

LOAVES AND FISHES

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Blurring the Binary

By Chelsea Froemke

We live in a binary world. Our six-year-old has really been embracing this binary as of late, despite our best efforts to try to explain the nuances of gender. Her favorite argument currently is demanding the paisley “girl” cloth napkin instead of the plaid “boy” cloth napkin. She is not alone. We regularly have people (adults and kids alike) pass up a great bike at the Bike Cave because the color is too “girly” or the frame doesn’t align with what they assume a male or female should be riding.

This binary isn’t necessarily bad. While it can be uncomfortable to hear our kid making these declarations of girl vs. boy constantly, don’t we also want our children to explore their own identity and embrace the beautiful and unique person that they are? And what about me? What assumptions do I make about the identity of my kids and how am I acting on those assumptions? How about other people I encounter? How do I celebrate and embrace my female identity? And how does this binary affect Loaves & Fishes’ work within our hospitality houses and the greater Duluth community?

The Loaves & Fishes community started 34 years ago when Angie Miller and Steve O’Neil opened their home for asylum seekers from Central America who were fleeing to Canada. After some time, the focus shifted towards providing hospitality to people who were experiencing homelessness. What started as one house, quickly grew to three houses, as it became apparent that more space was needed to accommodate the needs of the Duluth community. A house for men, a house for women, a house for families. Years passed, community members came and went, the focus of each house and the community ebbed and flowed depending on the needs of the Duluth commu-

nity and the interest/capacity of the live-in members and volunteers. Protests were planned, marches and actions took place, bikes were built, gardens planted, an additional house was acquired, hospitality for our neighbors continued.



Trans Springtime, pen and colored pencil, 2023

By Sarah Holst*

This artwork was created for TransNorthland to celebrate Trans Day of Visibility. In this piece, gender expansive humans are surrounded by animals and plants with abundant genders (cardinals, seagulls, and split gill mushrooms) and early spring flowers symbolizing the possibility of a world where the whole trans and gender expansive community is safe and celebrated.

Trans 101

By C. A. Lenore Bates (they/them)

Hello! And welcome to Trans 101, a primer about gender, sex, and trans identities. In this article you’ll find brief introductions to gender non-conforming identities, the ideas of sex and gender, and some terminology to help you on the path to understanding trans people and (hopefully) your own gendered experience! Someone reading this may already be deeply entrenched in the conversation around gender and transness, some may be new to it, and some may be somewhere in the middle. I’m hoping wherever you’re at in your conversations around gender, you can read this article, find it approachable, and maybe even learn a new thing or two.

A lot of people tend to conflate sex and gender, but they are very different. Sex has four components: chromosomes, gonads, primary sexual traits, and secondary sexual traits. Many of us are already aware of sexual chromosomes and their function. Generally, there are two sets of chromosomes that will determine a person’s sex; XX, marking female, and XY, marking male. I say “generally” because in-

Today we are four houses, two of which offer temporary housing and daytime drop-in hours where people can access showers, laundry, meals, and a listening ear. Olive Branch has traditionally been home to single women, couples, and families and Dorothy Day house for single men. At first glance our houses are very binary. We often discourage male identifying people from visiting Olive Branch during drop-in hours for the safety and comfortability of the guests who live there. However, each beautiful and unique person who passes through our door has their own story and experience and as we’ve journeyed with each new guest and community member, these binary descriptions of our houses have blurred. We do our best to meet each person where they are at and express flexibility depending on each individual’s needs.

We, as the Loaves & Fishes community, continue on this path of learning and we thank you for joining us. It feels extremely important in this current political climate to dedicate this newsletter to the realities that many people of the LGBTQIA2S+ community face. Our country has become a scary place for many and there are real and significant risks for expressing identities or loving another. People’s existences have become politicized, especially for our trans siblings. It is our hope that the articles that follow will broaden all of our understanding and better equip us to be compassionate neighbors and accomplices in the work of liberation.

tersex people introduce a degree of variance to this spectrum that often is forgotten, ignored, erased, or not known. Intersex people may be born with a combination of chromosomes outside of what is considered the norm, like XXX, YXX, or XXY among others. The second component of sex is the gonads, or testes and ovaries. All fetuses exist in a bit of a limbo until a certain point in pregnancy when hormones (dictated by chromosomes) from the person carrying the fetus give a signal for the gonads to either descend and become testes or remain inside of the body, becoming ovaries. When a child is born, doctors look for the presentation or lack of external gonads in a baby to determine their sex. The third component of sex is the primary sexual traits, meaning the purpose of the sexual organs. Does someone have ovaries and a uterus or a penis and testes? And finally, secondary sexual traits, which often aren’t present until after puberty, could be things like facial hair, body hair, breasts, or voice changes.

Gender is a construct, which has no immutable traits and is nuanced. Gender is a part of someone’s identity. It is a categorization of people to help us understand how to relate to ourselves and others. That doesn’t mean that the construct of gender is inherently good or bad, I find a lot of joy in my gender.

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Supporting Transgender Youth

By Kathy Hermes

Transgender young people are beautiful and are important members of our communities.

Nonbinary young people are beautiful and are important members of our communities.

Two-spirit young people are beautiful and are important members of our communities.

Queer young people are beautiful and are important members of our communities.

Trans, nonbinary, two-spirit, and queer youths should be afforded significance, a sense of belonging, and broadscale safety as they navigate toward adulthood. As a matter of course, these basic needs should be met by their families, their schools, and the greater community.

Trans, nonbinary, two-spirit, and queer young people deserve to be regarded as significant enough to be adequately housed, fed, educated, and provided with gender informed and responsive healthcare. They also deserve to be regarded as significant enough to be addressed with their true names and pronouns.

Trans, nonbinary, two-spirit, and queer young people deserve to experience a full sense of belonging in all places they occupy---in schools, workplaces, families, faith communities, on athletic teams, and in performance spaces. They deserve to see representation of their beautifully gendered selves in all these spaces as well.

Physical, emotional, psychological and spiritual safety should be solidly established and protected for trans, nonbinary, two-spirit and queer youths. They should be able to proceed through their days free from microaggressions related to gender identity and expression, free from hateful rhetoric, and free from assault.

For the past thirty years, I have both informally and formally worked at supporting LGBTQIA2S+ youths. At the start of that thirty years, sexual orientation was the focus, because our gender authentics were just beginning to emerge. Today's trans, nonbinary, two-spirit, and queer young people are shouldered into the gender justice frontlines. At a price.

The disproportionately high rates of compromised mental health, self-harm, substance abuse, and suicidality for these young people, compared to their cisgender counterparts, continue to rise. Understandably so. These normal and beautiful children and their families---both chosen and original---are under fire. They are at the center of a culture war fueled by frightened and uncomfortable adults wielding undue social and political power.

According to research conducted by the Human Rights Campaign, over 525 anti-LGBTQ+ bills were introduced this past legislative year with 220 of them targeting transgender people and 79 of them being signed into law. Consider a few of the consequences:

- 33.8% of high school-aged trans youths are living in states where they are unable to play alongside their friends
- 30.9% of trans youths between the ages of 13 and 17 are living in states where their access to life saving, gender-affirming medical care has been

- banned
- 270,000+ LGBTQ+ youths aged 13 to 17 live in states where "Don't Say LGBTQ+" bills have passed. Consequently, families are packing up their lives and heading across state lines to relatively safer states. Minnesota has joined a handful of other states in becoming trans refuge states by legislative decree. Families are relocating to Duluth because of this protective status.

How can adults ease the lives of trans, nonbinary, two-spirit, and queer young people? That question has been asked of LGBTQIA2S+ youths in the Duluth area. A common generalized response has been, "Get to know us and be decent to us." Now, that's a low bar we as adults should be fully capable of getting over.

Specifically, in both 2017 and 2022, LGBTQIA2S+ students were asked how school staff and administrators at their schools could be helpful. Adults working on sexual orientation and gender issues in area schools thought they were making decent progress. Students thought otherwise. Their recommended priorities for considerate regard remained



almost exactly the same over the five-year period.

What our students shared was largely associated with responsiveness around gender identity and gender expression. What was brought forward is readily applicable outside the doors of our schools.

This is what LGBTQIA2S+ youths ask of adults in our community, in order of descending importance to them:

1. Use correct pronouns and names for us. Ask, if you don't know or don't remember. [Respecting a person's pronouns is suicide prevention. A Trevor Project survey of 40,000+ LGBTQIA2S+ youths found that trans and nonbinary youths who reported having their pronouns respected by all or most of the people in their lives attempted suicide at half the rate of those whose pronouns weren't respected.]
2. Step in when you hear bullying and inappropriate comments.
3. Ensure that gender-neutral bathrooms are available and easily accessible. Then support the bathroom of choice.
4. Ensure that locker rooms are safe for LGBTQIA2S+ youth.
5. Make LGBTQIA2S+ history and people visible to all.
6. Teach us comprehensive sex education, including coverage of consent.

Consider what opportunities you have to support trans, nonbinary, two-spirit, and queer young people. Armor up with your privileges and head to the gender frontlines when you can. Encourage others to join you. Rest when you need to. Keep going back till

comprehensive gender justice is achieved.

Reflecting upon my time and experiences spent in the company of, and in struggle with, many fantastic LGBTQIA2S+ youths and their supporters, I offer these suggestions to those who aspire to help lighten their loads:

- Always prioritize the safety of trans, nonbinary, two-spirit, and queer youths over the discomfort of adults---yours and that of other people. Compromised safety and discomfort are not equivalent.
 - Ramp up your allyship to accomplice-ship. Push yourself beyond supportive messaging to aid in dismantling harmful tools and systems of oppression. Keep holding space at the frontlines.
 - Crush binary notions around masculinity and femininity with humor, reckless abandon, and determination. After all, these contrived codes were established and are defended by binary supremacists ---and marketers.
 - Run interference for young trans, nonbinary, two-spirit, and queer young people when they are being misgendered, being gender policed at bathroom or locker room or dressing room doors, being excluded from spaces and participation due to dress codes, or are being forced into stereotyped roles. Check out "I'll Go With You".
 - Help insulate young people attempting to live into their true gender identities from family members who don't or won't support their journey. If acute harm is being done, help isolate them from family members. This may mean support of relocation.
 - Consistently challenge sex and gender stereotypes. Normalize degendering as it applies to people---and things, too. Find the queerness in yourself. Find the joy in your queerness. Show some of it off. Young people who need to see you are watching.
 - STUDY UP!!! Don't expect trans, nonbinary, two-spirit, and queer youths to teach you how to respectfully regard them. It's not their job. This should have been taken care of by adults long ago. Learn about LGBTQIA2S+ culturally considerate terms, current and emergent, on your own time. There are plenty of information sources. Here are two examples:
 - The PFLAG (Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays) Glossary. This is a pretty good glossary put out by adults.
 - The TSER (Trans Student Educational Resources) Glossary. This is a really good glossary put out by young people.
- Also, learn about respectful pronoun use. Practice using "they/them/theirs" pronouns for individuals. Explore neo-pronouns. Check out <https://pronouns.org/> Remember that respecting a person's pronouns is suicide prevention.

To close, here are some words from Ivan Coyote's (they/them) book *Rebent Sinner*: "I want it said for the record that I don't believe the answer to making the world safer for our youth is teaching queer and trans kids that they need to toughen up to face down this world. They should not have to. A kid shouldn't have to learn through trauma and swallow a diet of other people's ignorance simply to become themselves. We need to soften this world up, not make our kids harder."

Kathy Hermes (She/They) is a nonbinary elder who lives in the Chester Creek Watershed of the East Hillside Neighborhood of Duluth where they self-care by gardening and attracting otherkin to their yard with whole kernel corn.

Cold Lake Hot Poets

By Jess Morgan

I realize I'm visibly queer now because I get hit on by more women than I do men when I DJ weddings and get called slurs while walking with friends or partners along the lake walk. But in front of Mother Superior we are reminded at how healing and fluid we are for each other as she is to us. "Ah, rocks and sand: the two genders," we crack. But really, sand is just a bunch of small rocks and rocks really big sand. And we just accept the shells and lake glass all the same. People ask which of us is the cold lake and which of us is the hot poet... but neither of us adhere to those boxes. On some days, one of us is the pen and the other the paper. On some days, one of us is the pen and the other the horizon.

Safe Inside a Vacuum

By Jess Morgan

I know things are getting dire and all of my queer millennial peers want to run into the woods to start a commune. I want a goat named Fettuccine. I'll name her kids Linguine and Tortellini. We'll spread their cheese on our toast and wait as long as we can to slaughter the one we love the most. Brenna has been growing rare types of tomatoes. And my roommate will find some way to keep eating so many goddamn avocados. If we channel all of our rage about the unlivable wage into our next stage of "living off the land," even our ADrift-Hunting-Dopamine friends can sit and focus until this is planned. Our neurodiverse brains know both that this is urgent AND enough facts about the critters we'll see that we won't even need to use the internet. Adam already fled to dream in New York, but left us their blueberry farm that we'll protect from harm until they're back. What we lack in funds we'll fill up on big ideas: Felix is sure he'll find a way to grow exotic fruit trees in Minnesota. Says: "I'll get the banana seeds off the black market." He married Moth Man yesterday, but hasn't met his quota of absurdity yet. And you can bet: None of us will own a closet big enough to hide inside of. But eventually we will choke and cough on the ash and dust that will catch up to us when the rest of the world is still on fire.

Jess Morgan (they/them) is a multi-disciplinary, nonbinary poet residing in Duluth, Minnesota where they juggle many hats. They currently serve as the president of the Duluth Poetry Chapter of the League of Minnesota Poets, on Duluth's NQT2SLGBIA City Commission, and are the entertainment coordinator for the Duluth/Superior Pride Festival. Some of their "hats" include goat-sitting, copy editing for Perfect Duluth Day and patient educator at WE Health Clinic. Poems that they've written have included Thunderbird Review, New Verse News, New Note Poetry, Pure Slush and more. Jess enjoys playing their clarinet or "Honk Machine" in a poetry "Goose Circus" with their partner. Their first book, "Too Many Hats," and art can be found at jesscribe.com. (Instagram: @jesscribe.the.vibe)



Sacred Life, pen and colored pencil, 2018 By Sarah Holst* This was used by the Queer Ecojustice Project for their Imagine Queer Futures mobilization alongside the global RISE for Climate actions on September 8, 2018. Honoring how Trans identities have always existed and celebrating how gender diversity exists in plants and animals is crucial in fighting for healthy ecosystems where all can thrive.

important reminder here that gender-affirming care encompasses a range of social and medical interventions to affirm someone's internal gender identity. Studies show that gender-affirming care can decrease emotional distress, has positive effects on overall well-being, and reduces thoughts of suicide among trans folk; that gender-affirming care literally saves lives of transgender people of all ages, especially our trans youth. Other bills, both proposed and enacted, restrict gender-affirming care for adults and/or ban drag performances and "cross dressing" (which targets trans folk as well).

Criminalizing transness validates aggression toward transgender people, so it is no wonder that 2021 and 2022 saw an increase in anti-trans violence. The increased targeting of trans people by right-wing militia groups, coupled with a broader resurgence in queerphobia in the US, has been described as threatening genocide. When the law no longer recognizes bodily autonomy of certain people, it gives everyone the opportunity to dehumanize them and devalue their lives. Truly, it is both dangerous and becoming illegal to be transgender in the United States of America.

These legislative, oratorical, and physical attacks are piled on top of the challenges trans folk face every day. Trans people, especially trans youth, are very likely to experience homelessness. It's estimated that one in five transgender individuals have experienced homelessness, and studies show that trans and other queer identified youth make up 20-40% of the over 4.2 million homeless youth. Family rejection, discrimination, and violence are all contributing factors to the large number of transgender and other queer-identified youth who are homeless in the United States. Unfortunately, many social service agencies and shelters, especially those that are religiously affiliated, fail to appropriately and compassionately serve trans folk experiencing homelessness. Trans people are often denied shelter because of their gender identity, or are inappropriately housed in gendered spaces that don't reflect their gender identity. Social services that fail to address co-occurring issues facing transgender homeless adults and youth. 63% of transgender people experiencing homelessness live on the street; often avoiding shelters because of this discrimination and harassment. This is especially dangerous because people on the street are more vulnerable to harassment and assault and are more likely to be asked to exchange sex for food and shelter.

It is significant that, amidst all of this, the State Legislature enacted legislation that makes Minnesota a "trans refuge", buttressing legal protections for trans people. The statute specifically prohibits the enforcement of another state's law being applied in a pending child protection action in Minnesota, when the law of another state allows the child to be removed from the parent or guardian for receiving medically necessary health care or mental health care that respects the gender-identity of the patient.

While Minnesota has declared itself a trans refuge, it is still not a place where trans folk can flourish, unmarred by transphobia. Most people in my queer community - most of my friends and chosen family - have been physically assaulted, harassed, and discriminated against. Our lives have been changed by the violence of words and actions; some of that violence has been fatal. We know that this is the Minnesota to which our trans siblings from other states are moving. We can't and won't let our siblings live on the street or experience harassment and assault. We must continue collectively and creatively advocating for a safer and more inclusive state. We must expand the infrastructure for culturally appropriate and supportive social services to meet the growing need of transgender people who live or seek care in Minnesota. We must confront and disrupt transphobia wherever it exists, from the halls of power to individual hearts. Being trans in America (and Minnesota) is dangerous, but it doesn't have to be. In solidarity, let us spark the revolution.

Ezra (He/Him) volunteered with the Loaves and Fishes community from 2017-2020 and lived at Olive Branch for a year of that time. He now works with homeless trans youth in Minneapolis. Ezra is a dog dad, a cyclist, and enjoys being in the woods camping or foraging.

Trans in America

 By Ezra Waskey

Content Warning: transphobia, assault of various kinds, harassment, death

Before I get into this heavy topic, let me introduce myself. I'm Ezra, a trans, gay white man, and former live-in volunteer at Olive Branch. Currently, I'm the case manager for the ConneQt host home program with Avenues for Youth in Minneapolis. We provide alternative, transitional housing for young queer people to keep them out of shelters. As anti-trans hate is spewed and legislated, we are noticing a significant increase of trans folk moving to Minnesota from other states. More and more we are receiving calls from trans refugees; teens and young adults who no longer have access to gender-affirming care or protection against harassment and harm. They come here fleeing violence of all sorts, often homeless with limited resources and with no community connections.

Month after month, the flames of transphobia seem to only grow, fed by hate-filled, politically expedient rhetoric. Twenty states enacted laws banning or significantly restricting gender affirming care for minors with another seven states considering the same; as many as half of trans youth have lost, or are at risk of losing, access to age-appropriate, medically necessary gender-affirming care in their state. Many of these laws also incriminate adults who actively support trans youth, even mandating reporting to Child Protection Services if there is reason to believe that a minor is undergoing gender-affirming care. We are literally enshrining health disparities into law. An

Yes, It Can Be That Hard:

Access to Trans Affirming Healthcare

By Nick Eliot

As someone who works within the LGBTQIA2S+ community reducing obstacles wherever I can, it was an “of course”, when asked to contribute something about the barriers Transgender folks face when accessing medical care. Narrowing such a large topic was tough, and as I stared at my keyboard, I kept thinking, “people know finding unprejudiced and competent care isn’t easy for our people, don’t they?”

Recently, writer Sophie Labelles visited our area. As she explained that access to Trans care in Finland is currently easier than in much of the US, I heard a voice state loudly and with an awkward level of confidence, “well, it isn’t hard....” Reflecting on this later, I felt that I should have replied, “perhaps for you.”

But, perhaps this is the wrong approach. People don’t just need details of barriers being navigated, they need to understand that barriers still exist. The person that night is at least an ally. They may themselves be Transgender, or perhaps they are the family member of an adult or youth of Trans experience. Being a part of, or in close proximity to a marginalized population does not mean that we are the most marginalized among us. It is always good to inventory our privileges and remind ourselves that our experience is never the experience of everyone in our Community.

Isn’t Healthcare Protected in Minnesota? Unlike most states, Minnesota has had rules in place since 2015 protecting insurance coverage for medically necessary healthcare. In 2023, it became a sanctuary state for affirming providers and the parents of Trans youth from other states. Unfortunately, making something

legal and making something accessible to everyone are not the same thing.

Despite ACA rules and Minnesota coverage mandates, many insurance plans have zero to limited coverage for medically necessary medicines and surgical interventions, because they are either exempt as self-funded or headquartered in another state. Some plans don’t cover counseling or psychiatric visits, yet those same plans require documentation from such providers in order to have transition related care covered. Although many individuals benefit from the support of a therapist in stressful times, the purpose of requiring therapy to validate someone’s existence only serves to pathologize, dehumanize, and further marginalize the Transgender population.

“Intersectionality is a real thing” is my catch phrase most days. It is important to recognize that for most of the population, being Transgender isn’t their most actively marginalized identity. Trans representation in the current discourse is often white, neurotypical, abled families with accessible funds, medical insurance, a car, and stable housing. As each one of these descriptors change, the barriers to accessing competent care grow.

Race has always been a top factor for disparity of care among Transgender populations. Doctors often don’t take the symptoms of Black patients seriously, so when you add the high levels of suspicion and social masking needed to survive as a Queer individual, it can be a difficult combination of well-earned mistrust. Two-Spirit patients who reveal their identity to doctors often find themselves having to give a college level lecture on Indigenous culture. Since their traditional identities don’t fit into the limited concepts of gender held by European colonization, Indigenous people world-wide continue to find it difficult to access af-

firming care that is relevant to their bodies and culture.

Folks with mental and physical disabilities, Autism, or consistent housing insecurity can find it difficult to get past the gatekeeping used to decide who does and does not have to access care. It is commonplace for the lived experiences of Disabled people to be ignored or dismissed. Even though it is common for Autistic and Transgender identities to be co-existing, many providers will use one to discredit the other, sometimes leaving people in a limbo where neither is appropriately treated or accommodated. Housing insecurity, experienced at much higher rates in the Transgender population, can make even basic medical care difficult. Scheduling and attending appointments requires access to reliable transportation, cell phones, and child care. Many gender affirming medications require multiple in-person visits and surgeons often require proof of stable housing, creating an obstacle that can cause disruptions in care for many Trans People.

These are only a sliver of the obstacles experienced by Transgender people living in our region, where care is, for the most part, protected. It doesn’t even touch upon any economic or gender disparities. In much of the US, legislative attacks on LGBTQ+ citizens make things far more dire. For a family in Duluth with the right set of privileges, accessing care may indeed be less hard, but for the rest of us: “Yes, it can be that hard.”



Nick Eliot is an activist and consultant in Northwest Wisconsin and the Arrowhead of Minnesota, focusing on culturally competent medical and mental healthcare access for the Transgender and Gender Diverse community.

Queering Faith

Maryn Hakes

Growing up, my family often watched the television program “Touched by an Angel” on Sunday evenings. One year, the Christmas Special focused on the broken relationship between a father and son. The son had come home after years of estrangement. He was suffering the effects of advanced AIDS. During the episode, it was made clear that he was gay and that this was the source of the rupture in his relationship with his dad. At the climax of the show, father and son finally reconcile. Later, after his son has succumbed to his disease, the father finishes the violin he had started thirty years before when his son was born as a tribute to his son’s life. At the end of the episode, my mom said that she wouldn’t know what to do if one of us kids were queer...

Queer.

How frightening that word seemed to me growing up in a conservative, Christian family. It was a phrase that risked everything. My faith, my family, my future. It colored me as an outcast, as someone condemned and unredeemable and I tried desperately to make those words less true.

For a long time, I didn’t know what it is like to not feel broken; to know instead at a heart level that I am good, loved, and worthy. I often found myself during the altar call at the end of services riddled with guilt and anxiety. I felt sinful, gross, unworthy. I was made to feel as if I had made this evil choice. If only I trusted God more, *He would take this awful burden away and I would be “normal.”*

So many queer folk have similar stories. Ridicule, estrangement, and vitriol often came from the



Spirit of Inclusion, pen, 2015 By Sarah Holst*

This piece was created for Call To Action’s national conference t-shirts in 2015. The focus that year was on the many forms family can take and a call to the full inclusion of LGBTQ+ folks in the ways we speak and vision about sacred family.

people around us. Family, friends, colleagues—people who call themselves Christians speaking from a misguided place of concern or judgment. Our churches and our scriptures were often used as swords instead of plowshares.

Listen to the words of Psalm 139 sing to us of our beauty, our belovedness. “...it was you who formed my inward parts; you knit me together in my mother’s womb. I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully

made.”

Like individual squares on a quilt, the Seamstress of Life has masterfully crafted each of us using various colors, textures, and patterns; God has stitched into us Their incomprehensible love, tenderly sewing together our experiences of grace into the beautiful and unique people we are.

What keeps us ignoring all the ways our God sings out Their love to us? What words, what definitions, what false binaries, what systems of power continue to keep us from our true selves? What keeps us from hearing God’s words through the prophet Isaiah when he writes, “I have called you by name, you are mine, you are precious to me and I love you?”

Rather than being bruising, the words of the Christian scriptures have become a balm for my queer soul. In the words of Joseph Tetlow, SJ, they “charge my senseless sorrows with meaning and... make my pain pregnant with power.” Through my journey of faith, I have encountered a Creator who knows every part of me and loves me. Step by step, I continue to be called to a fuller surrender to Their incomprehensible, transforming, life-giving love. God invites each of us to begin the work to no longer lose ourselves in our crucifixions, but to, through Their resurrecting power, find in our wounds sources of deepest grace.

Amir Rabiya, a trans and two-spirit disabled queer femme poet, wrote these lines:

“...My beautiful people let us dream towards what we want beyond survival
Let us dream towards loving ourselves till we become love over and over again
My beautiful people
I can taste our honeyed victory

Trans 101 Continued from cover page It simply means that gender, like social class, is socially constructed as ways for us to understand how to relate to one another. However, as all of us are aware, social constructions can be damaging, hurtful, and even inspire violence when we don't understand other sides of our lived experiences. Many people think of gender as a spectrum. We all exist in varying places on this spectrum depending on our gender expression.

"Cis", coming from latin meaning "on the same side of", refers to people whose gender identity aligns with the sex they were assigned at birth. "Trans", coming from latin meaning "on the other side of", refers to people whose gender identity does not align with the sex they were assigned at birth. For example, transwomen and ciswomen are both women, but a ciswoman was assigned female at birth (AFAB) and a transwoman was assigned male at birth (AMAB). AFAB and AMAB are terms used to discuss sex in relation to our socialization, and many people are even moving away from them in favor of more inclusive terms. Young girls and boys are socialized differently based on the gender they were assigned at birth. Girls have a different experience of being gendered than boys do. For example, girls are often given Barbie dolls and toy kitchen sets and boys are often given army dolls and footballs. Our experiences of being gendered as children is what affects us most as we mature and begin to construct a self, so many people will say "people who were socialized to be women" or "people who were socialized to be men" instead of AFAB and AMAB when discussing how we are or were gendered.

Because the gender spectrum is diverse there are constantly new terms to help describe a person's experience. A common word is non-binary. "Non-binary" can be a specific gender and an umbrella term for many gender non-conforming people. Other terms include: agender, gender fluid, genderqueer, demi-gender, etc. Folks whose gender identities exist in this gray space often use pronouns that some may not be accustomed to using, like singular they/them and even neopronouns like ze/zir, fae/fir, em/eir, and the list goes on. As someone who uses they/them pronouns, I meet many people who are confused because we are most familiar with plural they/them pronouns. However, in English, like in many languages, there are cases for singular they/them pronouns when the gender of another person is unknown or undefined. Using ne-

opronouns works basically the same as using any other pronoun. For example, "Ze is going to be late, because zir car broke down." If you have any questions on how to use someone's pronouns, you can probably ask that person how to use them or look up the many helpful guides on pronouns on the internet.

Now, let's delve a little deeper into the discourse around gender and transness. We are all aware of the concepts of man and woman, I used these terms freely and without the narrow definitions in previous sections. I chose to not specifically define these terms because we all have our own understandings of what it means to be a woman or a man. Many trans people have adopted terms like transfemme and transmasc to describe their genders, terms which focus on femininity and masculinity as opposed to womanhood and manhood. Femininity is not exclusively for women and masculinity is not exclusively for men. Many people express varying degrees of these two things in their gender expressions. This gender expansive thinking has allowed greater expression and fluidity for a lot of people. Men and boys, who before could never express an ounce of femininity because of oppressive patriarchal expectations, now have the freedom to paint their nails, put on makeup, and wear dresses. Harry Styles is an example of someone who wears dresses and paints his nails, expressing femininity, but still identifies as a man. Many transgender people find womanhood and manhood too narrow for their gender identities and expressions, and instead have found femininity and masculinity more expansive.

Gender is whatever you want to make it. It is an idea that people have created to describe ourselves and inform our relationships with others. While

transgender people have existed for millennia, we only recently began using some of these words to describe our queer existence. Hopefully, this article gave you some context and foundation to understanding trans people and gender. The topic of gender and transness is so nuanced and variable, it's hard to put it into so few words.

C. A. Lenore Bates, a.k.a Jack, is a biracial black non-binary transsexual youth. Born and raised in Minneapolis, they have been organizing communities in queer and trans spaces since 2020. They restarted Rye House in 2021 with their good friend and fiancé Ezra Waskey, another queer-about-town. They enjoy reading and discussing non-fiction history and theory books and zines with their queer community, organizing skill shares around household tasks, arts and crafts, and queer defense tactics, and will occasionally relax with a silly anime or pulpy romance novel. Since organizing around Rye House, they've realized the importance of having spaces focusing on trans people where caring and carework are central parts of the culture of the community.



C.A. Lenore Bates & Ezra Waskey

If you would like to learn more about trans people, our experiences, and gender, check out:

- Gender Outlaws: The Next Generation* by Kate Bornstein and S. Bear Bergman
- The Will to Change: On Men, Masculinity, and Love* by bell hooks
- A Quick and Easy Guide to Using They/Them Pronouns* by Archie Bongiovanni and Tristan Jimerson
- Street Transvestite Action Revolutionaries: Survival, Revolt, and Queer Antagonist Struggle*
- Sissy: A Coming of Gender Story* by Jacob Tobia
- Gender Queer: A Memoir* by Maia Kobabe
- All Boys Aren't Blue: A Memoir-Manifesto* by George M. Johnson
- Rebent Sinner* by Ivan Coyote Johnson

My beautiful people..."

To other queer folx, I hope you find a salve in these words and an affirmation of your journey. You are beautiful and good and loved. I know that this world isn't always hospitable, and it often seems those with power to affect change are comfortable being complicit in oppression. While the world isn't always safe, there are safe people and places, and I hope that you find them.

We are stronger together and our liberation demands our solidarity. As Paul writes in 1 Corinthians, "...God chose the foolish of the world to shame the wise, and God chose the weak of the world to shame the strong, and God chose the lowly and despised of the world, those who count for nothing, to reduce to nothing those who are something, so that no human being might boast before God." Keep shining your fabulous queer light and together let us "dream towards what we want beyond survival... dream towards loving ourselves..."

To those who want to journey with us toward liberation, know that queer folx are reminded daily that the choice to openly and outwardly live the truth of who God has created us to be carries substantial risk. Take time to consider what you actually know about the queer community and better educate yourself. Interrogate the systems of which you are a part. Use any power and privilege you might have for our collective liberation, always

rooted in the principles of solidarity and subsidiarity. As the prophet Zephaniah reminds us, we are to seek justice, seek humility. Remember, if you aren't actively listening to and working in solidarity with queer folx for queer liberation, then you are complicit in our oppression.

St. Francis de Sales once said: "be who you are and be that well." To which, a dear friend of mine, Sr. Mary Margaret McKenzie, VHM, of blessed memory, added these wise words: "But in order to be who you are, you must know who you are. And that takes hard work. But you start with Love."

I believe firmly that the call of the Christian faith is to minister to the frontiers, the peripheries, the margins of our society. Followers in the way of Jesus are called to stand and speak in solidarity with the most vulnerable, the rejected, the marginalized. To quote St. Francis de Sales again, the reason to live is "...to receive and carry the gentle Jesus: on our tongue by proclaiming Him; in our arms by doing good works; on our shoulders by supporting the yoke of dryness and sterility in both the interior and exterior senses..."

May we each more fully embrace the fabulous, unique people we have been created to be, may we each live a little more fully into who we are and who we are becoming, and may each we listen deeply to and learn from the stories and experiences of those around us.

*About the Artist

Sarah Holst is a non-binary and genderqueer parent, artist, and theologian living on Anishinaabe Land on Madeline Island in Lake Superior. Sarah spends their days collaborating with two wild little kids and creating illustrations of the biodiversity of specific places. Sarah believes that intimately knowing local ecosystems and the sacredness therein is the way toward a viable future. See more of Sarah's work at sarahholstart.com



Olive Branch

By Shelly Bruecken

Spring was late this year and that feels just about accurate for how I feel. I am slowly arising from a long winter. Some positive things have come from this winter: a larger kitchen, a second shower. The Olive Branch team of volunteers has also expanded, welcoming Maryn (who lives at Hannah House but is a part of the Olive Branch volunteer team) and Gloria! We also remember the many folks in the community that have helped pull us through this challenging past year without Donna. Specific shoutouts to Sharon and Kurt who continued to volunteer even when Kate and I felt like we couldn't do much. Thank you.

We have also been very grateful for the guests who we have had this past year. Many have secured housing and continue to come back and visit. The relationships have been fruitful and meaningful during this time. Right now we have an extra dog in the house and my dog, Mowgli, is as happy as could be to have a friend.

This summer we have a new volunteer that would like to introduce herself!



Mowgli and her friend making sure to welcome all guests.



Gloria & Anne enjoying the view of Duluth from Enger tower.

My name is Gloria (she/her). I am from East Germany and I will be working and living in Olive Branch for almost 3 months. I am studying social work and will finish my bachelor's degree in March next year. In 2019, I did a summer internship with the LA Catholic Worker. My parents lived with the Amsterdam Catholic Worker 25 years ago. From day one, I have felt welcome and safe at Olive Branch. I feel as though

the energy here will be something I can learn and grow from. I am very happy to be here, to meet all of you, and be part of this community during this time.

We are looking forward to enjoying late summer and early fall. We've been swimming, biking, walking, and rock hunting as much as possible as well as trying to expose Gloria to all of the good things about Duluth during her short time here. We continue to be friends and advocates for our folks that face the enormous challenge of getting through our current housing systems to find stability of their own. We are grateful for our volunteers that continue to show up and support us with their energy and time, and we are always looking for more hands and hearts to join in our efforts.

Dorothy Day House Notes

By Dave McComas-Bussa

This summer at Dorothy Day House we bid farewell to Joel Kilgour. For 28 years Joel has poured his body and soul into our home, making Dorothy Day House what it is today. He has been a friend, a mentor, and a lifeline to so many who call Duluth home. Always focused on the needs of our neighbors and the work that needs to be done, Joel has been a steady hand through the easy and the hard times. We look forward to supporting him in his next adventure as he continues his work with the Stepping On Up plan to end homelessness in Duluth. We know that if we need him, he's only a phone call away and will always be in our hearts as we continue to love and live together on Jefferson Street.

Without Joel in the house, things will be different. To help us manage this transition, we called upon the wisdom and knowledge of our extended community. We held a gathering of our meal angels, house duty volunteers, and anyone else who gives their time and love to our home. It was a night full of delicious food and warm conversation. We discussed anything and everything related to hospitality. Most importantly we made connections between many volunteers who had never met each other. There was consensus at the end of the night that the meeting was a success, and we agreed to continue to gather three or four times a year.

We are also happy to welcome Shannon back to our team! Shannon has been a part of Loaves and Fishes for years, but had to split her time between Jefferson Street and her home in central Minnesota. But now, as of early June, Shannon has rejoined us as a full time member. She's an important part of the Dorothy Day team and brings a cool confidence to her work. We are so lucky to have her.

Our work remains challenging. There are so many obstacles facing our guests as they seek safe and stable housing. Recently, more landlords have been requiring strict credit and background checks. Many also require cosigners on leases, even if the applicants meet the income thresholds necessary to afford rent. These requirements discriminate against the poor and work to keep people in poverty. Even with stable employment and ample savings it can take

months of searching to find an apartment. This means many of our guests have been staying with us longer than they would have in the past. This limits the amount of people we are able to help, but it is also an opportunity to get to know our guests better. The camaraderie in the house has never been stronger, and many former guests continue to stay in touch and come back to share a meal.

Things never stay the same for long around here. We don't know what challenges tomorrow will bring, but we know we can face them together.



Warren, Clayton, and Christine around the Dorothy Day House dining room table.

Bread and Roses House Notes

By Tone Lanzillo

We are happy to welcome Shannon back to our house. We all missed Shannon while she was away helping to take care of her grandchildren.

Anne, Shannon, and myself have been caring for Bread and Roses while also supporting the Dorothy Day House with house duty and overnight coverage. While Shannon is always available to take on another house duty or prepare dinner for the guests, you will find Anne painting the dining room or one of the 3rd floor bedrooms. Anne and Shannon have also invested a lot of time and energy into making Bread and Roses such a warm and inviting space.

When we're not doing house duty or working on community projects, you may find us walking or biking along the lake or working in the yard or with the garden. And on any given evening at our house, you will find Anne at the dining room table putting together a puzzle, while I play the keyboard, and Shannon is in the living room



Shannon and two of her grandchildren enjoying a day at the Great Lakes Aquarium.

checking out a new movie on her laptop.

Over the past several months, Bread and Roses has truly been a house of hospitality with a number of people visiting and staying at the house, including Shannon's children and grandchildren, Anne's children and extended family, former members of the community, and friends of the community who periodically come to Duluth to help out with house duty and prepare meals. We have also found time to go see our grandchildren, whether in Montana, Kentucky, Indiana, or other parts of Minnesota.

During our annual block party weekend, we welcomed Shannon's sister, Sharon, as well as Peggy and John, to our house. We enjoyed their company and energy, especially this dynamic trio's help with the block party - setting up, facilitating activities, and breaking it all down at the end. A good time was had by all!

In July we acknowledged the one year anniversary of Donna's passing. The community came together to celebrate her life and commitment to the Loaves and Fishes community. Her spirit and presence at Bread and Roses continues to be felt and embraced on a daily basis.

Hannah House Notes

By Drew Anderson

Hannah House has been host to some special guests this summer: The monarch butterfly (*Danaus plexippus*), the gray treefrog (*Dryophytes versicolor*) and the brown rat (*Rattus norvegicus*). The latter of which was uninvited. Chelsea, Drew, Alahna (6) and Gavia (2) along with returning community member, Maryn have been busy providing intentional and unintentional hospitality to these small creatures. The rats deserve special mention for their wiliness in evading all of our traps and causing the deconstruction of a decades-old raised floor in the Hannah House kitchen. In July, the rats finally made an appearance inside the house and we soon discovered that the cavities inside the floor platform had not only become a cozy den and bathroom for rats and mice alike, but that there were also several direct tunnels to the outside of the house! Our junky cabinets were torn out revealing another nest and then 5 layers of linoleum and their respective subfloor were peeled back. Thankfully, this overwhelming task was relieved by the tremendous help from friends: Jerry, Bob, Steve, Luke and Justus arrived on short notice and sped along the demolition and cleanup process. Needless to say, life with kids in our kitchenless house at the time was dysfunctional, so we were so grateful to those helping hands. The kitchen looks a bit different now—we are walking on the floor boards original to the house when it was built in 1889. The lower cabinets were replaced with plywood and 2X4 shelving. And while we lost 5 inches of floor we gained 5 inches of ceiling height which put our unchanged upper cabinets a little out of reach. It's sort of

a tall person's domain now. But it's temporary. There has been talk of renovating Hannah House's kitchen for some years and now the planning process is officially underway.



A healthy rat investigating a compost bucket in the Hannah House backyard...

Despite the rat fiasco, Hannah House has seen some wonderful changes. In April, Maryn moved in, giving the adults a 3 to 2 advantage over the kids. In just a couple weeks time, Gavia learned to speak Maryn's name (M for short) along with Anja, a mild-mannered golden lab who stays with us every other week. And with the inquisitiveness and candor that only a six-year-old can master, Alahna became acquainted with Maryn's trans identity. Maryn in turn fielded her every question and claim with patience and

clarity. The end of Alahna's school routine kicked off our family's summer rhythm: lots of later nights with post dinner walks down to the lakeshore to hunt for agates or cool off in the water. Gavia began potty training in roller coaster fashion. Her good days are few, but celebratory (every other day is laundry day...). Her speech just keeps accelerating in terms of vocabulary and sentence forming. It really is remarkable to witness her world widen with every new word she masters.

We're blessed with another beautiful, yet smaller, garden due to some late spring construction of a new garden shed. This required the excavation and relocation of thousands of pounds of clay. Thankfully, we learned to operate a mini backhoe which saved time and backaches. A stone retaining wall now articulates a new landscape and garden layout. We hope to complete two more retaining walls by the end of the growing season to complete this project. Yet here we are, mid August already. The nights come sooner and indications of fall are subtle, but present. The squirrels and the pumpkins are gaining weight, the compost bin is about filled, and back-to-school emails are arriving in our inbox. These immediate concerns fill our days and it's easy to ignore the darkening future. My own parenthood seems to have heightened my fears of the yearly droughts and wildfires, of political instability and of global warfare, to name a few. This sense of existential threat becomes numbed, though, by all the activity of summer Community life. And I do take some comfort living in a house that has stood nearly 140 years. Will it remain standing another century? Will our children be able to tell that tale? For now, the most important thing is eating green beans out of the garden, or riding bicycles around the block, or playing in the sprinkler with Anja.

Showing Up at the Bike Cave

By Daniel Sandborn

I started showing up at the Bike Cave around spring 2022 after coming to Duluth for graduate school from my home in the Sierra Nevada. Moving across the country was difficult, a task made still harder by the isolation of the pandemic. Rebuilding my social network was made much easier by the wonderful folks at the Bike Cave.

On a chilly spring afternoon immediately upon my arrival, I was put to work building, fixing, disassembling, cleaning, chatting, helping, teaching, learning... The need for volunteer help was and is immense, and everybody there was sure to make me feel appreciated. The Bike Cave proved to be a singularly egalitarian space, where the strengths and weaknesses of all combined to form a powerful force for two-wheeled empowerment. It was the perfect place for a bike nerd



The steadfast Bike Cave volunteers: Daniel, Ken, Isaac, Chelsea, and Drew

and grad student far from home. As that first wonderful summer wore on, I settled in as a frequent patron and volunteer. My fellow mechanics became my friends.

In winter, I found that chilly basement workshop to be a warm, welcoming community as we worked on recovering from the chaos of the year, and preparing for the next. Come spring, I found that the knowledge and friendships I found over winter at the Bike Cave served me well under the onslaught of Duluthians eager for summer. There is a special joy in working with and for a community, even in as humble a way as fixing flat tires and squeaky brakes. The happiness in a person's eyes when they ride away is great, but it's nothing compared to their smile when they return, just looking for a friendly place.

The Bike Cave has taught me, above all, that a community only works when people show up. Won't you join us too?

Daniel Sandborn spends his time thinking about bicycling and carbon cycling as a graduate Oceanographer at the University of Minnesota.

Current Hours

Dorothy Day House

12:00-7pm Tuesday, Thursday, Saturday

Olive Branch

9am-8pm Wednesday, Friday, Sunday

Bike Cave

1-5 pm Wednesday & Sunday
(April- October)

Chelsea formatting the newsletter

Stepping On Up is a community-wide effort to end unsheltered homelessness. Partners are moving quickly to create new emergency and long-term housing that is designed to provide people a deep level of services and a pathway to stability. This is an all-in effort, with nonprofits, city and county government, faith communities and businesses all playing a part. Peace UCC and Our Savior's Lutheran recently voted to move forward with plans to develop housing in unused portions of their buildings. To find out more about how you or your faith community can get involved visit steppingonupduluth.org

Dorothy Day House
1712 Jefferson Street
Duluth, MN 55812
(218) 724-2054

Bike Cave
1712 Jefferson Street
Basement/Backyard
(218) 302-5523

Olive Branch
1614 Jefferson Street
Duluth, MN 55812

**Loaves & Fishes Housing INC OR
Hannah House**
1705 Jefferson Street

Current Needs:

- Eggs (home raised is ok!)
- Socks (adult small sizes)
- Men's underwear (not white, medium and large)
- Nitrile gloves for Bike Cave (S, M, L)
- Laundry detergent
- Butter
- Winter coats, gloves, mittens, hats (adult sizes)
- Bus passes
- Gas cards
- Dish soap
- Sugar
- Baby Wipes
- Toilet paper
- Hand warmers

Donations can be delivered to 1614 (Wednesday, Friday, Sunday) or 1712 Jefferson Street (Tuesday, Thursday, Friday). Ask for the volunteer on duty.

Monetary Donations:

Checks can either be made out to *Loaves and Fishes* (NOT tax deductible) for unrestricted needs of the community and our guests, OR to *Loaves and Fishes Housing* (tax deductible) for house maintenance and repair only. Send donations to 1705 Jefferson St, Duluth, MN 55812. Online donations can be made at www.loavesandfishesduluth.com



Volunteer Needs:

- Live-in volunteers at both Olive Branch and Dorothy Day! Come share life and help run the houses. Feel free to contact us at duluthcatholicworker@gmail.com for more info.
- Plumbers, electricians and carpenters to assist with small projects around our four old houses.
- Volunteers with trucks or trailers to help occasionally with dump runs, donation deliveries and helping guests move into new apartments.
- Meal angels to bring a prepared meal for 12-15 people once a month.
- Volunteers to help cover house duty shifts at both Olive Branch and Dorothy Day

For more information or to update your mailing address please email us at duluthcatholicworker@gmail.com

Who We Are:

Loaves and Fishes is a community of people inspired by Dorothy Day and the Catholic Worker movement to build "a new society within the shell of the old." We believe in a world that is abundant with resources and love, and that there is enough for everyone if we share. As a community we offer family-style hospitality to people experiencing homelessness; operate a no-cost neighborhood bicycle shop to promote shared economics; organize with our neighbors to protect everyone's right to housing; and study and practice nonviolence in our interpersonal relationships and in our politics. Loaves and Fishes is entirely volunteer-run and receives no government funding.

Current live-in members of Loaves and Fishes Community are: Drew Anderson, Shelly Bruecken, Chelsea Froemke, Gloria Gunther, Maryn Hakes, Tone Lanzillo, Shannon Loehrer, David McComas-Bussa, Anne Schepers, and Kate Young. Many other people are part of our community as volunteers, donors, meal providers and advocates.



Dave, Chelsea, & Gloria move out the old Olive Branch fridge

Solar panels were installed on the Hannah House roof last fall

Lead line replacement at Bread and Roses this summer

Setting shed foundation

Alahna & Mark Engebretson inspecting the shed roof

Gutter installation & shed siding

Loaves & Fishes Housing INC Board Report

By Jeff Corey

This spring I wrapped up service with the Loaves & Fishes Housing Inc. board of directors. My connection to Loaves and Fishes began when my wife Michele Flatau and I moved to Duluth 28 years ago to be part of Loaves and Fishes. While living as L&F community members for two years I met an amazing circle of community supporters (many of whom remain good friends today) and began many of the hobbies I still enjoy today—gardening, food preserving, cross country skiing, exploring our trails, and canoe camping. About a year into our time there, our oldest son, Cedar, was born on the 2nd floor of Dorothy Day House. Last month Cedar and his band performed at the Loaves & Fishes block party—it is heartening to see these connections continue.

It was at Loaves and Fishes that I became affiliated with Northern Communities Land Trust (NCLT) because the community decided to put the land under the Loaves & Fishes houses into the Trust. After leaving Loaves & Fishes, I went to work for NCLT (which morphed into One Roof Community Housing) where I have worked the past 25 years.

Loaves and Fishes community has helped hundreds of guests over the years, and it has also been a fantastic magnet/training/connecting place for many in the Duluth

area. Serving on the board was an easy decision after experiencing all of the good the community does.

Donna Howard and Joel Kilgour approached me about helping start Loaves & Fishes Housing Inc. as a means to make improvements and ensure ongoing maintenance of the Loaves & Fishes homes about 10 years ago. It has been very gratifying to see the improvements made to the four Loaves and Fishes homes during that time and to see the board evolve in partnership with the community to become adept at raising funds and planning and completing projects in the homes. Particularly in the past few years with roofs replaced on three of the homes, major renovation projects completed at Dorothy Day and Olive Branch, and countless smaller projects completed—all so that the homes can provide housing and community for folks who otherwise would be on the street or in a shelter. In the past year, the completion of the Olive Branch bathroom and kitchen renovations and the roof replacement and solar panel installation at Hannah House have been major highlights.

I am grateful to my colleagues on the board and its committees, to Loaves and Fishes community members, to our many donors, and to our foundation grantors for all the contributions that have made the work possible. Amazing service and healing happen in these homes. Life-changing relationships begin in these homes. It has been a gift for me to participate in the work of Loaves and Fishes through board service.



Anne, Dave, Gloria, Maryn, Shannon, Shelly, Gavia, Drew Tone, Kate, Alahna, Chelsea