn growing up from your culture about gender?
5. Malcolm was able to find resources at a nearby Gender Identity Center. Where can transgender people go in your community to learn more about transgender issues and resources?



Discussion (23 minutes)

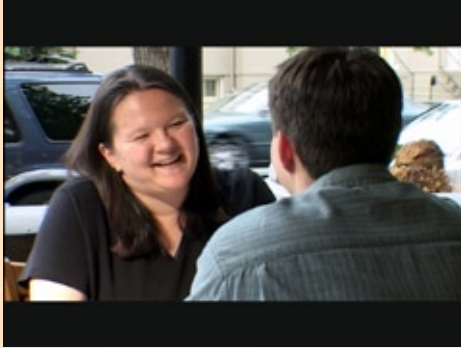
Introduce the Question Box (5 minutes)

Explain to the participants that, in Sessions 4 and 6, you and some transgender guests will answer anonymous questions from the Question Box. Invite them to put questions in at any time as they arise. Remind participants that there are no

bad questions; however questions that ask for personal information from the facilitator, guests, or other participants are not appropriate in this setting.

Closing (10 minutes)

Invite participants to take a silent minute to reflect on one thing that surprised them or that they learned from this session. Then go around the room and invite participants to share their reflection if they so choose.



Resources for faith communities

Additional material for opening
– Read Gen.1:27

“So God created humankind in God’s own image, in the image of God they were created, male and female they were created.”

Theological questions

1. Malcolm’s minister said that, in her theology, transgender people embody what it says in Genesis 1:27, that human beings were made in the image of God, male and female. Given your experience of The Divine, what is your image of God and does it include gender?

2. Malcolm felt called as an ordained minister. All people of faith are called to use their unique gifts and talents to do God’s work in the world. How are you called?

Closing materials

Prayer of a Parent for a Transgender Child, from *Coming Out Young and Faithful* by Leanne McCall Tigert and Timothy Brown. Ohio: Pilgrim Press, 2001.

God, you are the creator of the universe. You created all that is. You made the sun and the moon, the stars, and the seas. God who made the animals, and the fish and the birds, you created humanity. You created me, and you created the miracle that is my child, whom I love deeply.

I (we) have just learned that my child is transgender.

I (we) don’t know why you created him (her) this way. Help me (us) not only to accept him (her) but to fully embrace and love him (her) for who he (she) is. I (we) ask for your presence during my (our) own journey with my (our) son (daughter).

I (we) also ask for your presence and special protection on _____’s journey in this world, which can sometimes be so cruel, especially to one who is different. I (we) ask your blessing on my (our) family. Amen.



SESSION ONE DISCUSSION QUESTIONS HANDOUT

1. Have you made a significant change in your own life? How did your family and friends react to your change?
2. Malcolm talks about how his parents reacted to the gender change in his life. Everyone experiences many different changes throughout their lives. Has someone close to you made a significant change of any kind in their life? How did that affect you?
3. Sometimes family and friends can support changes, but still grieve the loss of who you used to be. How can people show support, but still acknowledge their grief or sadness at the loss of what was?
4. Malcolm spoke with Dr. Tinker about the way his culture looked at gender. What did you learn growing up from your culture about gender?
5. Malcolm was able to find resources at a nearby Gender Identity Center. Where can transgender people go in your community to learn more about transgender issues and resources?

Theological questions

1. Malcolm's minister said that, in her theology, transgender people embody what it says in Genesis 1:27, that human beings were made in the image of God, male and female. Given your experience of The Divine, what is your image of God and does it include gender?
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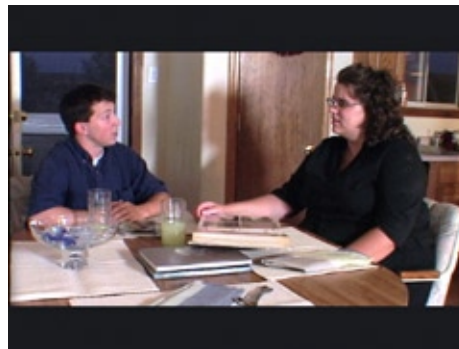
Session 2: “The Language of Gender and Vulnerability”

Overview of issues to be explored

In this session participants will be invited to explore the layers and terminology of gender identity, gender expression, and gender roles. Participants will be invited into compassion with those who experience violence because of their gender identity and/or gender expression.

Preparation for session

Focus Symbols – we suggest that you cover your table with a cloth color that to you symbolizes struggle, and place objects on the table that symbolize grief and comfort.



- ◆ Materials
- ◆ Audio/Visual equipment required to view the DVD Study Guide
- ◆ Table and Focus Symbols
- ◆ Pens or pencils
- ◆ Handout copy of Discussion Questions for each participant
- ◆ Extra paper for discussion questions
- ◆ Question Box and blank white index cards

DVD cues: Play from the beginning of scene 8, “Friend Laura” through the end of scene 10, “Pauline Mitchell.”

Note to facilitator: This session may bring up painful memories of personal grief for some participants. Encourage those who find that happening to follow up with someone they trust like a close family member, friend, or clergy person.

Opening (5 minutes)

Invite the group to settle into their chairs. You may want to light a candle as a focal point. Invite them to reflect on the light and pay attention to how they are feeling, notice if they are holding tension in any part of their bodies. Invite them to take several deep breaths to center themselves and move from their busy lives outside the room to this place and time.

Watch the film (17 minutes)



Play: From Scene 8, “Friend Laura”

Stop: At end of Scene 10, “Pauline Mitchell”

Writing reflections and thoughts on the discussion questions (10 minutes)

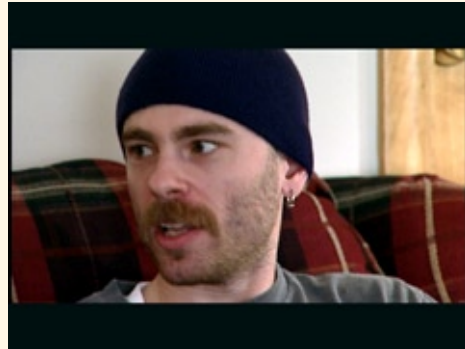
Discussion Questions

1. Malcolm talks about the suit he bought in Washington, D.C., as a symbol of his change. What have you done to symbolize a change in your life?

2. This part of the film explores issues of gender identity, gender role, and gender expression. Read the following definitions, and reflect on how each of those things changed, or did not change, for Malcolm.

Gender Terminology — Instruction

Many persons believe that sex is a simple, either-or division: male or female, with no other options. But in reality there are thousands of children born each year whose external sex characteristics do not fit into these simple categories. For some of these children, the differences are immediately apparent, and even physicians may not have an answer to the question: “boy or girl?” For others, the differences are less obvious, perhaps even invisible and not apparent until the child grows and experiences discomfort with the sex in which they have been assigned.



Gender refers to one’s perception. A person living a man’s life in the world is viewed as male gender, and a person living a woman’s life is viewed as female gender. The great majority of persons never question their gender: they are who they seem, and there’s no need for discussion. However, it’s possible for a person to have the physical appearance of one gender and the internal feeling of the other, and this causes great distress. A person’s internal feeling of being a man or being a woman is **gender identity**.

A person’s appearance in society creates an impression of that person as “woman,” “man,” or “something in-between.” **Gender expression** refers to the way we present ourselves in order to express our gender identity. Within different societies, gender may be expressed differently. Clothing, for example, often communicates gender. Hairstyle, jewelry, and personal grooming also communicate something about gender. Style and appearance refer to someone’s gender expression.

Society expects men and women to behave in somewhat strictly defined manners. These expectations create a **gender role** for each person. As with all defined behaviors, some people are stressed by persons who seem to be behaving contrary to their expected gender role. For example, a person’s narrow view of gender roles may make them uncomfortable with girls who excel at math and science, or boys who love to cook. Such views limit most human beings in some way, and they fail fully to accept persons who live in a gender role different from their assigned sex. Some societies observe less rigid gender roles than others.



3. Sadly, in our culture people who do not neatly fit certain definitions of gender are often victims of violence. F.C. Martinez was a Two-Spirit young person living in Cortez, Colorado. (Native communities affirm the English “Two-Spirit” though it can mean both homosexual and transgender.) “Nadleeh” is a Navajo term for one who acts and looks like both a woman and like a man. Martinez dressed sometimes as a girl, wearing makeup and feminine attire. Ze was very outgoing, is said to have had a great sense of humor, and was very well adjusted. Martinez was also very open about being transgender.

In June of 2001, another teenager, Shaun Murphy, hit Martinez with a large chunk of sandstone on the head, hands and stomach, and then left him to die near the sewer ponds outside Cortez. After doing so, Murphy allegedly bragged to friends that he beat Martinez to death because he was “a fag.” In 2002, Murphy pleaded guilty to second-degree murder and was sentenced to 40 years in prison.

F.C.’s mother, Pauline found some comfort after F.C.’s death in doing advocacy and speaking about her experience. In your own life, where and how have you received comfort and hope in times of pain and grief?

4. In the film, Malcolm and Pauline visit F.C.’s grave and find that it has been vandalized. How did that make you feel?

Discussion (40-50 minutes)

Question Box (3 minutes)

Encourage participants to put questions in the question box, to be answered in Sessions 4 and 6.

Closing (10 minutes)

Invite participants to take a silent minute to reflect on one thing that surprised them or that they learned from this session. Then go around the room and invite participants to share their reflection if they so choose.

Resources for faith communities

Additional material for opening

“You understand that the mainstream will try to wash you downstream. God has made you a swimmer. Swim.”

– Rev. Dr. Cecil “Chip” Murray, First African Methodist Episcopal Church, Los Angeles, *A Whosoever Church*. Gary David Comstock. Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001.

Theological question

Crimes, like the one against F.C., create an immediate media response. How can your faith community respond in the longer term to the victims, their family and friends, and the larger community?

Closing materials

“Every door you bring down, every wall that comes down, every bridge you build takes you to a new place of really becoming the kind of world God intends.”

– Rev. Dr. Yvonne V. Delk, Director, Center for African American Theological Studies, *A Whosoever Church*. Gary David Comstock. Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001.

SESSION TWO DISCUSSION QUESTION HANDOUT

1. Malcolm talks about the suit he bought in Washington, D.C., as a symbol of his change. What have you done to symbolize a change in your life?

2. This part of the film explores issues of gender identity, gender role, and gender expression. Read the following definitions, and reflect on how each of those things changed, or did not change, for Malcolm.

Gender Terminology

Many persons believe that sex is a simple, either-or division: male or female, with no other options. But in reality there are thousands of children born each year whose external sex characteristics do not fit into these simple categories. For some of these children, the differences are immediately apparent, and even physicians may not have an answer to the question: “boy or girl?” For others, the differences are less obvious, perhaps even invisible and not apparent until the child grows and experiences discomfort with the sex in which they have been assigned.

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F.C.’s mother, Pauline found some comfort after F.C.’s death in doing advocacy and speaking about her experience. In your own life, where and how have you received comfort and hope in times of pain and grief?

4. In the film, Malcolm and Pauline visit F.C.’s grave and find that it has been vandalized. How did that make you feel?

Theological question

Crimes like the one against F.C. create an immediate media response. How can your faith community respond in the longer term to the victims, their family and friends, and the larger community?

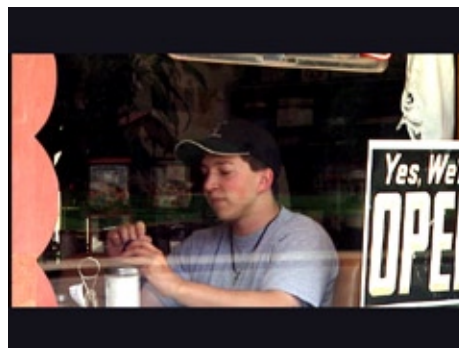
Session 3: “Stories of Challenge and Hope”

Overview of issues to be explored

This session explores the role of the legal system and other institutional policies around transgender issues, and possible ways of changing those systems to make them more accessible to transgender people.

Preparation for session

Focus Symbols – we suggest that you cover your table with a cloth color and objects on the table that to you symbolize the hope for change in our legal system around issues of equity and access.



Materials

- ◆ Audio/Visual equipment required to view the DVD Study Guide
- ◆ Table and Focus Symbols
- ◆ Pens or pencils
- ◆ Handout copy of Discussion Questions for each participant
- ◆ Extra Paper for discussion questions
- ◆ Question Box and blank white index cards

Opening (5 minutes)

Invite the group to settle into their chairs. You may want to light a candle as a focal point. Invite them to reflect on the light and pay attention to how they are feeling, notice if they are holding tension in any part of their bodies. Invite them to take several deep breaths to center themselves and move from their busy lives outside the room to this place and time.

Watch the film (23 minutes)



Play: From Scene 11, “Malcolm Reflections”

Stop: At end of Scene 15, “Sgt. Thorne”

Writing reflections and thoughts on the discussion questions (10 minutes)

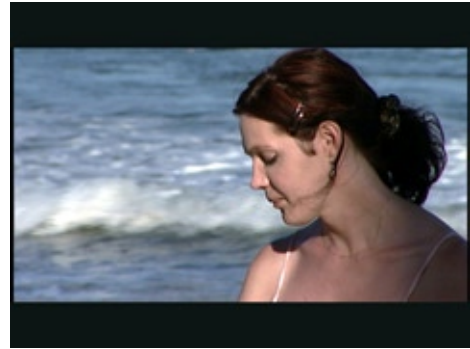
Let the participants know that the discussion will be a bit different during this session. The larger group will be broken into five small groups. Each small group will be given one scenario and asked to answer the following question, first by writing about it personally, then discussing their particular scenario with their small group, and finally each small group will report back to the larger group:

Discussion Question

Many things went right for Malcolm in the movie. He had access to education and employment opportunities. He had medical assistance. He had the right to get married, and a fair landlord. Any of these things could have been different, and are for many transgender people. Think about the challenging scenario your small group has been given which is representative of issues that diverse transgender people face. What would make justice in this situation more accessible? Think of: policies by employers and other entities, state laws protecting civil rights, assistance by lawyers and courts and social services, and lastly the role of families and friends as allies.

FIVE SCENARIOS

Scenario one — *Employment*: A 50-year-old trans woman, seen as male by others, is fired from her lifelong job at a glass factory when harassment by her co-workers inhibits productivity and disrupts the workplace. She has no case in court because in her state, it is not illegal to discriminate based on gender identity/expression. OR... A 50-year-old trans man, mid-way through transition and seen as androgynous by others, leaves his internal medical practice when patients complain about his appearance. He could start over professionally but needs credentials and work history in his new name – he is denied these by his university and by his former colleagues.



Scenario two — *Medical Insurance*: A female-to-male transgender patient is told that he needs expensive lab work in order to be prescribed hormone therapy. His insurance will not cover the lab work, which monitors possible heart conditions, because it is related to gender reassignment deemed *not* medically necessary. He decides he can pay out of pocket for these costs, as well as for the prescription. However, he is surprised when his annual female exam is also denied by the insurance company, which for those purposes considers him male. Unable to afford all aspects of care, he foregoes the annual exam and contracts cervical cancer undetected.

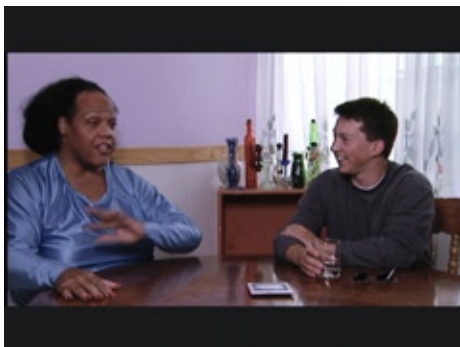
Scenario three — *Marriage*: A couple is legally married in one state, he an FtM transsexual and she a born female. When they travel to another state, custody of their children is challenged by an upset relative. Under that state's courts, the marriage is found to be invalid, and the parentage of the father is revoked. While marriage is defined on the basis of gender, and with gender having various legal definitions, transgender people do not know from state to state whether their marriage will be recognized under the law. This puts their families in jeopardy, and their children at risk.

Scenario four — *Identification*: A transgender teenager is forced to leave their parents' house under threat of violence. They flee with neither a social security card nor a birth certificate. They are old enough to get a driver's license but cannot prove who they are. Nor can they afford six months' therapy by a psychologist and the care of a medical doctor whose professional opinion will allow the state motor vehicle office to use the teen's preferred gender on a new ID. They give up on 'the system' and seek safety, affirmation and belonging from a peer group of transgender sex workers on the streets.

Scenario five — *Safety*: Trying to get away from an abusive relationship, a trans woman seeks shelter at an overnight facility. She is turned away from the men's shelter at a nearby church, where she is told this is for her own protection. She is also turned away from the local non-profit women's domestic abuse recovery project, where she is told she is not a woman.

Small group discussion and reporting back to the larger group (35-40 minutes)

Larger Group Discussion: (5-10 minutes)



Discuss the following quote from Miss Major: *The majority of people think that for transgender females like myself, well, all we know how to do is prostitute, steal and do drugs. You know? Well if you don't do drugs and you don't steal, and you don't prostitute, then you shouldn't be a transgender person.*

Some states or communities have non-discrimination policies that include gender identity and gender expression in employment and housing, but most do not. What do you think about this? What legal rights and protections do transgender people need?

Discuss the following quote from Malcolm: *You can't say the word "transgender," and people really know what you're talking about. But anybody who says the word "transgender" probably means something different by it anyway, so it really is a story and not just a label.*

Has the film changed or challenged your ideas about transgender women and men? Explain your answer. What can be done to create a safe space for transgender people to share their stories and express their truest sense of self?

Question Box (2 minutes)

Encourage participants to put questions in the Question Box, to be answered in sessions 4 and 6.

Closing (10 minutes)

Invite participants to take a silent minute to reflect on one thing that surprised them or that they learned from this session. Then go around the room and invite participants to share their reflection if they so choose.

Resources for faith communities

Additional material for opening

Read Isaiah 56:3-5

*"Do not let the foreigner joined to the Lord say,
'The Lord will surely separate me from his people';
and do not let the eunuch say,
'I am just a dry tree.'*

For thus says the Lord:

*To the eunuchs who keep my Sabbaths,
who choose the things that please me and hold fast my covenant,
I will give, in my house and within my walls,
a monument and a name better than sons and daughters;
I will give them an everlasting name that shall not be cut off."*

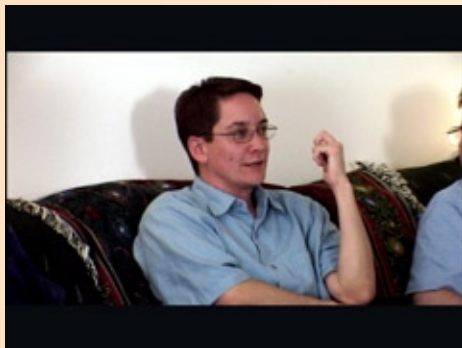
Theological questions

1. In this beginning of this film chapter, Malcolm looks in the mirror and talks about what he used to see, and what he sees now. It has been said that humans are created in the image of God. What part of God is reflected in the mirror when you look at yourself?

2. What would you say to Calpernia in response to her negative experience of the church and her feeling that she is disconnected from God?

Closing materials

Prayer from Rev. Dr. Justin Tanis, *Trans-gendered Theology Ministry and Communities of Faith*. Ohio: Pilgrim Press, 2003.



*Blesser of all things,
You created us in your likeness and in your image
And then pronounced us good.
We give you thanks for the gift of life itself
And for our uniqueness.
God of transformations,
You set us free
To change and grow,
You hold us close
In love and grace.
We rejoice in our transgendered lives,
Different, strong, dynamic and loved.
Amen.*

SESSION THREE DISCUSSION QUESTION HANDOUT

Discussion Question

Many things went right for Malcolm in the movie. He had access to education and employment opportunities. He had medical assistance. He had the right to get married, and a fair landlord. Any of these things could have been different, and are for many transgender people. Think about the challenging scenario your small group has been given which is representative of issues that diverse transgender people face. What would make justice in this situation more accessible? Think of: policies by employers and other entities, state laws protecting civil rights, assistance by lawyers and courts and social services, and lastly the role of families and friends as allies.

FIVE SCENARIOS

Scenario one — Employment: A 50-year-old trans woman, seen as male by others, is fired from her lifelong job at a glass factory when harassment by her co-workers inhibits productivity and disrupts the workplace. She has no case in court because in her state, it is not illegal to discriminate based on gender identity/expression. OR... A 50-year-old trans man, mid-way through transition and seen as androgynous by others, leaves his internal medical practice when patients complain about his appearance. He could start over professionally but needs credentials and work history in his new name – he is denied these by his university and by his former colleagues.

Scenario two — Medical Insurance: A female-to-male transgender patient is told that he needs expensive lab work in order to be prescribed hormone therapy. His insurance will not cover the lab work, which monitors possible heart conditions, because it is related to gender reassignment deemed *not* medically necessary. He decides he can pay out of pocket for these costs, as well as for the prescription. However, he is surprised when his annual female exam is also denied by the insurance company, which for those purposes considers him male. Unable to afford all aspects of care, he foregoes the annual exam and contracts cervical cancer undetected.

Scenario three — Marriage: A couple is legally married in one state, he an FtM transsexual and she a born female. When they travel to another state, custody of their children is challenged by an upset relative. Under that state's courts, the marriage is found to be invalid, and the parentage of the father is revoked. While marriage is defined on the basis of gender, and with gender having various legal definitions, transgender people do not know from state to state whether their marriage will be recognized under the law. This puts their families in jeopardy, and their children at risk.

Scenario four: Identification: A transgender teenager is forced to leave their parents' house under threat of violence. They flee with no social security card and no birth certificate. They are old enough to get a driver's license but cannot prove who they are. Nor can they afford six months' therapy by a psychologist and the care of a medical doctor whose professional opinion will allow the state motor vehicle office to use the teen's preferred gender on a new ID. They give up on 'the system' and seek safety, affirmation and belonging from a peer group of transgender sex workers on the streets.

Scenario five — Safety: Trying to get away from an abusive relationship, a trans woman seeks shelter at an overnight facility. She is turned away from the men's shelter at a nearby church, where she is told this is for her own protection. She is also turned away from the local non-profit women's domestic abuse recovery project, where she is told she is not a woman.

Larger Group Discussion:

Discuss the following quote from Miss Major: *The majority of people think that for transgender females like myself, well, all we know how to do is prostitute, steal and do drugs. You know? Well if you don't do drugs and you don't steal, and you don't prostitute, then you shouldn't be a transgender person.*

Some states or communities have non-discrimination policies that include gender identity and gender expression in employment and housing, but most do not. What do you think about this? What legal rights and protections do transgender people need?

Discuss the following quote from Malcolm: *You can't say the word "transgender," and people really know what you're talking about. But anybody who says the word, "transgender", probably means something different by it anyway, so it really is a story and not just a label.*

Has the film changed or challenged your ideas about transgender women and men? Explain your answer. What can be done to create a safe space for transgender people to share their stories and express their truest sense of self?

Theological questions

1. In this beginning of this film chapter, Malcolm looks in the mirror and talks about what he used to see, and what he sees now. In the Bible, the book of Genesis proclaims that humans are created in the image of God. What part of God is reflected in the mirror when you look at yourself?

2. What would you say to Calpernia in response to her negative experience of the church and her feeling that she is disconnected from God?

Session 4: “Making Transitions”

Overview of issues to be explored

In this session participants will learn about some of the medical issues involved in transition. They will also have the opportunity to have some of their questions answered.

Preparation for session

If there are local transgender persons with educational speaking experience, who are willing to be resources for this session, invite their help in answering question box questions. Make sure they have copies of the questions ahead of time so they have an opportunity to prepare answers. Assure them that one of your ground rules is that no one is to ask direct personal questions.

Focus Symbols – we suggest that you cover your table with a cloth color that to you symbolizes the medical profession as well as objects on the table that symbolize medicine and the medical field.

Materials

- ◆ Audio/Visual equipment required to view the DVD Study Guide
- ◆ Table and Focus Symbols
- ◆ Pens or pencils
- ◆ Question Box and blank white index cards

Opening (5 minutes)

Invite the group to settle into their chairs. You may want to light a candle as a focal point. Invite them to reflect on the light and pay attention to how they are feeling, notice if they are holding tension in any part of their bodies. Invite them to take several deep breaths to center themselves and move from their busy lives outside the room to this place and time.

Let the group know that the flow of this session will be a little different. After watching the film clip, there will be a short mini-lecture on some of the medical issues transgender people face. After that many of the question box questions will be answered and discussed.

Watch the film (7 min.)



Play: Re-View Scene 7,
“Sgt. Thorne”

Stop: At end of Scene 7,
“Sgt. Thorne”



Mini Lecture on Medical issues (10 minutes)

Medical Treatment of Transsexual Persons

1. Psychological Counseling

When a person makes the decision to proceed with gender transition, the best chance for success comes from following a plan. The first step is to begin a relationship with a therapist (counselor) who is trained and competent in caring for transgender persons. Such a therapist may be a psychiatrist, psychologist,

social worker, or other behavioral health professional.

The role of the therapist is not to “cure” a person of their transgender feelings. So-called “reparative therapy” cannot be shown to transform a person’s gender identity to eliminate these feelings, and at best

will produce a state of constant anxiety in which the person survives day to day in the birth gender but never finds relief from the stress. The role of the therapist is first, to determine that a person's impression of being transgender is correct; and second, to identify and manage the stress and conflict created before and during the transition process.

The Harry Benjamin International Gender Dysphoria Association (HBI/GDA), the professional organization for therapists and medical professionals who treat transgender persons, publishes Standards of Care which are periodically updated to deal with the management of persons before, during, and after transition. Professionals who follow the Standards of Care help assure proper management of their patients.

Once a person has been in an ongoing counseling relationship for several months, they may discuss with their therapist the next step, beginning medical therapy to produce hormonal changes appropriate to their desired gender. Hormonal therapy will be discussed separately [below] for female to male persons and for male to female persons. Other additional measures to aid in transition may begin at this time, including voice therapy, electrolysis for male to female persons, and planning the practical aspects of public transition (employment, family issues, spiritual concerns, document management). Many persons feel they will succeed in transition if they have accomplished these measures before beginning to live in their new gender.

2. Hormone Therapy: Female to Male

Testosterone is usually given as single agent therapy for female to male transsexual persons. It can be administered as an intramuscular injection (Delatestryl, which is a Schedule III controlled substance under DEA regulations); a topical gel or patch (Androgel, Androderm, Testim); or orally as methyltestosterone. The oral form is not the preferred form, since it is associated with a greater risk of liver toxicity.

Testosterone effects include enlargement of the larynx and associated structures, which produces deepening of the voice. This is irreversible once it occurs. Also irreversible are the loss of scalp hair in persons genetically prone to alopecia, and the growth of facial and

body hair. Testosterone increases muscle bulk and strength, and usually produces a significant increase in libido.

Persons taking testosterone should have blood testing to monitor their liver functions and their red cell counts, since polycythemia (elevated red cell count) may occur rarely. Serum testosterone levels are often used to monitor the effectiveness of a given dose of medicine.

3. Hormone Therapy: Male to Female

The treatment of male to female transsexual persons is more complex, and involves not only estrogen but often progesterone, and in most cases a medicine to counter the effects of the body's testosterone.

Estrogen is given orally as conjugated estrogen (Premarin) or as estradiol (Estrace). Many persons are prescribed the topical form of estrogen (Vivelle, Climara, Alora) which, like topical testosterone, is less likely to stimulate the liver and risk liver damage. Estrogen is also given by injection, usually as estradiol valerate.

Progesterone is sometimes given along with estrogen to enhance the feminizing effects. While medroxyprogesterone (Provera) is commonly prescribed, it has a higher incidence of emotional and physical side effects compared to natural progesterone (Prometrium). Progesterone can be given by intramuscular injection, but it is quite painful.

Medication to counteract the effect of the body's own testosterone is usually administered to male to female transsexual persons prior to surgery. There are several different anti-androgen medications, with different mechanisms of action. Finasteride (Proscar, Propecia) and its relative dutasteride (Avodart) are safe and very effective in blocking testosterone, but are expensive. Spironolactone (Aldactone) is less expensive, but can have side effects including dehydration, low blood pressure, and electrolyte abnormalities. Leuprolide (Lupron) is sometimes used in young persons because its effects are reversible if the drug is discontinued.

The most obvious feminizing effect of estrogen and progesterone is breast growth. This begins in some people after as little as three months, but in

others it may take over a year to be noticeable. Some redistribution of body fat may occur, but most persons will not develop significant fat deposits in the hips and buttocks. Likewise, estrogen will not produce changes in vocal pitch, nor will it reduce facial or body hair.

Monitoring of blood tests for liver function is recommended for persons taking estrogen. Serum estradiol levels are one way of determining the proper dose of estrogen. Another blood test, FSH (follicle stimulating hormone) is also helpful in knowing if enough estrogen is being given. Persons taking spironolactone should have measurement of electrolytes and kidney function.

4. Surgery

A transsexual person will usually undergo a number of surgical procedures to complete the physical transformation from one sex to the other. These procedures can be categorized as primary or secondary. The primary surgery is referred to as SRS (sex reassignment surgery) or GRS (genital reassignment surgery). In male to female persons, SRS consists of removal of the testicles and formation of the vagina and external genitalia. The skin and tissues of the scrotum and penis are used for the new genitalia; a few surgeons use a segment of colon, a more complex operation.

Breast augmentation surgery for male to female persons is considered to be a secondary procedure, along with tracheal shave (Adam's apple) and a variety of facial surgery procedures on the brow, nose, chin and jaw. These procedures are called FFS (facial feminization surgery).

For female to male persons, SRS is generally considered to include mastectomy (removal of breasts) and hysterectomy (removal of uterus and ovaries). The actual construction of a penis is often, but not always, a part of SRS. Several techniques are performed, some involving skin and tissue grafts from other parts of the body. Others use the clitoris, which has become enlarged from testosterone therapy. Secondary surgical procedures on the face or skull are not usually necessary in female to male persons.

5. Medical Issues Post SRS

After sex reassignment surgery, the dose of

hormone therapy is usually reduced because the hormones from the sex organs are no longer being produced. Long time care of the postoperative person is similar in some ways to that of the older or menopausal patient. Hormone therapy is usually continued, although at a lower dosage. Osteoporosis is a risk, especially for persons who do not continue hormone therapy. Prevention of osteoporosis with calcium and activity remains a concern.

Some transgender persons who have completed their transition are reluctant to disclose their history to their doctor. This may interfere with proper medical follow-up. For example, a male to female person should still have blood tests (PSA) to screen for prostate cancer, and a female to male person who has not had a hysterectomy should still have pelvic examinations and Pap tests. An atmosphere of trust between doctor and patient will allow for such testing without stigmatization.

Malcolm's Story



Life can get complicated for transgender people. Evaluations and tests, such as those recommended by the HBIQDA, often take time, money,

and professional services which may be out of reach to a variety of individuals. There is more than one option for medical professionals in discerning responsibly how to aid transgender people seeking care. The Tom Waddell Clinic has also established a guideline of "informed consent" for hormone therapy, working with people who might otherwise be left out of the clinical establishment (See <www.dph.sf.ca.us/chn/HlthCtrs/transgender.htm>).

Malcolm saw four counselors (covered by various insurances when he was still a minor and then a student) who declined to believe him or treat him for gender dysphoria. An expert 'specialist' psychologist, who would have followed the HBIQDA protocol, was not covered by insurance and thus financially out of reach when Malcolm was an independent adult. Finally, a social worker met with him for a short time, and together with the opinion of his medical doctor, helped Malcolm achieve

“permission” for irreversible physical steps, made possible by a combination of timing, luck and loans.

During this time Malcolm felt, as many trans people feel, that he was facing an impossible test — “sane” enough to have surgery and “crazy” enough to need it. Had he needed to go out-of-state or out-of-the-country for treatment, he could not have afforded it. So he went to a physician and a surgeon who had not worked with transgender people before, and who signed away their liability in order to treat him and others. Still, Malcolm felt fortunate for his experience. Professionals worked with him on a cash basis, sliding-scale, so that he did not have to seek an underground market for testosterone. He was treated respectfully in

clean and sanitary facilities. Doctors’ offices, learning fast, made attempts to call him by his preferred name and gender.

In sum, Malcolm’s path was to take seriously a patient’s rights to their own care, seek out trans-friendly caregivers, help to educate new providers, and look for helpful loopholes.

Conclusion

Competent and compassionate medical treatment is vitally important for a transgender person to complete successful transition. A basic understanding of the three components of medical care – counseling, hormone treatment, and surgery – will enable a transgender person to seek appropriate providers and know what to expect.

For family, friends and co-workers, it is important to know that each trans person’s journey is unique, and often influenced by factors that they cannot control. Whether or not a person can afford hormones or surgery, whether or not they can finally present in a manner convincing you of their gender identity, each person deserves to be called by the pronouns that they see fit. It is not necessary for anybody else to know whether a transgender person is pre-operative or post-operative, (or non-operative), in order to know what to call them. What matters is how the person wants to be called.

Answer and discuss question box questions and these additional questions: (45 minutes)

Frequently Asked Questions

What do you mean by “transgender”?

The term transgender is an umbrella term that refers to a variety of persons who may feel a level of discomfort in their assigned gender or sex. Some persons may be content with their gender identity, but may desire a different gender expression at times. They may refer to this gender expression as “cross-dressing.” Other persons feel a profound discomfort with their gender role and their assignment of physical sex. Often the discomfort has been present from earliest memories. These persons may seek to change both their gender expression and their physical body to match their gender identity. They are referred to as “transsexual” persons. Still other people within the transgender category do not view gender as a problem, but as a creative possibility to be explored. Such people might name themselves as dual-gender, omnigender, third-gender, gender-queer, or androgynous. They may or may not seek body modifications.

How is ‘transgender’ different from people born with anatomy of both sexes?

Intersex people have a variety of physical conditions, such as androgen insensitivity, adrenal hyperplasia, or Klinefelter’s syndrome, any of which can make one’s sex less distinct. Intersex babies are often surgically modified, lest they grow up enduring society’s stigma on “hermaphrodites.” However, the Intersex Society of North America now challenges medical practice on this issue, and many children are raised by families giving them the choice later on of how to express their sexual identity through their physical being.

Transgender people, unlike intersex people, do not have bodily evidence for their uncommon gender identity either at birth or in puberty.

Are transgender people homosexual?

It is easy to miss the difference between gender identity and sexual orientation. Gender identity is personal: who we are, man, woman or in between. Sexual orientation is relational: to whom we are attracted. In our experience, these two things are often inter-related. Yet they are separate, even so.

Transgender persons are all across the spectrum of sexual orientation. For example, some who make the transition from male to female were attracted to women prior to transition and remain so afterwards. They would then be considered lesbian. Other male to female trans persons find themselves attracted to men and form heterosexual relationships. Still others may realize that they can be attracted to persons of either sex and they identify as bisexual. When we consider such variety, the terms “gay,” “straight” or bisexual cease to be so rigid!

If a transgender person is aware of their gender identity so early in life, why might they marry, have children, and try to live in their assigned role?

Times have changed, and information is available now which did not exist when today’s adult transgender persons were growing up. Using all the resources they had, these persons believed they could overcome the internal conflict caused by their gender identity. Whether by spiritual “healing” or by marriage and parenthood – or all of these – they tried to conform to society’s expectations. Only as years passed and no “healing” occurred did they accept the reality and the permanence of their gender identity.

Transgender youth now have much more access to good information, and may be able to proceed with transition at a much younger age.

“How can you cause such pain to persons who love you? If you’ve already lived so many years in this role, why can’t you continue? Why make this choice?”

A person does not “choose” to be transgender. Gradually or quickly, a person *awakens* to the reality that they are transgender. It is not a choice one makes, and conversely one cannot “choose” not to be transgender.

The choice comes in what one does with the reality of being transgender. Some may be able to refrain from full transition due to family concerns. For some, economic issues prevent the physical changes needed for successful gender expression. But a transgender person who chooses not to pursue transition is not “cured.” They live with the daily conflict, which often grows stronger with time. Depression, substance abuse, and suicide may result from this unresolved conflict.

Given the reality of these outcomes, most transgender persons do seek peace through pursuit of transition. Many marriages will not survive, and some families will reject their child or their parent. Those whose families can accept and support them are fortunate.

Isn’t this sinful? Doesn’t the Bible condemn it?

Being transgender is not a moral issue. Christian transgender persons have often prayed for “healing” of their gender identity over a period of many years. We know that God loves each of us and wants us to be whole and yet this sought-after “healing” does not occur. We can only conclude from this that God created transgender people for God’s own purposes. As we pursue the means to bring our gender expressions and our bodies into agreement with our gender identity, God can bring us peace and wholeness rather than despair, isolation or loneliness. After all, Jesus didn’t rise from the tomb so that we could stay locked up in it! (*See Session 6 Resources for faith communities for more on this.*)

Closing (15 minutes)

Ask participants to describe the “wholeness” Sgt. Thorne is talking about when he offers the following advice to Malcolm: *I encourage you to trust, I encourage you to trust, and to be open. It lets you be whole, instead of being divided. ... It lets you be whole. And it lets them be whole, too.*

Invite participants to take a silent minute to reflect on one thing that surprised them or that they learned from this session. Then go around the room and invite participants to share their reflection if they so choose.

Resources for faith communities

Additional material for opening – read 1 Samuel 16:7

“But the Lord said to Samuel, ‘Do not look on his appearance or on the height of his stature, because I have rejected him; for the Lord does not see as mortals see; they look on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart.’”

Closing materials

Thought from Thomas Merton, *He Is Risen*. Illinois: Argus Communications, 1975.

True encounter with Christ liberates something in us, a power we did not know we had, a hope, a capacity for life, a resilience, an ability to bounce back when we thought we were completely defeated, a capacity to grow and change, a power of creative transformation.

A Christian’s entire life is changed by the presence of the Risen Christ.

“For the Christian there is no defeat, because Christ is risen and lives in us, and Christ has overcome all that seeks to destroy us or to block our human and spiritual growth.



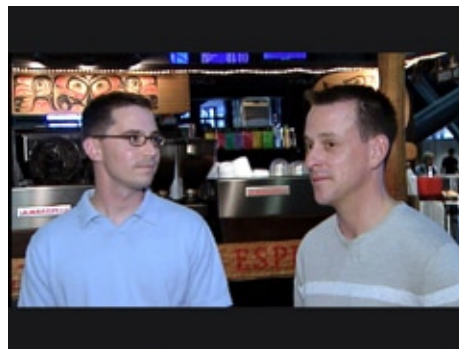
Session 5: “Relationships of Love and Integrity”

Overview of issues to be explored

In this session participants will explore issues of relationships within families. We will also look at particular challenges faced by many trans youth.

Preparation for session

Focus Symbols – we suggest that you cover your table with a cloth color that to you symbolizes committed relationships, and place a diverse array of “wedding cake toppers.”



Materials

- ◆ Audio/Visual equipment required to view the DVD Study Guide
- ◆ Table and Focus Symbols
- ◆ Pens or pencils
- ◆ Handout copy of Discussion Questions for each participant
- ◆ Extra paper for discussion questions
- ◆ Question Box and blank white index cards

Opening (5 minutes)

Invite the group to settle into their chairs. You may want to light a candle as a focal point. Invite them to reflect on the light and pay attention to how they are feeling, notice if they are holding tension in any part of their bodies. Invite them to take several deep breaths to center themselves and move from their busy lives outside the room to this place and time.

Watch the film (18 min.)



Play: Beginning of Scene 16,
“Friend Alicia”

Stop: End of Film (18 min.)

Writing reflections and thoughts on the discussion questions (10 minutes)

Discussion Questions

1. How do you hope Malcolm’s wedding turned out? Was it a “straight” wedding?
2. Malcolm shared his story with some teenagers in New York. Adolescence can be a difficult time, not just for transgender people, but for most people. What or who helped (helps) you through difficult times during your adolescence?

Thousands of transgender youth across the country, youth of all races and cultural backgrounds, face incredible hardships. They are not as accepted in their homes as FC Martinez, nor as established in the workplace as Sgt. Thorne and The Rev. Malcolm Himschoot. Without family support or other housing, and with limited means to earn a living, homeless trans youth face critical challenges to be safe sexually, psychologically and physically. Along with homelessness, HIV rates and suicide attempts are

also high.¹ F.C. Martinez was not the last transgender person to be killed violently. Hate crimes in the U.S. target both urban and rural victims every year.

Most transgender teens face threat of violence either in their homes or in society, and they have few role models in many fields of employment. Damage to self-esteem and physical well-being can be immense.

The *good news* is transgender people with a growing number of allies are organizing to be positive and visible, to build up support and resources for legal rights and jobs, and to educate counselors and the medical community on their own behalf.

3. What resources are available in your community for transgender youth?



WHAT CAN YOU DO?

Make it known that your campus or church youth group is a safe and affirming place for LBGTTQQI (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, questioning, intersex) young people. Carry a witness of faithful affirmation to the schools in your community, and to other churches. Network to provide support services for parents or care-givers who may be struggling to support a transgender child against challenging odds. For more information contact those listed in the resources section at the end of this guide.

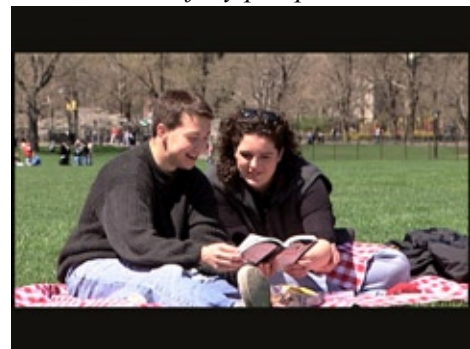
4. When Malcolm's brother and partner adopt a child, Malcolm becomes an uncle. Here is a good way to talk about transgender with children:

"Some people are born with boy hearts but they have girl bodies. Some people have girl hearts but they are born with boy bodies." Using words like these can be a helpful way to describe gender identity and gender transition to young children. Children need to know there is nothing to be ashamed of when a family member or acquaintance seeks a congruent gender expression. Even young children are very able to understand. Statistics cited by the transgender group FtM International show that 1 in 50 children will themselves show gender variance, have questions about gender or will claim an alternate gender identity.

In your opinion, when is it appropriate to begin talking with children about transgender issues? Why?

Reflect on the following quote from Malcolm at the very end of the film: *If my perspective has changed in the last year, it's just to grow into more strength about who I get to be and, if there is a place for me in this world, not just on a closed campus where people are extra friendly and believe in a gracious God, but in the big 'ole world. And when I think about the future year, two years, three years, I generally anticipate good things.*

What do you think has helped Malcolm to be so positive about his future? How do you think that might be different for other transgender persons and why? What are some things you and/or your group might do to help make things better for transgender persons in your church and community?



Discussion (40 minutes)

1 Qualitative research by non-profit youth-serving organizations in Minneapolis, San Francisco, Denver and New York City shows acute homelessness among transgender youth, and a high degree of accompanying risk factors.

Question Box (2 minutes)

Encourage participants to put questions in the question box, to be answered in Session 6.

Closing (10 minutes)

Invite participants to take a silent minute to reflect on one thing that surprised them or that they learned from this session. Then go around the room and invite participants to share their reflection if they so choose.

Resources for faith communities

Additional material for opening – read Luke 9:46-48

“An argument arose among them as to which of them was the greatest. But Jesus, aware of their inner thoughts, took a little child and put it by his side, and said to them, ‘Whoever welcomes this child in my name welcomes me, and whoever welcomes me welcomes the one who sent me; for the least among all of you is the greatest.’”

Theological questions

1. How does your faith community define family?
2. What are the ways your faith community can welcome families of diverse configurations?

Closing materials

Prayer of a Teen for Unaccepting Parents/Family. Tigert and Brown et al.

God, it feels painful right now. I hurt. I hurt because my parents (family) don't accept me for who I am, for who you made me to be. They're not happy that I'm transgender. Words of rejection have been said.

I ask you for two things.

First, help me to understand that their own coming-out-as-parents process may take a long time – it took me a long time, and it may take them a long time, too.

Second, I ask for your presence. Be with me as they begin a new journey. Be with them, too. Be with all of us. Right now we feel upset with each other and need to heal. Help us to love each other. Amen.



SESSION FIVE DISCUSSION QUESTIONS HANDOUT

Discussion Questions

1. How do you hope Malcolm's wedding turned out? Was it a "straight" wedding?
2. Malcolm shared his story with some teenagers in New York. Adolescence can be a difficult time, not just for transgender people, but for most people. What or who helped (helps) you through difficult times during your adolescence?

Thousands of transgender youth across the country, youth of all races and cultural backgrounds, face incredible hardships. They are not as accepted in their homes as FC Martinez, nor as established in the workplace as Sgt. Thorne and The Rev. Malcolm Himschoot. Without family support or other housing, and with limited means to earn a living, homeless trans youth face critical challenges to be safe sexually, psychologically and physically. Along with homelessness, HIV rates and suicide attempts are also high.¹ FC Martinez was not the last transgender person to be killed violently. Hate crimes in the U.S. target both urban and rural victims every year.

Most transgender teens face threat of violence either in their homes or in society, and they have few role models in many fields of employment. Damage to self-esteem and physical well-being can be immense.

The good news is, transgender people with a growing number of allies are organizing to be positive and visible, to build up support and resources for legal rights and jobs, and to educate counselors and the medical community on their own behalf.

3. What resources are available in your community for transgender youth?

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

Make it known that your campus or church youth group is a safe and affirming place for LBGTTQQI (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, questioning, intersex) young people. Carry a witness of faithful affirmation to the schools in your community, and to other churches. Network to provide support services for parents or care-givers who may be struggling to support a transgender child against challenging odds. For more information contact those listed in the resources at the end of this guide.

4. When Malcolm's brother and partner adopt a child, Malcolm becomes an uncle. Here is a good way to talk about transgender with children:

"Some people are born with boy hearts but they have girl bodies. Some people have girl hearts but they are born with boy bodies." Using words like these can be a helpful way to describe gender identity and gender transition to young children. Children need to know there is nothing to be ashamed of when a family member or acquaintance seeks a congruent gender expression. Even young children are very able to understand. Statistics cited by the transgender group FtM International show that 1 in 50 children will themselves show gender variance, have questions about gender or will claim an alternate gender identity.

In your opinion, when is it appropriate to begin talking with children about transgender issues? Why?

Theological questions

1. How does your faith community define family?
2. What are the ways your faith community can welcome families of diverse configurations?

¹ Qualitative research by non-profit youth-serving organizations in Minneapolis, San Francisco, Denver and New York City shows acute homelessness among transgender youth, and a high degree of accompanying risk factors.

Session 6: “Living into a Good Future”

Overview of issues to be explored

In this session we will invite participants to explore concrete ways in which to be more inclusive, welcoming, and affirming of transgender persons in our lives and community.

Preparation for session

If there are local trans persons who are willing to be resources for this session, invite them to come to help in answering question box questions. Make sure they have copies of the questions ahead of time so they have an opportunity to prepare answers. Assure them that one of your ground rules is that no one is asked direct personal questions.

Focus Symbols – we suggest that you cover your table with a cloth color and objects that to you symbolize movement, action, and social justice.

- ◆ Materials
- ◆ Study Guide
- ◆ Table and Focus Symbols
- ◆ Pens or pencils
- ◆ Handout copy of Discussion Questions for each participant
- ◆ Extra paper for discussion questions
- ◆ Question Box and Questions that were not answered in Session four

Opening (5 minutes)

Invite the group to settle into their chairs. You may want to light a candle as a focal point. Invite them to reflect on the light and pay attention to how they are feeling, notice if they are holding tension in any part of their bodies. Invite them to take several deep breaths to center themselves and move from their busy lives outside the room to this place and time.

Writing reflections and thoughts on the discussion questions (10 minutes)

Discussion Questions – action planning



1. What can I do in my own life to learn more and be more accepting and welcoming of transgender persons (including myself if I am a transgender person)?
2. What can I/we do to help support friends or family members who are transgender persons?
3. What can I/we do to help my family and friends be more supportive and welcoming of transgender persons?
4. What can this group do to support and make transgender people feel more welcomed in our community?
5. What can this group do to educate more people in the community on transgender issues?

Discussion (40 minutes)

Question Box (20 minutes)

Finish up any questions left over from previous sessions. Adjust this time with the time for discussion, depending on the number and type of questions you have.

Closing (10 minutes)

Invite participants to take a silent minute to reflect on one thing that surprised them or that they learned from this session. Then go around the room and invite participants to share their reflection if they so choose.

Resources for faith communities

The Bible and Transgender Persons

Many passages of the Bible lift up the outcast, the stranger, or the marginalized; dealing with ethics on the basis of what is life-giving to an individual and to a community. More often than they might use the Bible to challenge oppression, however, people will use the Bible as a weapon to condemn those persons who do not conform to their expectations, under a framework of guilt and sin. This section of the discussion guide will tackle some of these passages with reference to gender-bashing.

One such Bible verse is found in Deuteronomy 22: 5, which states,
“A woman must not wear men’s clothing, nor a man wear women’s clothing, for the LORD your God detests anyone who does this.”

The verse is part of a long passage in which the Israelites are instructed in ways to be different from the tribes in their vicinity. Other verses in the same section forbid clothing made of blended fabrics and mandate tassels on the edges of garments. In the teachings of Jesus, none of these regulations matter more than the Great Commandments, which he proclaimed in Matthew 22:

“One of them, an expert in the law, tested him with this question: ‘Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?’

“Jesus replied: ‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: Love your neighbor as yourself.’ All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.”

Another verse often used to condemn transgender persons is First Corinthians 6:9-10 (King James Version): *“Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God.”*

So many explanations have been offered for the word “effeminate.” We could spend much time discussing them all, but no translation or explanation will be agreed upon by everyone. So, like Jacob in Genesis 33 wrestling with the angel for a blessing, we also are invited to wrestle with scripture in our own experience, so that we use it not to oppress, but to liberate, and also receive its blessing. In the film, Malcolm talks about the fact that many people use a “fear based” reading of scripture when it comes to sexuality. An alternative faithful approach is a “love based” reading.

When persons say, “God made you, and God doesn’t make mistakes,” we can agree. God made no mistakes with us. *“Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, before you were born I set you apart.” — Jeremiah 1:5*

When we get down to the unique and diverse ways we were created, then we can truly praise a very creative God:

“I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well. My frame was not hidden from you when I was made in the secret place.

“When I was woven together in the depths of the earth, your eyes saw my unformed body. All the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be.” —Psalm 139: 14-16

Theological questions

1. What are some ways of dealing with conflict within faith communities and within families, when some issues are controversial? How might people of faith behave when they believe other people of faith are wrong?
2. In the final scene, Malcolm is ordained into the “ministry of Jesus Christ.” What did Jesus’ ministry look like? Did it include only the “normal” or “respectable” people?
3. “Grace – dignity – transformation – care.” Malcolm mentions these are part of his experience of God. When can you relate to those experiences? How do these experiences affect the way you go about your life and the way you treat others?

Closing materials

Prayer of a Congregation on Coming-Out Day or Pride Sunday – the Rev. Malcolm Himschoot
Living, Mighty God, Creator of us all, we thank you that long ago you made us heirs of your majesty, without regard to our differences. This is a lot to live up to, God.

Your ministry of peace, justice, and reconciliation is always a challenge to us. In particular today (Coming-Out Day or Pride Sunday), we remember that our church has not always honored the gifts of Your transgender, lesbian, gay and bisexual children among us. We confess a lack of esteem and regard for LGBT young people, adults and loving couples. We ask you for Your Spirit to guide us and help us grow beyond where we are now. Help us celebrate together what is good in ourselves and our relationships, and work together to end that which harms any in our midst.

In Christ’s name we pray, who reached out to all. Amen.

SESSION SIX DISCUSSION QUESTIONS HANDOUT

1. What can I do in my own life to learn more and be more accepting and welcoming of transgender persons (including myself if I am a transgender person)?
2. What can I/we do to help support friends or family members who are transgender persons?
3. What can I/we do to help my family and friends be more supportive and welcoming of transgender persons?
4. What can this group do to support and make transgender people feel more welcomed in our community?
5. What can this group do to educate more people in the community on transgender issues?

Theological questions

1. What are some ways of dealing with conflict within faith communities and within families, when some issues are controversial? How might people of faith behave when they believe other people of faith are wrong?
2. In the final scene, Malcolm is ordained into the “ministry of Jesus Christ.” What did Jesus’ ministry look like? Did it include only the normal or respectable people?
3. “Grace – dignity – transformation – care.” Malcolm mentions these are part of his experience of God. When can you relate to those experiences? How do these experiences affect the way you go about your life and the way you treat others?

SESSION SIX ADDITIONAL RESOURCE HANDOUT

HOW TO BE MORE UNDERSTANDING AND WELCOMING OF TRANSGENDER PEOPLE*

10 BASIC ACTIONS

1. Respect a person's identity and self-label.
2. Create single stall bathrooms.
3. Say the words: Bisexual, Gay, Lesbian, Transgender.
4. Do not use "-ed" at the end of "transgender."
5. Make no assumptions about gender identity or sexual orientation.
6. Do not assume a transgender person is all-knowing and/or wants to speak about transgender issues.
7. Do not assume a transgender person can speak only about transgender, or that it is or is not an issue at all.
8. Use the word "children" instead of "boys and girls", "people" instead of "women and men."
9. Create/include a "transgender" box on forms where gender is requested. Also, ask for "gender," not "sex."
10. Show the film, *Call Me Malcolm*, to family and friends, and to school and community leaders and groups.

10 ADVANCED ACTIONS

1. Ask questions about transgender issues.
2. Do not tokenize persons who are transgender.
3. Talk to children about transgender issues.
4. Talk about gender roles you grew up with.
5. Review member policies for your men's and women's groups — do they make room to include transgender folks?
6. Realize that learning about gender is a life-long process.
7. Do not divide groups (including in worship) into groups of men and women.
8. Do not ask the gender of a newborn child.
9. Experiment: Spend a day or week avoiding using pronouns when referring to someone important in your life.
10. Learn about the local laws regarding:
 - ◆ hate crimes
 - ◆ name changes
 - ◆ changing gender
 - ◆ discrimination (employment, housing...)
 - ◆ impersonation of a gender

* adapted from *Transgender 102*, Office of Bisexual, Gay, Lesbian and Transgender Concerns, Unitarian Universalist Association, <www.uua.org/obgltc/resource/tg102.html>. Used with permission.

BIBLIOGRAPHY OF RESOURCES

On the Web

www.uccCoalition.org — The UCC Coalition for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Concerns has resources and information, including their Youth and Young Adult Program.

www.mattkailey.com — *Just Add Hormones: An Insider's Guide to the Transsexual Experience*. Matt Kailey, Beacon Press, 2005. See. Matt also travels to give educational presentations.

www.tgchoir.org — Transcendence Gospel Choir, City of Refuge UCC, San Francisco, Calif. A documentary film on DVD about the choir and its ministry called, "The Believers," plus they also have music and prayers on their CDs: "Whosoever Believes" and "Oh Happy Day."

www.hmi.org — The Hetrick Martin Institute (Harvey Milk High School) offers information on safe school ideas and practices for young people.

www.dph.sf.ca.us/chn/HlthCtrs/transgender.htm — Medical guidelines from the Tom Waddell Transgender Clinic

www.hbigda.org — Harry Benjamin Standards of Care

www.sfgov.org/site/uploadedfiles/sfhumanrights/docs/tg_guide.pdf — Public policy non-discrimination guidelines from the San Francisco Human Rights Commission

www.nctequality.org — National Center for Transgender Equality contains information on a variety of transgender concerns.

www.pflag.org — Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (PFLAG), is an excellent organization for support and information, especially for family members. Numerous local support groups exist. Find one near you for a transgender speaker or panelist in your community! A good place to begin looking is by contacting your nearest LGBT Community Center or PFLAG organization.

Books and Articles

Becoming a Visible Man. Jamison Green, Vanderbilt University Press, 2004.

Crossing Over: Liberating the Transgendered Christian. Vanessa Sheridan, Pilgrim Press, 2001.

Gender Loving Care: A Guide to Counseling Gender-Variant Clients. Randi Ettner, Ph.D., W. W. Norton and Company, 1999.

Made in God's Image: A Resource for Dialogue About the Church and Gender Differences. Ann Thompson Cook, Dumbarton United Methodist Church, 2003.

Mark 947: A Life Shaped by God, Gender and Force of Will. Calpernia Sarah Addams, Writers Club Press, 2002.

Omnigender: A Trans-Religious Approach. Mollenkott, Virginia Ramey. ISBN 0-8298-1422-1, 208 pages, Hardcover, The Pilgrim Press, 2001.

Transgender Emergence: Therapeutic Guidelines for Working With Gender-Variant People and Their Families. Ari Istar Lev, Haworth Press, 2004.

Trans Forming Families: Real Stories About Transgendered Loved Ones, 2nd Edition. Ari Istar Lev, Oak Knoll Press, 2003.

Trans-Gendered: Theology, Ministry, and Communities of Faith. Justin Edward Tanis, Pilgrim Press, 2003.

Transgendering Faith: Identity, Sexuality, and Spirituality. Tigert, Leanne McCall and Maren C. Tirabassi, eds. ISBN 0-8298-1494-9, 176 pages, Paper, The Pilgrim Press, 2004.

True Selves: Understanding Transsexualism for Families, Friends, Coworkers, and Helping Professionals. Mildred L. Brown and Chloe Ann Rounsley, Jossey-Bass publishers, 1996.

Film

Soldier's Girl, directed by Frank Pierson, Showtime 2003

The Believers, directed by Todd Holland 2006, video

A film about the Transcendence Gospel Choir and their ministry

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

The Rev. Malcolm Himschoot, in 2004, joined the first generation of transgender people to be affirmed within their denomination as ordained ministers. A servant, pastor and teacher of the United Church of Christ, Malcolm has worked in multicultural urban ministry in Denver and Minneapolis. He has a B.A. from Amherst College (where his records still say “Miriam”), and an M.Div. from Iliff School of Theology. With the release of *Call Me Malcolm*, he has given workshops and talks across the country to people of all age groups on gender education, social change, community, diversity and vocation.

Rebecca Allison, M.D., is a physician in practice in Phoenix, Arizona, where she is a member of Shadow Rock United Church of Christ. Becky obtained her B.S. and M.D. degrees from the University of Mississippi. She then completed her medicine residency and cardiology fellowship in Jackson, Mississippi. When Becky began her transition from male to female in the early 1990s, she lost her medical practice and was rejected by her family and her former church. After completing transition and surgery, she has established a successful career in Arizona. Becky’s website, <www.drbecky.com>, has been a source of information and support for transgender persons since 1996.

The Rev. Lizann Bassham has been an ordained minister in the United Church of Christ since 1988. She has taught courses for the Graduate Theological Union and Pacific School of Religion on the issues of sexuality and spirituality, adolescent development, and arts and spirituality. She has written curriculum used by Progressive, Evangelical, and Catholic groups, and is a guest Cantor for a Reconstructionist Synagogue. She is currently the director of “Side by Side: A Journey With Depression – a funny look at serious survival.” She has a B.A. in Psychology from SFSU, and an M.Div. from PSR in Berkeley. Once, quite by accident, she won a salsa dance contest in East L.A.

The Rev. Mike Schuenemeyer joined the national staff of the United Church of Christ (UCC) in the fall of 2002. He serves as Executive for Health and Wholeness Advocacy in Wider Church and provides leadership on lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender concerns, HIV/AIDS and global health. He is engaged in the creation of educational resources, consultation with church leaders and advocacy on related public policy issues based on the social policy statements adopted by the UCC’s General Synod. A native of Missouri, he received his B.A. in Music from the University of Missouri – Kansas City Conservatory of Music, and his Master of Divinity degree from Eden Theological Seminary, St. Louis. Prior to joining the UCC’s national staff, he served in pastoral ministry in the Southern California Nevada Conference of the UCC.

For more information:

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Notes

Notes



Call Me Malcolm
A documentary film

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www.CallMeMalcolm.com

To order the film on DVD, call UCC Resources, toll free, at 800-537-3394