

Gender Identity and Camp

A (non-exhaustive) list of considerations, concerns and policy suggestions

SAFE CAMP COMMITMENT: *At Shrine Mont Camps, we strive to create a diverse and safe community that welcomes campers and staff from all backgrounds. We do not discriminate on the basis of gender, race, religion, creed, color, national or ethnic origin, gender identity, or sexual orientation in the administration of any of our programs. All camp activities will promote and maintain the personal and emotional safety of all campers and staff. We do not tolerate harassment based on any of these characteristics nor on differences based on gender identity or expression.*

Statements of Intent and Theological Groundings:

Shrine Mont Camps is committed to creating a space where all campers can participate in authentic self-expression and be celebrated for exactly who they are. We are a community who believes that each person is a beloved child of God, and that each of us has work to do to create a more positive, loving and inclusive environment in this world. It is the mission of our camping program to promote the emotional and spiritual development of children, youth and young adults through the fostering of a safe and positive environment for all.

In order to encourage the growth of relationships for all, it is essential that we are continually working to make our environment safe for all. This includes those individuals who are transgender. As Christians, we are constantly trying to follow Christ's word and example to love each other through our words and actions. We are called to love our neighbors as ourselves (Matthew 22:37-39), and out of that love is born a conviction to protect all those who are a part of our camps and ensure that all programs are free of violence, fear and discrimination. We believe that whatever is done "to the least" of members of society is done to Christ (Matthew 25:40), a belief that is particularly meaningful in this time when the LGBTQ community is at great risk for discrimination. As a faith community who strives to be the Body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12), it is our responsibility to honestly and plainly consider how our actions, policies and decisions are helping to create the environment we want to see. Shrine Mont Camps has been deeply engaged in this work for nearly a decade, and have worked within the affirming statements of the Bishops put out in 2015.

Why is this work important

We know that for some children, youth and young adults this is harder than for others. Here are some statistics:

- 45% of LGBTQ youth have seriously considered attempting suicide in the last year (2022 Trevor Project)
- 53% of trans and non-binary youth have seriously considered attempting suicide in the last year; 20% attempted suicide (2022 Trevor Project)
- 61% of heterosexual students feel connected and welcomed in their school systems, as opposed to 48.3% - less than half - of LGBTQ youth. (CDC 2021)
- 59.1% of LGBTQ students felt unsafe at school because of their sexual orientation, 42.5% because of their gender expression, and 37.4% because of their gender. (GLSEN 2019)

Significantly:

- LGBTQ youth who have access to spaces that affirm their identity are at a significantly lower risk of attempting suicide.

When asked to list what things bring them joy LGBTQ youth listed (among other things): Art & creative expression, chosen family, connection with other LGBTQ youth, faith & spirituality, having supportive & accepting friends, music, theater, physical activity, and seeing LGBTQ role models in their community.

Gender inclusive practices allow children to be children and put their focus on: outdoor living skills, music & drama, arts & crafts, canoe, rock wall, archery, sports & games, pool, campfire, and faith & spirituality, without having to focus on if they can safely exist in the camp space.

The sections below outline the many different ways to view our work in this area. This is a space that is ever growing and developing, so this document both gives general guidelines as well as some highly specific recommendations or “rules.” It aims to encompass the spirit and overall goals of Shrine Mont Camps’ commitment to inclusion, and provides overarching principles to be used when making policy decisions. Please note that this document specifically relates to gender identity, and will not touch on sexual orientation.

For more information on why gender inclusive spaces are important check out this video from Chris Reys-Dupin of Transplaining an organization that we work with to ensure that our Camp can be the best it can be for trans, non-binary and queer campers. <https://youtu.be/bgK55DILWTA>

*Data points taken from The Trevor Project’s [2022 National Survey on LGBTQ Youth Mental Health](#)

* Data points taken from CDC’s recurring [Youth Risk Behavior Survey for 2021](#)

* Data points take from [GLSEN’s 2019 National School Climate Survey](#)

General Practices

**The below policy points were in use for the camp season 2022.*

As with all campers and staff, Shrine Mont Camps will curate a safe space for cis, trans, gender-fluid, and non-binary campers. Campers are continually supervised, and camp operates with the 'rule of 3', meaning 3 or more individuals are present at all times - with at least one of these individuals being an adult. For more information about safety at camp, please refer to The Diocese of Virginia's page - [Safe Church, Safe Communities](#), or feel free to contact the Director.

When campers who are transgender or non-binary want to attend Shrine Mont Camps, we will work with both the camper and the parents to ensure in advance that as much has been considered as possible. This includes cabin assignments, locations for changing clothes, bathing locations, swimming protocol and other concerns. When at all possible, we will seek openly to find suitable accommodations for all campers who desire them.

Confidentiality:

We consider maintaining confidentiality around gender identity as a priority. The gender identity and surrounding issues of our campers will be treated with the same respect as a camper's medical needs. We will endeavor to protect those who are transgender and will not disclose information about any camper or staff member except to those who fall in a "need to know" category such as camp Directors, Nurses and Chaplains. While we do not make housing decisions except in concert with camper families, if a camper discloses that they are transgender, we will protect that camper's privacy. Cabin staff are required to report all disclosures to their camp leadership, who will report to the Camp Director and Camp Nurse. All efforts to protect a camper's privacy will be made, and Shrine Mont Camps will never share sensitive medical or personal identifying information with camper parents.

We do not engage in the practice of calling a camper family with information about their camper's gender expression, nor will we contact other camper families, as this is confidential information. We will never disclose information about camper's gender identity or questions which arise during camp except to the staff members who "need" the information – such as Camp Director, cabin counselor, nurse and chaplain. Campers are allowed to self-disclose personal information, and see our FAQ section for more.

General camp practices:

In addition to our understanding of confidentiality and a general camper-based approach, our other practices include:

- Single occupancy washrooms are located throughout our campsites and can be accessed by campers. Gender separate washrooms are as of now the primary space for campers to access their restroom needs, but accommodations are offered and in place for those who would benefit. The spaces used by each camper is a conversation between that camper, their family and camp.
- We currently offer single gender housing based on stated gender expression upon registering for camp. We currently do not offer a housing option for Non-binary or gender fluid campers outside of our single gender housing model.
 - We affirm that trans boys are boys, that trans girls are girls, and so all of our housing

options provide living space for cis and trans campers. Since information pertaining to gender is considered medical information, we cannot disclose this information to parents, and thus all parents should be aware of the possibility that their camper's cabin can have non-binary, trans, gender-fluid and Cis gendered campers.

- Campers will be invited (not compelled) to share their names and pronouns on introduction, and at differing times throughout a camp session.
- We do not organize activities on the basis of gender, and use other methods to separate large groups into subgroups.
- Changing is a time of vigilance, privacy, safety, and efficiency at camp. All campers are asked to change clothing in a way that offers themselves and others privacy, as well as is efficient so that we can go forward in our camp day. A changing space is offered within each cabin, and campers have the option to change in whichever way respects their individual needs within our safe practices. Living in community includes learning to navigate sensitive moments such as changing, and camp is committed to navigating these moments safely and well.
- Camp accommodates special care requirements for identity affirming undergarments, prosthetics, and more.
- Staff are trained in creating safe(r) spaces for queer, transgender and non-binary campers and staff. This includes building a staff body that reflects this diversity.

Family Systems and housing:

We know that sometimes a child comes to terms with their gender identity before their parents, which can cause confusion and conflict in family relations. When determining cabin assignments of campers who are minors, we defer to the gender assignment that parents/legal guardians specify and cannot deviate. However, we will endeavor to be supportive and open with all campers, regardless of gender identity. If we have a camper who identifies as a different gender than indicated on official documents, we will seek ways to accommodate and respect the camper in other ways besides cabin assignments, such as using preferred pronouns and creating safe space for the camper to discuss their identity with the chaplain.

Administrative/Logistical/Programmatic Considerations:

Practices in this area include:

- When a camper or potential staff member is identified as transgender, genderqueer or nonbinary the Director of Shrine Mont Camps should contact them (or – in the case of a minor – their parent/guardian) to initiate a conversation surrounding our culture and practices so that questions and concerns may be addressed prior to the start of camp.
- Dress code should reflect our openness to LGBTQAI+ campers and we endeavor to ensure it is not unduly gendered or restrictive.

- Considerations should be made to manifest our values visually so that they are clear to all who interact with our programs (such as, “safe space” images on the door of the Staff Office and on our website, etc.)
- We acknowledge that some of our camps are better suited to transgender campers, such as St. Andrew’s, Explorers the Great, SHYC or Family Camp. This is due to the existing housing and bathing facilities at these programs. However, we will work with any family to find a right fit if they want to come to Shrine Mont Camps.

Staff and Training

**The below policy points were in use for the camp season 2022.*

Practices in this area include:

- Not included in this document are our general safety precautions taken with all counselors, as that is general policy and not specific to gender inclusionary practices. Camp is diligent in curating supervised, safe, and supportive programming.
- When an applicant who is transgender applies to work at this camp, advance conversations with both the Camp Director and the Director of Shrine Mont Camps will be had to make sure that we can provide for and protect the individual as much as possible.
 - Part of this conversation includes which space a given counselor feels safe and competent to work in with regards to a housing assignment. Transgender counselors will be coached on ways to navigate their identity with their cabin body that respect said identity, and focus on running camp.
 - For the summer of 2023, transgender staff will serve in a Out Of Cabin Counselor (OCCC) Capacity.
 - For counselors who are non-binary and/or gender fluid, individual placements will be made in conversation with the Director. In 2023, this placement will not include counselors serving in spaces that do not correspond to their gender assigned at birth.
- Nursing staff and Health Centers:
 - Nurses should be educated and comfortable with issues surrounding transgender individuals; including how to administer hormone regimens and suppressants, confidentiality, and how to be caring to transgender individuals.
 - We should leave Sanitary Napkins of different sizes out in the open for people to get, so people won’t have to ask.
 - Make sure that our nursing staff know about chest binders– make sure that camp leadership knows about binders and how important it is for kids not to wear them all

the time. Make sure we can accommodate a transgender person who is concerned with this!

- Make sure nurses and leadership teams know about self harm and what the warning signs are.
- TRAINING TOPIC– we emphasize the power of language and give tools on how we can use our word choices to indicate our intentions
 - Eliminate words like saying “Guys” when you mean “people” etc. Using all inclusive language.
 - Offer the option for staffs to include “what pronouns you use” when going around a circle and doing introductions
 - Encourage the staff to use new and different ways to separate a group without relying on gender Include the phrase “if you identify as” as a way to separate boys and girls
 - Eliminate the talk about “purpling” (a slang term to refer to heterosexual romantic encounters) as a means of conveying expectations around romantic relationships at camp; instead clarify boundaries of all intimate relationships at camp.
- TRAINING TOPIC – include a very brief overview of gender identity/sexual orientation information – include definitions for clarity. (Infographics would be great here!) Basically acknowledge that it exists and that we are open to it. Say the sentence that “everyone is welcomed here.” Encourage staff that if they encounter this situation or have any questions or thoughts, that I am available to speak and so is the rest of the senior leadership team.
- Included above is instruction on our module of “container conversations”. We instruct counselors to continually have appropriate, camper led conversations that do not seek fully to instruct, but rather serve the camper in where their needs are. We engage in Small or Medium container conversations at camp, and a second adult is present whenever a conversation larger than a small conversation occurs.
- TRAINING TOPIC – state how important it is that if a camper comes “out” in any way to us that we continue to uphold how safe a place this is. **Coming out is terrifying**, even in the best place in the world. This does include holding this information in confidence when asked, though not confidence from camp leadership and other parties in the “need to know” space (which does not include a camper family).
- TRAINING TOPIC – around changing clothing in cabins. All counselors should offer a changing space as a private way to change, and have privacy conversations with their cabin alongside setting cabin norms. Educate staff around what the different changing options may be for campers who desire more privacy while changing. They should also suggest a few other ways for kids to change privately, including behind a towel in the bunk.

- TRAINING TOPIC – Offer to staff specific tools to use when responding to microaggressions. This includes definitions and examples of what a microaggression could look like as well as what things staff can say and do if/when they see this happening at camp.
 - Microaggressions are the everyday verbal, nonverbal, and environmental slights, snubs, or insults, whether intentional or unintentional, which communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative messages to target persons based solely upon their marginalized group membership.
 - Examples of some would include words said (such as using “guys” when you mean “people”) as well as actions (such as announcing different song parts as “for the boys” and “for the girls”).

- LEADERSHIP TOPIC – This information, including this document, will be shared broadly with Camp Director team and INC Staff (Chaplains, Nurses, Vienna House) and discussed prior to staff training.
 - Conversations with leadership will be had in advance of camp beginning, outlining expectations on them to ensure a safe summer for all. All directors will include a block of time when they address camp as a whole within the first 24 hours and state our Safe Camp Commitment as well as an invitation for anyone who feels unsafe to speak with their cabin counselor, OOCC, chaplain or director.

Knowing Our Limits

We know that there may be times when the answer to a question or request may be “no” or “not yet.” At this time, we cannot directly accommodate campers who wish to reside in an all-gender housing space, those who are in conflict with their families surrounding gender identity per their housing assignment, or honor the request made by campers to amend their accommodations mid-session. Other limits may be discovered over time. When we recognize that we are venturing into an unknown or “not yet” area, attempts will be made to suggest alternative programs that would be a better fit than Shrine Mont Camps at this time.

Acknowledgement

Shrine Mont Camps wants to acknowledge that it can be hard and vulnerable work to learn more about transgender, non-binary and queer identities. Many of us have been raised to believe that trans, non-binary and queer people are wrong and sinful. This is not true and it doesn’t make our world better to ignore these issues. Thank you for taking the time to learn, stretch and grow. It means the world to us, our campers and our staff. If you have any questions about these policies please reach out to our Director James Williams at jwilliams@thediocese.net, and I will be happy to clarify any of our policies. Please know that we will not debate the existence, presence or lives of transgender, non-binary or queer campers or staff. Please do not ask our frontline staff (counselors) about our policies, they are focused on making camp fun, safe and wonderful for the campers and they will simply direct questions to James Williams so that they can go back to being awesome for the campers.

Timeline of camps work to present

2014:

“Safe Camp Commitment” first outlined in camp brochure and online

“ At Shrine Mont Camps, we strive to create a diverse and safe community that welcomes campers and staff from all backgrounds. We do not discriminate on the basis of gender, race, religion, creed, color, national or ethnic origin, physical or mental ability, or sexual orientation in the administration of any of our programs. All camp activities will promote and maintain the personal and emotional safety of all campers and staff. “

2015:

- First Camper comes out at camp as transgender
- Fall/Winter:
 - Conversations begin with diocesan leadership, camp leadership and diocesan bishops surrounding gender expression and identity at camp.
 - Parallel conversations are taking place at diocesan schools
 - Bishops express support of inclusion for all, regardless of gender identity, and begin to explore how to express that support.

2016:

- Jan-June:
 - Director of Shrine Mont Camps consulted with other camps (both episcopal and secular) to learn about existing protocols and practices surrounding gender at camp.
 - Episcopal Camps and Conference Center offered a gender workshop to discuss this on the national level.
- April: Training and conversations were had with leaders of church schools facilitated by the organization Side By Side to discuss how practices to support full inclusion of transgender folks can be developed in our diocesan institutions.
 - First draft of “policies and practices” document created, based on conversations with other camps, schools and groups who work with youth
- May: Bishops of the Diocese of VA publish a statement in support of the full inclusion of transgender individuals in our church schools and camps.
- Summer:
 - First staff member self-identifying as transgender
 - First introduction officially to inviting folks to share their preferred names and pronouns

2017:

- January:
 - Met again with leaders of church schools to follow up on 2016 meeting, and to discuss next steps and how to support each other.
- March: Training statements and video shared by Bishops of the Diocese of VA to support ongoing efforts toward full inclusion of transgender, non-binary and gender fluid individuals in our schools and camps.
- Summer:
 - Staffing model includes a transgender staff member
 - Multiple camper-led conversations are had in session, wherein campers bring up questions and issues surrounding gender identity to counselors and chaplains
 - Conversations surrounding specific policies and practices around full inclusion of transgender, non-binary, and gender fluid individuals occur with staff throughout the summer. Directors receive a copy of the approved policy document to assist in the conversations. Conversation is held on the staff level.
- November:
 - Resolution R8-a is approved, indicating diocesan support of full inclusion of transgender individuals in our parishes, camps and schools

2018:

- Ongoing: conversations with camps, schools and community leaders surrounding “next steps” toward full gender inclusion at our camps
 - Questions identified include how to work with existing facilities, how to support campers and staff programmatically and pastorally, and a review of our existing language in training documents and registration/communication forms and documents
 - Ongoing questions around the appropriate roles for transgender, non-binary and gender fluid staff members are explored. At this time, female-to-male or male-to-female transgender individuals are invited to serve as Out of Cabin Counselors (OCC's).
- Summer:
 - A number of transgender and gender non-conforming (using “they/them pronouns”) staff work at a number of Shrine Mont Camps programs, and several campers as young as 11 express a desire to use “they/them” pronouns or come out as transgender. Non-binary staff served both in and out of the cabin.
 - Camp has many conversations surrounding what “inclusion” does and does not look like at our camps, how staff are expected to discuss issues of gender within staff and with campers, and where appropriate boundaries are, all this occurring during training week and throughout the summer.
 - Camp Staff are directed to be clear, concise and honest when speaking with campers. Counselors answered direct questions as they arose without elaborating, and the illustration of “small container conversations”, or simple and non-explanatory sharing, are enforced.
 - Chaplains are available and present in these conversations, and staff are

directed to love and care for campers while balancing camper experiences of gender and their daily camp life. Staff are asked to support campers, allow for camper-led conversations, and communicate without becoming “educators.”

- Directors are informed that they are to disclose to the Director of Shrine Mont Camps whenever a camper comes out as LGBTQAI+.
- This is the first time that conversations around gender have been prominent at our camps in such a way, and the first summer where direct instructions/boundaries are placed on staff on this subject. (Staff have always been expected to keep their private life private, not to disclose their sexual history, to be discreet about their romantic and personal life, and to support without educating on all “hot button” topics.)
- Staff begin implementing changing policies that allow staff to have privacy while changing. There is an ongoing conversations about how to create such private space for campers as well.
- Conversations open with a collection of camper parents after a information is shared by a counselor, and parents express confusion and discomfort with Shrine Mont Camps’ positions on inclusion of transgender campers and staff.

Fall 2018

- Camp reaffirms our dedication to full inclusion of LGBT+ campers and staff continues, but there is more work to be done as to how this is achieved and how to responsibly communicate.

2019

- Small group of experts and stakeholders pulled together to discuss this topic in Feb 2019.

Summer 2022

- Shrine Mont Camps, in direct conversation with Bishop, Director, Parents and Camper, house the first transgender youth in a cabin based on their identified gender upon registration.
 - Some parents expressed concern surrounding this decision of camp, citing a general discomfort with inclusion practices, as well as the need for forward, direct, prior communication surrounding Camp’s inclusion policies

2023

Spring

- Conversations surrounding how best to create a fully inclusive camp are had between the Director of Shrine Mont Camps, the Canon of the Ordinary, Bishop, and Chief of staff
 - It is decided in consultation with the Bishop that 2023 should be a year of reflection and adjustment to practices of the previous year.
 - Specifically, camp writes inclusion practices out to be share broadly with the Diocese, parents, and staff

Diocesan CONVENTION RESOLUTIONS [2017]

R-8a The Inclusion of Transgender Youth in our Churches, Schools, and Camps (Amended by Resolutions Committee)

Resolved, that the 223rd Convention of the Diocese of Virginia affirm these guiding principles for the inclusion of transgender people in the parishes, missions, schools, and camps of this diocese; and be it further

Resolved, that the 223rd Convention of The Diocese of Virginia submit the following resolution to the 79th General Convention of The Episcopal Church:

Resolved, the House of _____ concurring, that the 79th General Convention affirm the following guiding principles for the inclusion of transgender people and urge that the Dioceses of the Episcopal Church prayerfully consider adopting and implementing the following guiding principles for the inclusion of transgender people in their parishes, missions, schools and camps:

Submitted by the Rev. David Stoddart and the Rev. Kathleen Sturges

Guiding Principles for the Inclusion of Transgender People in Dioceses, Parishes, Missions, Schools and Camps

We believe that all people are created in the image of God and that all people are beloved children of God. Because this is true,

1. We will protect the rights and respect the dignity of transgender persons, refusing to reject, judge, abuse, belittle or in any way dehumanize them.
2. We will engage the complex realities for transgender persons in our churches, schools, and camps, and not yield to the temptation to ignore those realities.
3. We will recognize and accept our responsibility to protect the privacy of transgender persons.
4. We will make decisions about transgender minors in our schools and camps in communication with their parents.
5. We will provide a safe environment for transgender persons, for those who support them, and for those who do not understand our commitment to these principles.
6. We will stay flexible in response to the complex and changing ramifications of this work by being open to relevant stories, to emerging information, and to the movement of the Holy Spirit.

GENERAL CONVENTION RESOLUTIONS – Concurred at the 2018 session of

General Convention (proposed by Province III, using language from Diocese of VA's resolution)

BISHOPS STATEMENTS

Bishops' Statement of Full Inclusion of Transgender Persons in All Aspects of Our Common Life

7/28/2017

The Bishops of the Diocese of Virginia continue our commitment to the inclusion of LGBTQ+ persons in all aspects of our common life as a Church and as a nation. We are proud to be in community with Presiding Bishop Michael Curry and concur with his statement (below) in response to our President's decision to exclude transgender persons from military service. We also stand by [the guidelines for the inclusion of transgender persons in our camps and schools](#), which we developed last year. Be assured of our unwavering support for God's beloved children, no matter their gender, gender identity or sexual orientation.

The Rt. Rev. Shannon S. Johnston

The Rt. Rev. Susan E. Goff

The Rt. Rev. Edwin F. Gulick

Statement from the Presiding Bishop

In light of President Trump's tweet banning transgender individuals from serving in the military and the Department of Justice's argument that employers can legally discriminate against people on the basis of sexual orientation, I am compelled to oppose these actions and to affirm the moral principle of equal rights for all persons, including the LGBTQ communities. I do so as a follower of Jesus Christ, as Presiding Bishop of the Episcopal Church, and as a citizen who loves this country.

This conviction is not born primarily of a social ideal, but of the teachings of Jesus of Nazareth and the witness of our biblical and theological tradition.

Genesis 1:26-27 teaches us that all human beings are created in the image and likeness of God. This is a divine declaration of the inherent sanctity, dignity and equality of every person.

Further, the sanctity of every human person and the principle of human equality before God are deeply imbedded in the teachings of Jesus of Nazareth. In Mark 22:26 and Luke 13:10-17, Jesus teaches the inherent worth and dignity of the human person. In Matthew 5, he tells us of God's love for all people equally. In Luke 10:25-37, he commands us to love God and to love every person. Above all, Jesus teaches that we are to treat all others as we ourselves would want to be treated (see Luke 6:31-36).

As followers of Jesus Christ we believe the inherent sanctity, dignity, and equality of every human being as a child of God is part of the moral foundation of our faith. In the Episcopal Church we promise in Holy Baptism to "respect the dignity of every person," and to "seek and serve Christ in all persons."

As Americans, we believe in civil and human equality, as one of the foundational ideals of our country. Discrimination based on gender identity or sexual orientation is a violation of the fundamental ideal of equality in America. The Declaration of Independence says, "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights."

Those rights – and the protection from discrimination – apply equally to all Americans.

I truly believe that the overwhelming goodness and kindness and sense of justice of the American people are summed up in the words of the Pledge of Allegiance, which says that we are “one nation, under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.” Therein is the soul of America!

So, to the transgender individuals currently serving in the armed forces: thank you. We are grateful for your service and for your sacrifices. We support you and all service members and veterans. You are our neighbors, brothers and sisters in God’s human family, and fellow citizens of this country we love.

The Most Rev. Michael B. Curry
Presiding Bishop and Primate
The Episcopal Church

Statement about full inclusion of transgender persons in the Church Schools and Camps of the Diocese

6/5/2017

Statement from the Bishops of the Episcopal Diocese of Virginia regarding the full inclusion of transgender persons in the Church Schools and Camps of the Diocese

The guidelines below emerged from a year-long process of conversation and continuing education with representatives of each of our six Church Schools of the Diocese of Virginia and of Shrine Mont Camps. They were distributed in written and video form to the schools and camps in January, 2017, with the intention that they be used in local training programs. We share them with the clergy of the Diocese for your information and to support you as you engage this issue in the congregations and other organizations you serve.

We believe that all people are created in the image of God and that all people are beloved children of God. Because this is true,

1. We will protect the rights and respect the dignity of transgender persons, refusing to reject, judge, abuse, belittle or in any way dehumanize them.
2. We will engage the complex realities for transgender persons in our schools and camps, and not yield to the temptation to ignore those realities.
3. We will recognize and accept our responsibility to protect the privacy of transgender persons. We will make decisions about transgender minors in our schools and camps in communication with their parents.
4. We will provide a safe environment in our schools and camps for transgender persons, for those who support them, and for those who do not understand our commitment to these principles.
5. We will stay flexible in response to the complex and changing ramifications of this work by being open to relevant stories, to emerging information and to the movement of the Holy Spirit.

We are grateful to God for the responsibility entrusted to us to live out in concrete ways the promises we made when we were baptized, and we are grateful to you for being partners with us as we strive to fulfill this high calling together.

January 17, 2017

The Rt. Rev. Shannon S. Johnston

Resources and Communication

FAQs

How will counselors be assigned to cabins?

Counselors are asked before the start of the camping season which cabins they are comfortable leading and sleeping in just like campers. A single gender cabin will be led by a counselor of that gender, or a non-binary counselor. All our staff aged 18 and older undergo background checks, Safe Church training, and provide us with multiple references.

How will campers be assigned to cabins?

During the sign-in process the registrant may choose to sleep a single gender cabin option (which includes trans and cis campers of a single gender “i.e” trans girls and cis girls, and can include non-binary campers).

Other factors that influence cabin assignments are: cabin mate requests, staffing capacity, accommodation of medical needs, age etc. Campers will not be assigned to a gendered cabin that they did not select during the registration process (check out “Will campers be allowed to switch bunks once they arrive at camp?” for information about switching cabins) .

Will you be asking campers and staff to share their pronouns during introductions?

Campers and staff are invited to share their names and pronouns during cabin and large group introductions. Campers and staff do not have to share their pronouns if they do not want to. Campers and staff may change their name and pronouns as often as they would like and staff are trained to offer the opportunity to share names and pronouns regularly throughout the week.

If my camper asks to use a different name or set of pronouns will that information be shared with me?

No. The unique experience of camp is that campers are able to explore who they are away from their families. They may try things out temporarily at camp like: playing forward during soccer rather than defense, wearing make-up, not eating any vegetables, singing on stage, a new name, different pronouns. All of this is part of healthy development and does not need to be shared with families. In our experience, campers often will want to tell you EVERY SINGLE DETAIL about what happened at camp - down to what color their favorite pool noodle is. If they feel that it is time to share these things with you, we trust that they will.

What we will do:

- Encourage your camper to share this new development in their life with an adult they trust outside of camp.
- Make a plan with them for how they might share their news safely and who they know they could go to if something went wrong.
 - Contact the proper authorities if there is a concern that they are in danger of harm who then contact you as they see necessary - a mental or physical health care provider, social worker, police, or children's aid society as appropriate.
- Alert you that your camper could benefit from a mental or physical health care provider without telling you the details at the discretion of your camper.

Will campers be allowed to switch bunks once they arrive at camp?

Yes, though we will not switch a camper outside of the gender they registered with upon arrival. We know that sometimes a child comes to terms with their gender identity before their parents, which can cause confusion and conflict in family relations. When determining cabin assignments of campers who are minors, we defer to the gender assignment that parents/legal guardians specify and cannot deviate. However, we will endeavor to be supportive and open with all campers, regardless of gender identity. If we have a camper who identifies as a different gender than indicated on official documents, we will seek ways to accommodate and respect the camper in other ways besides cabin assignments, such as using preferred pronouns and creating safe space for the camper to discuss their identity with the chaplain.

How will counselors be trained in gender inclusive practices?

Prior to camp in our staff training, counselors and leadership will take part in a training session offered by a qualified trainer as well as learn from those with lived experience when possible. Staff will have the opportunity to engage in discussion and reflection on the specific gender inclusive practices and policies at Shrine Mont Camps as led by the Camp Director. All staff training continually focuses on creating a nurturing, dynamic, safe, and spiritual camp experience.

For specifics on camp training practices, please contact the Director or see our policies listed.

How will my camper's privacy be maintained in the cabin?

Shrine Mont Camps continually makes space to hold and have privacy within a community context. You can expect that each counselor will set norms in their cabin whenever your camper arrives, specifically surrounding privacy. These norms include (but are not limited to): ways that we treat others belonging; allowing each camper their personal space as well as the space to articulate boundaries; making it known that privacy measures are for all campers not just campers with "exceptional requirements"; speaking to campers who may need extra support away from the larger group; maintaining camper privacy in medical matters; specific privacy around changing, bathroom use and other sensitive times.

Changing is a time of vigilance, privacy, safety, and efficiency at camp. All campers are asked to change in a way that offers themselves and other privacy, as well as is efficient so that we can go forward in our camp day. A changing space is offered within each cabin, and campers have the option to change in whichever way respects their individual needs within our safe practices. Living in community includes learning to navigate sensitive moments such as changing, and camp is committed to navigating these moments safely and well. If there are specific privacy needs to be accommodated by camp, these conversations can be shared with the Director and accommodations made.

For campers who require gender affirming undergarments or prosthetics we recommend that they come with a bag that can be kept in their bunk and easily brought to washing machines or the health center for care and cleaning throughout the week as needed.

How will you be ensuring the safety of all campers in their bunks?

As with all moments of camp, we ensure continuous supervision of campers. A staff/camper ratio of at least 1:6 for our youngest campers and 1:10 for our older campers is always maintained, and no adult or camper is ever alone or alone with another individual, as we operate with a rule of 3 persons at all times. Staff are in-cabin during vulnerable times like changing, as well as stationed outside bathrooms during heavy use times to ensure camper safety. In the evening when campers are in bed, a counselor lives in an open-layout cabin alongside campers with an Out Of Cabin Counselor (or OCCC) in the room adjacent.

Counselors are continually looking to care for campers and provide a safe environment to play and grow. We are trained to provide appropriate conversations that bolster inward learning, faith, and care for others.

What about showers and bathrooms?

Gender neutral washrooms are located throughout our campsites and can be accessed by campers. Gender separate washrooms are as of now the primary space for campers to access their restroom needs, but accommodations are offered and in place for those who would benefit. The spaces used by each camper is a conversation between that camper, their family and camp. Changing and showering are times of vigilance, privacy, safety, and efficiency at camp, and so all will move through these spaces safely and quickly so as to re-engage the camp day.

Campers using the washroom during the camp day bring a buddy, follow the rule of three, and notify a counselor where they are heading (when a counselor is not present). Counselors are specifically stationed outside restroom facilities to monitor during mornings, evenings, showering times, and heavily trafficked times of the day; it is a general safety practice at camp to count campers whenever leaving a space, and this includes checking restrooms to ensure nobody is left behind.

At night campers use the washrooms on site. Counselors clearly state at the beginning of the week, and on the first night (and often again throughout the week) that campers may wake them if they want a buddy for the washroom at night.

Showering is offered either during mornings, evenings, camper freetime, or other times specified explicitly by a counselor (aka after a mud fight!). All such times are monitored by counselors for efficiency, privacy and safety. Specific accommodations can be made for showering spaces for those that need. Our shower facilities are single stalled units.

Won't gender-inclusive cabins encourage romantic relationships?

There is no way for us to say that romantic relationships cannot occur at camp. That was true before incorporating gender inclusive practices and will remain true. Camp does continually practice ways to ensure that if romantic relationships develop they are safe, healthy and minimally physical while at camp:

- Campers are not allowed in each other's beds for any reason at any time.
- Campers are always supervised and if they are not directly supervised staff have been told where the camper is going and will check-in if they have been gone for more time than whatever activity they are doing should require (ie. grabbing a sweater, going to the bathroom).
- Staff talk about consent with campers as part of everyday activities, and we continually enforce that part of a healthy camp body is an ability to articulate boundaries, both physical and emotional.
- While we do not outright prohibit romantic relationships staff are trained to talk to campers about why starting a romantic relationship at camp is not a good idea (ie. it is likely that you will not stay in touch, it is hard to really get to know someone at camp fully)

Forming romantic relationships is often not a priority for campers; most come to camp focused on the jam-packed day of activities keeping them busy rather than seriously pursuing a romantic relationship at Camp. This does not change because of the gender make-up of the cabin.

Won't creating gender inclusive spaces encourage more kids to change their gender?

There are no medical or psychological studies that support this claim. Most campers will not even notice most gender inclusive practices as being specifically 'gender inclusive', and our camp is continually focused on offering powerful and purposeful programming. In addition, gender inclusive practice continue to build our community and make camp a safer space. Many campers regardless of gender want a private place to change, look for ways to have their identity affirmed by role models, hope for a camp body that reflects their specific self, and all campers deserve safety, privacy, respect for their body, and a place to sleep at night where they feel safe and respected.

What if my camper has questions or concerns about these practices before or during camp?

We love questions, especially those that come from places of genuine curiosity. Our counselors are trained in these conversations, and specifically are trained to allow

conversations to be camper-led (this is true with all conversations!). If your camper has a question about our gender inclusive practices prior to camp we are happy to speak to them or you in whichever way they feel most comfortable. If they have a question during Camp they can ask their counselor, the Chaplain, a leadership team member or even one of the Directors who will happily answer their question to the best of their ability. All staff will be trained to accommodate various levels of comfort and understanding of the church's values towards gender. We are happy to answer questions about how we make these practices work, to clarify misunderstandings, and even to share why this is important to use. In all our conversations we operate with the understanding that trans, non-binary and queer campers are loved and valuable and that we will do our best to ensure that they know this to be true through our gender inclusive actions and not just our words.

Isn't this a lot of work to accommodate a very small number of people?

There are two assumptions at play here that are both very understandable: one, that this is a lot of work and two, that it is for a very small number of people.

Shrine Mont Camp has been consistently taking steps to create a more inclusive environment, and has done so earnestly since 2016. We have established long-standing conversations surrounding privacy, consent and respect for others' bodies and belongings. We have done work to build in use of others pronouns, create programming that does not rely on gender distinctions, ensure camper safety in expressing their identities, curated a trained staff that is knowledgeable about gender identity and how to walk with kids on their personal journeys, and more. Campers of gender minorities already come to camp and we do our best to create spaces that are safe(r) for them. This additional step of articulating our policies and practices is the next step, and does not include a heavy lift for camp.

These changes will benefit everyone at Camp. Campers want privacy for changing. Campers want to feel safe at camp. Campers want to know that if they run out of things like clean underwear or menstrual products that these things can be dealt with in a discreet and timely manner. Gender inclusive practices make the lives of all of our campers better, because when you design with the most inclusion possible or for the most vulnerable people possible you benefit many more people than if you design for the narrow and assumed norm. Shrine Mont Camp has long upheld the understanding of welcoming all into the Body of Christ, and this vision has served camp well. Creating more practices that uphold our baptismal covenant of respecting all persons, and more fully welcoming more people into our camp body furthers a mission driven camp that benefits all.

Allowing my child to be housed with someone of the opposite gender is against my religious or cultural beliefs. Will this be taken into account when making cabin assignments?

Yes, there will still be a cabin option for single gender cabins - all boys or all girls cabins. Trans girls are girls and trans boys are boys so single gender cabins will include both trans and cis campers.

What resources do you have that we can share with our camper before the camp session?

Why are gender inclusive policies so important - a video by Chris Rehs-Dupin from Transplaining - *warning this video includes hard statistics and may be tough for younger campers or campers who are trans, non-binary or queer to hear.*

<https://youtu.be/bgK55DILWTA>

Find [@Transplaining](#) on Instagram for more information and resources!

The Trevor Project has great resources about what gender identity is, exploring your own gender identity and how to be an ally to trans and non-binary people all designed for youth specifically:

<https://www.thetrevorproject.org/>. The Trevor Project also has counselors that youth can access if they want to talk to someone about their gender identity or sexual orientation

Survey information provided is information from the Trevor Projects 2022 National Survey on LGBTQ Youth Mental Health.

Is your camp now only for LGBTQ campers?

No, Shrine Mont is not only for LGBTQ+ campers and staff. Rather, we are working towards ensuring that our Camp truly is for EVERYONE and that requires a focused correction of our past behaviors. We cannot wait to have your camper at Camp, whatever their gender is

Why is your camp taking a side on such a politically charged issue?

The Episcopal Church has affirmed the stance of holding and valuing specifically transgender and non-binary individuals, and so our living into this spiritual direction is not a political act. We are here to support and protect the safety, privacy, health and joy of our campers, and gender inclusive policies do that. Living into our calling as Christians and Episcopalians is something Shrine Mont Camps will continue to feel at home in.

We wanted to send our kid to camp to have fun, not to learn about these types of issues. Can you ensure this will not disrupt their childhood?

We are right there with you! We cannot wait to have all our campers focused on fun, taking well-supported and safe risks, learning about the outdoors, practicing their spirituality, swimming, making art, shooting archery and singing campfire songs! Gender inclusive practices will allow all children to have this experience and that is exciting news!

Camp is also a space of self education and personal growth so things like celebrating our authentic selves, having guided conversations about gender if campers have questions, learning about the lives of others and talking about justice are all part of our camp experience. This is great news because childhood is about learning and growing and becoming an awesome adult that will make a positive impact on the world. We promise that this will, as it has always been, be mixed in with all the silliness, play and friendship that you are thinking of!