

Statement of Welcome and Affirmation

The Alliance of Baptists in 2004 adopted a [Statement on Same Sex Marriage](#) that affirms our support for the *rights of all citizens to full marriage equality*. Since that time, we have witnessed many changes in our world and our communities. We have joined together to create additional statements and to boldly address the injustices perpetrated on queer* and trans** folk by power structures: social, ecclesial, political, and interpersonal alike.

Today, we once again gather, in person and in word, to *hold ourselves accountable for equity, collegiality, and diversity*.¹ We gather as queer and trans folk, as allies, as individuals whose lives represent countless sexual, gender, racial, ethnic, economic, variously-abled, and additionally intertwined and intersectional identities.

We gather to pursue God's justice.

We gather in mourning for and in solidarity with clergy and religiously-employed folks who are in the closet to maintain their employment, who are continually forced to choose between living into their full identity and losing the livelihood that simultaneously gives and drains their lives.

We gather with the understanding that by fully affirming all sexual orientations and gender identities, by refusing to hide anyone's light, by utilizing the gifts for ministry that come with the entirety of our neighbors' individual identities and orientations, we move closer to God who is the Divine source of all life.

We gather knowing that human life is a journey in continuing discernment and self-naming, and we validate and affirm the power that comes in naming one's self without restriction or retribution by the power structures attempting to control the narrative of queer and trans folk.

We gather with intention to center, make visible, and make heard *all* marginalized people who are Black and Brown, immigrant, poor, differently-abled and especially those in the queer and trans community, the Church, and society-at-large who must daily defend their own identities.

We gather to affirm all persons at all stages in this journey, particularly persons of sexual and gender minorities who are too often wounded, ignored, and/or oppressed at personal and societal levels throughout our world, including in communities of faith.

¹ Item #9 in the [Alliance Mission Statement](#) adopted 1997

Thus, in our gathering, we reaffirm the freedom of the *church to shape its own life and mission, call its own leadership, and ordain whom it perceives as gifted for ministry*,² inclusive of the queer and trans members of God's family.

The Alliance of Baptists celebrates and reaffirms those *wounded and ignored by the church* and society, not the least of these being the beloved members of the queer and trans community.

We are queer and trans. We are allies. We are lay and clergy. We are partners in mission. We are everyone. We are the Alliance. We are Baptists.

* *queer*: The most common use of *queer* is as an all-encompassing term inclusive of anyone who lives outside of heterosexual and gender-conforming norms. So *queer* is often used to mean lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and so on. But *queer* also has a more radical meaning, especially in academic literature, as a term that challenges the notion that sexual and gender experiences can be neatly categorized and understood in the fixed, static, and scientifically driven manner we have typically attempted to use in describing these aspects of human experience.

** *trans* or *transgender*: People whose psychological and spiritual sense of gender differs from the social and cultural expectations attached to the biological/physical sex characteristics with which they were born (i.e., their "sex assigned at birth"; see above). Terms sometimes used to denote a transgender person's experience are "male-to-female" (MTF) and "female-to-male" (FTM). It is important to note that the general preference is for use of the adjective form of *transgender* or *trans* to describe a person's gender identity, rather than to use the term as a noun (e.g., saying, "He is a transgender man," rather than, "He is a transgender" or "He is transgendered"). It is not preferable to use the term with an added "-ed" ("transgendered"). At the time of this writing, the general preference is shifting toward the simple term *trans* rather than *transgender*.

² Item #2 in the [Alliance Covenant](#) adopted 1987.