



LGBTQ+ Statement of Inclusivity for Mission Presbytery and John Knox Ranch

The arc of scripture and the work and witness of Jesus Christ call us to accept people as they are. Both the Old and New Testaments tell us of men and women who defy gender norms and are accepted.

One of which is the Ethiopian Eunuch, who was baptized by Philip after being denied access to the temple based on the law of that time. It is through Philip's actions (based on the teachings of Jesus) that the eunuch is credited with starting the church in Ethiopia.

Another is Deborah, a warrior and the only female judge named in the book of Judges. To our knowledge, this was not the norm of her time.

It is with this Biblical support we affirm that even in our differences, we are all children of God, created in the imago Dei.

A. Purpose Statement:

1. Christian community is a shared journey from which no one should be excluded. In alignment with our values, vision, and mission, Mission Presbytery and John Knox Ranch welcome all persons, regardless of their sexual orientation or gender identity, as guests and full participants in all our programs.
2. This policy is a statement of our sincere intention to include all participants in the work and activities of Mission Presbytery and John Knox Ranch. Some solutions will not be ideal because of existing structures and facilities, but we will do our best to accommodate all participants. The work is not yet complete, and we will continue to revisit and revise this policy as we live into it.

3. LGBTQ+ youth and campers are already participating in our programs. They are members of our families, our churches, and our wider communities. Adopting this inclusion statement will not change that but will enable our LGBTQ+ siblings and their families to have greater reassurance that Mission Presbytery and John Knox Ranch will do everything in our power to keep them safe.
4. This policy applies to Mission Presbytery-sponsored youth events and retreats and John Knox Ranch summer camp only. Churches that bring youth to a Mission Presbytery youth event agree to abide by the policy while they are attending the event. The policy does not apply to individual congregations, gatherings of multiple Mission Presbytery youth groups that are not planned or led by the Mission Presbytery Youth Connection Committee, or third-party groups hosting events at John Knox Ranch. However, this policy may serve as a template for sessions, youth committees, and other entities that want to adopt a similar policy.

B. Definitions:

1. **Youth participant:** youth (grades 6-12) attending a Mission Presbytery-sponsored youth event and/or a camper at John Knox Ranch.
2. **Adult participant:** church staff or volunteer youth leader who attends a youth event as a youth group chaperone or who volunteers at John Knox Ranch summer camp as a chaplain or other helper.
3. **Group registrar:** Designated church staff or volunteer youth leader who fills out and submits registration paperwork for their youth group for an event and communicates with event leadership.
4. **Leadership:** Mission Presbytery staff and adult members of the Youth Connection Committee who are responsible for managing registration, leading programs, and assigning housing for a Mission Presbytery-sponsored youth event, or John Knox Ranch directors and upper leadership.
5. **Secondary leadership:** Small group leaders, worship leaders, keynote speakers, and youth members of the Presbytery Youth Leadership Team who help with a Mission Presbytery-sponsored youth event or John Knox Ranch summer staff/counselors.

C. Mutual Respect and Community Expectations:

1. All participants will treat one another with respect and kindness. Bullying or harassment of another participant will not be tolerated. Any participant who engages in bullying behavior during a Mission Presbytery event will be sent home at their family's expense.
2. When referring to another participant, all participants should use the individual's self-identified pronouns when not using the person's name.
3. Intentional misgendering of a transgender and/or nonbinary person is a form of bullying. While grace will be offered to all participants as they adapt to new ways of thinking and speaking, repeated and intentional misgendering of any participant will not be tolerated.
4. The purpose of Mission Presbytery youth events and John Knox Ranch summer camp is community building and spiritual growth. Sexual activity of any kind is prohibited at Mission Presbytery youth events and John Knox Ranch summer camp.

D. Registration:

1. Parents/guardians or group registrars will indicate the gender of youth participants on the event registration form. That information will be used by event leadership to assign appropriate housing. Adult participants and staff will indicate their own gender.
2. If a youth participant requests to use a different gender than they were registered with, leadership will work with the youth participant to accommodate them for comfort and safety. Due to potential safety concerns and confidentiality, the leaders will not report the youth participant's gender request to their parents/guardian or church pastor without the youth participant's consent.
3. Participants, parents/guardians, or group registrars are not required to disclose to leadership that a participant is transgender and/or nonbinary. However, sharing this information is encouraged so leaders can make the best housing arrangements for all participants with all relevant information.
4. If the transgender and/or nonbinary identity of a participant is shared with leadership, it will be held in confidence and shared only at the participant's discretion. With the participant's consent, the information may be shared with some secondary leadership (such as small group leaders, the health care provider, or counselors), who will work directly with the participant so they can provide a safe and inclusive environment for all participants.

E. Housing and Restrooms at Mission Presbytery Youth Events:

1. Adult and youth participants at Mission Presbytery-sponsored youth events will be housed in rooms corresponding to the gender indicated on their registration form.
2. Nonbinary participants can choose their housing from a list of options (including either male or female housing) provided by leadership.
3. When event leadership is aware that a transgender and/or nonbinary participant is attending, they will reach out to the group registrar or parent/guardian of the participant to discuss the best housing options for the event.
4. Transgender and/or nonbinary participants will not be required to stay in separate or alternative housing. However, if they wish to have more private lodgings, every reasonable effort will be made to accommodate those wishes to make them feel safe and comfortable.
5. Adult and youth participants may use restrooms corresponding to their self-identified gender. When selecting host sites for events, the Youth Connection Committee will prioritize hosting events at churches and facilities with at least some gender-neutral restrooms.
6. Participants and parents/guardians of participants will not be informed in advance if or when a transgender and/or nonbinary participant will be sharing their housing during a Mission Presbytery youth event.
7. If a participant expresses discomfort with sharing housing space with a transgender and/or nonbinary participant, that participant will be allowed to be re-housed, when possible. If a change is desired, it will be made with discretion and sensitivity to all parties involved. Every reasonable effort will be made to keep youth groups together.
8. Mission Presbytery requires that all event participants change clothes in private areas and forbids nudity or disrobing in shared housing areas such as dormitories. Adult and youth participants must change clothes in private bathrooms or shower stalls. All showers are single occupancy.
9. Mission Presbytery requires that all participants sleep in their own bed or sleeping bag and do not share sleeping surfaces regardless of gender or sexual orientation.

4. Further Considerations for Inclusion:

- A. Mission Presbytery's Child Protection Policy states that all youth participants will be supervised at all times during youth events. The policy also states that at least two adults will always be present (unless it is an open space where others can observe) and that all adults will be properly

background-checked. The Child Protection Policy protects all participants regardless of gender identity or sexual orientation. Therefore, this policy does not increase the risk of inappropriate behavior or sexual misconduct due to the full inclusion of transgender and/or nonbinary participants.

- B. Parents/guardians will be provided with this policy and the Child Protection Policy as part of the registration process. They must review and sign for their youth to participate in the event. Parents/guardians should understand that their youth may share housing and/or a bathroom facility with a transgender and/or nonbinary youth or adult.
- C. Training for adult sponsors and event leadership will include information regarding this policy and the inclusion of LGBTQ+ youth participants.
- D. Participants will have an opportunity but will not be required to wear a pronoun button on their nametag (or write it on their nametag).
- E. Event leaders will be encouraged to use gender-neutral group greetings such as “Hi y’all” or “Hey everybody!” Leadership will strive to use inclusive language for humanity and expansive language for God in written and spoken communications and worship. Keynote speakers, presenters, and worship leaders will be encouraged to model inclusive language from the front.
- F. Euphemistic terms such as “no purpling” will not be used to describe prohibited activities (historically, “purling” has been used as a euphemism for sexual activity. If males are blue and females are red, sexual activity would make “purple”). Instead, we will strive for clarity in communication so that both youth and sponsors can understand expectations and help to keep one another safe.

5. Inclusion at John Knox Ranch: As an entity of Mission Presbytery, John Knox Ranch will utilize the policy as described above with the following additions:

- A. At John Knox Ranch, campers typically sleep in cabins according to gender specified on the registration form. John Knox Ranch will work with nonbinary campers and their families to find the best housing situation they are most comfortable with.
- B. John Knox Ranch requires that all campers and staff practice discretion when changing clothes in the cabin and forbids nudity or disrobing directly in front of others. All campers and staff have the option to change clothes in private single-occupancy bathrooms or shower stalls. All showers are single occupancy.

- C. John Knox Ranch's policies state that all campers will be supervised at all times during summer camp. The policy also states that at least two staff members will always be present (unless it is an open space where others can observe) and that all staff will be properly background-checked and trained. These policies protect all campers and staff regardless of gender identity or sexual orientation. Therefore, there is no increased risk of inappropriate behavior or sexual misconduct due to the full inclusion of LGBTQ+ participants.
- D. Parents/guardians of campers will be provided with this policy as part of the registration process. Parents/guardians should understand that their youth may share a cabin and/or a bathroom facility with an LGBTQ+ camper or staff member.
- E. John Knox Ranch fills staff vacancies and assigns staff lodging/ responsibilities based on summer staff applicant's self-selected gender.
- F. Staff training will include a session regarding the inclusion of LGBTQ+ campers. This policy will be discussed, along with rationale and training for providing transgender and/or nonbinary campers (and every camper) with an emotionally and physically safe environment.