

New guidance for parishes to welcome transgender people has been published by the Church of England

The pastoral guidance for clergy on how to use the rite of Affirmation of Baptismal Faith in the context of gender transition has been published and will be referenced in *Common Worship**.

It encourages clergy to be “creative and sensitive” when approached by transgender people requesting a way of marking this transition in their lives.

It details how elements including water and oil can be used with the prayers and makes clear that trans people should be addressed publicly by their chosen name.

As part of the service trans people could also be presented with gifts, such as a Bible inscribed in their new name, or a certificate.

“The Church of England welcomes and encourages the unconditional affirmation of trans people, equally with all people, within the body of Christ, and rejoices in the diversity of that body into which all Christians have been baptized by one Spirit,” the guidance emphasises.

The document - approved by the House of Bishops - follows a motion overwhelmingly adopted at General Synod in 2017 recognising the need for transgender people to be welcomed and affirmed in churches.

It was produced in consultation with the Revd Dr Tina Beardsley, the Revd Sarah Jones and the Revd Canon Dr Rachel Mann, who have a personal interest in this matter and who have also consulted widely with those directly affected, and their clergy.

They said: “Collectively, we have sought to ensure that these new Pastoral Guidance notes provide a rich and generous space for trans people to locate their lives in the existing liturgy for the Affirmation of Baptismal Faith.”

The rite for the Affirmation of Baptismal Faith is not a second baptism. The Church of England teaches that the sacrament of baptism is only to be undertaken once.

But this service enables people to renew the commitments made in baptism and in a public setting and provides space for those who have undergone a major transition to re-dedicate their life to Jesus Christ.

As a central part of the Affirmation of Baptismal Faith the minister lays their hands on the candidate or candidates, addresses them by name, and prays for them.

The Bishop of Blackburn, Julian Henderson, Chair of the House of Bishops Delegation Committee, which oversaw work to produce the guidance said: 'We are absolutely clear that everyone is made in the image of God and that all should find a welcome in their parish Church. This new guidance provides an opportunity, rooted in scripture, to enable trans people who have "come to Christ as the way, the truth and the life", to mark their transition in the presence of their Church family which is the body of Christ. We commend it for wider use'.

Updated press release clarifying information published on 1/12/2018.

Notes to Editors

***Common Worship** is the Church of England's library of services in contemporary language.

[View our Common Worship texts.](#)

The full Pastoral Guidance is available [here](#).

Further information about the [July 2017 General Synod motion](#).

The House of Bishops published an [update in January 2018](#).

Read a [background paper from the House of Bishops](#) setting out the theological thinking.

The text of the service can be found [here](#), under the full heading: 'Affirmation of Baptismal Faith within a Celebration of Holy Communion'.

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