

LGBTQAI Glossary

CUMC currently is celebrating 27 years as a reconciling congregation. But if you're a dinosaur like me struggling daily to overcome 70 years of cis white male obliviousness, you might be having trouble keeping up with the precise meaning of many of the terms being used these days. I offer this glossary adapted from one used by the University of California Davis LGBTQIA Resource Center in the hope it can help clarify the subject. It may seem like a lot of new information to digest for many, but like anything new, practice makes perfect.

LGBTQIA+: Abbreviation for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex, and Asexual. The additional "+" stands for all of the other identities not encompassed in the short acronym. This is an umbrella term that is often used to refer to the community as a whole. Our center uses LGBTQIA to intentionally include and raise awareness of Queer, Intersex and Asexual communities as well as myriad other communities under our umbrella. Sometimes this is shortened to LGBTQ+. There is also a more and more commonly used longer version that is 2SLGBTQIA+

Asexual/Asexuality/Ace: A broad spectrum of sexual orientations generally characterized by feeling varying degrees of sexual attraction or a desire for partnered sexuality. Asexuality is distinct from celibacy, which is the deliberate abstention from sexual activity, despite sexual desire. Some asexual people do have sex and do experience varying levels of sexual attraction. There are many diverse ways of being asexual. A person who does not experience sexual attraction can experience other forms of attraction such as romantic attraction, physical attraction and emotional attraction, as these are separate aspects of a person's identity. These may or may not correlate with each other - for instance, some people are physically and romantically attracted to women. However, others might be physically attracted to all genders and only emotionally attracted to men.

Bisexual/Bi: A person whose primary sexual and affectional orientation is toward people of the same and other genders, or towards people regardless of their gender. Some people may use bisexual and pansexual interchangeably.

Gay: This term can be a general term to indicate a sexual and affectional orientation toward people of the same gender or it can be used more specifically as someone who identifies as a man who is attracted to persons of the same gender.

Intersex: An umbrella term to describe a wide range of natural body variations that do not fit neatly into conventional definitions of male or female. Intersex variations may include, but are not limited to, variations in chromosome compositions, hormone concentrations, and external and internal characteristics. Many visibly intersex people are mutilated in infancy and early childhood by doctors to make their sex characteristics conform to society's idea of what normal bodies should look like. Intersex people are relatively common, although society's denial of their existence has allowed very little room for intersex issues to be discussed publicly. Hermaphrodite is an outdated and offensive term that has been used to describe intersex people in the past.

Lesbian: Usually, someone who identifies as a woman, whose primary sexual and affectional orientation is toward people of the same gender. However, some nonbinary people also identify as lesbians, often because they have some connection to womanhood and are primarily attracted to women.

Queer: This can either be used as an umbrella term to encompass the entire 2SLGBTQIA+ community (a bit easier to say!) OR it can be understood as a specific identity. While the term originated as a slur, it has been taken on as a preferred identity/term for many. There are still some who avoid the term. See the clergy corner article for a more detailed exploration of this term!

Transgender: An adjective used most often as an umbrella term and frequently abbreviated to “trans.” Identifying as transgender, or trans, means that one’s internal knowledge of gender is different from conventional or cultural expectations based on the sex that person was assigned at birth. While transgender may refer to a woman who was assigned male at birth or a man who was assigned female at birth, transgender is an umbrella term that can also describe someone who identifies as a gender other than woman or man, such as non binary, genderqueer, genderfluid, no gender or multiple genders, or some other gender identity.

So much for the basics. But wait, there’s more.

2S: refers to Two-Spirit, a term important in some indigenous cultures referring to someone with both a feminine and masculine spirit residing in the same body.

AFAB: This acronym means someone who is assigned female at birth. This could be a cis- or trans- person. It refers to the gender that doctors/parents presumed that person to be at their birth.

AMAB: This acronym means someone who is assigned male at birth. This could be a cis- or trans- person. It refers to the gender that doctors/parents presumed that person to be at their birth.

Cis: A person who identifies as the same gender that they were assigned at birth. This is typically framed as the “opposite” of trans.

Deadnaming: While many queer/trans/nonbinary persons keep their names, others choose to adopt a new name that better matches their identity. A dead name is the name a (usually) trans or non-binary person used before coming out. To “deadname” someone is to use the name they have asked to not be known as. Don’t do this.

Demi (or demisexual or demiromantic): A term used to describe someone who only feels attracted to someone (romantically or sexually) after an emotional bond has been formed.

Gender dysphoria: The emotional distress caused by experiencing a mismatch between their gender identity and their gender assigned at birth.

Gender expression: How a person chooses to express their gender outwardly (this includes things like how they dress, how they wear their hair, mannerisms, etc.)

Gender identity: A person's innate sense of their own gender (regardless of what gender was assigned at birth)

Misgender: To use the incorrect pronouns and nouns (girl/boy/wife/husband/etc.) to refer to someone.

Non-binary: A person whose gender identity does not fit in the binary categories of male or female.

Pansexual: A person whose attraction to another person has nothing to do with gender. This term is sometimes used interchangeably with bisexual. However, this term does more to distance from the binary itself.

Pronoun: words we use to refer to someone in conversation. In addition to he/him and she/her and the singular they/their, there are also neo-pronouns like ze/zir. There are also persons who mix and match—she/they or they/she or even he/she. For some people they just want any mixture of the two. For others, they are in prioritized order (ex. they/she means this person primarily uses they/them pronouns but an occasional she/her is OK). It's OK to ask what balance folks prefer. There are also folks who prefer that no pronouns be used, so you just use that person's name at all times.

Transition: The steps a trans person takes to live as their true gender. This may or may not involve surgery.