

Hi, everyone, I'm Barbara! I'm a member of the Welcoming Congregation Committee. My pronouns are she her hers.

Two weeks ago, if you remember, and I hope you do... I defined the terms that make up LGBTQIA2S aka LGBTQ+.

I talked about sexual orientation (gay, lesbian, bi, queer, asexual) and gender identity (cis, trans, intersex, 2 spirit). I'm a queer cis woman. Queer is my orientation, I am a lesbian woman attracted to other women. My gender identity is cis, which means that I identify as the gender I was assigned at birth.

Now, let's go a little deeper than last time. What about the terms gender queer, non-binary, and gender fluid?

These words describe folx who do not fit the male/female gender binary. Binary as in two options, and only two options. But there is a wide and diverse spectrum of gender identity. Gender queer is a broad term for anyone who doesn't subscribe to conventional expressions of gender. People who identify as somewhere in between, feeling like neither male nor female fits, are non-binary. Gender fluid folx do not have a fixed gender, meaning they move between different gender expressions.

But why is it important for us to understand all of this? Why is it important to re-certify ourselves as a Welcoming Congregation?

Well, the first Unitarian Principle is: We believe in the inherent worth and dignity of every person. To believe that, and to live that, is to understand people who aren't the same as you. And *not* in a "I'm cool, I have a gay friend" kinda way. You don't get points for that anymore.

Since I've been at UU Studio City, about a year and a half, people have said to me... this is all just too much political correctness, why should I bother to learn all those letters, it's too confusing, and I don't like the show *Queer Eye* because that one guy is too swishy. Ouch. That last one veers into homophobic, but all of these comments boil

down to fear or unwillingness to get outside our comfort zones to understand the experiences of people different from us. We can practice our First Principle by being open to learning. We can practice it by being aware of our language.

Language is important because it has often been used as a powerful tool of exclusion. I don't think anyone likes the feeling of being left out or not part of the group. Lots of LGBTQ+ people have experienced heart-wrenching exclusion in myriad ways, simply because of who we are. So for us, exclusion can hit a deep nerve. A totally doable way of combatting this is to be aware of the language we use! Boys and Girls, Ladies and Gentlemen, those are phrases that exclude people outside of the gender binary. Changing our language to gender neutral things like kids, folks, everybody, even hey you! is an affirming and easy way to include everyone.

Another way is to listen to people's pronouns when they share them, and if you don't know how someone identifies, politely ask what pronouns they use. Part of this process is not making assumptions about people based on their appearance. It's okay to make mistakes, we all do! A simple apology and correction can go a long way. Let's try to be as inclusive as we can as we learn and grow and care for each other.

That's why it's important to open our hearts and minds and re-new our Welcoming Congregation with the UUA. It's a path to becoming more caring people and a more caring congregation.

Slides for projection during talk:

Gender Queer

Non Binary

Gender Fluid

First Principle

Inclusive language = Caring!