

RESOURCES FOR 2SLGBTQ+ CHRISTIAN TEENS



Created by **Living Skies Region**
an **Affirming Ministry** of
the **United Church of Canada**

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WELCOME

We're so glad you're here and that you found this toolkit. We want you to know we see you, we support you, and we affirm you. No matter how you ended up here or where you are in this journey, God loves you!

This is a toolkit. We want you to have as many resources and tools to turn to as possible. All of these tools are to affirm, support, and love you. Not everything in the toolkit will be relevant to where you are right now. Feel free to skip over the sections you don't find helpful. You can always come back to them later! **Keep in mind that the information may change as time goes on and that language is always evolving.**

This resource has been adapted by Living Skies YAYAC (Youth & Young Adult Community) in the United Church of Canada from our friends at the Reconciling Ministries Network in the United States.

This toolkit mainly uses the term **"2SLGBTQ+ community."** Other resources may use terms like LGBT+, LGBTQ+, LGBTQIA+, or "queer community." These generally refer to the same community. Because language is always evolving, simple definitions or terms may not capture everyone's real experience.

This is not a how-to-guide. These are tools for you to explore your identity, ask questions about yourself and faith, and ultimately become more confident in your own skin.

We wholeheartedly believe that you are created in the beloved image of God. You are not separated from God because of your identity. Your identity is on purpose! As you move forward we want to remind you of a few things:

- Be patient with yourself.
- Everyone needs something different at different stages of self-acceptance.
- There's no right time or right way to be yourself. This is a guide, not a rulebook.



WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE 2SLGBTQ+?

Do you think you might be 2SLGBTQ+? That's great! Discovering who you are is part of growing up and living. We know it can feel like a big task to know who you are, so we're here to help. Below are some resources for you.

As you go, remember: there's no right way or right time to be yourself. There's only knowing who you are today and being open to waking up and knowing more about yourself tomorrow.

Let's begin by reminding ourselves that our identities are more complex than we might realize. You are so much more than any one label, and that's worth celebrating.

2SLGBTQIA+ STANDS FOR:

- 2S** Two-Spirit
- L** Lesbian
- G** Gay
- B** Bisexual
- T** Transgender
- Q** Queer
- I** Intersex
- A** Asexual
- +** All of the identities that fall under the nuances of the above terms

Key things to remember:

- You do not have to claim a specific label to be a part of the 2SLGBTQ+ community.
- Your chosen label might change as you discover more of who you are.
- Your labels don't define or describe the fullness of your identity. They are simply one beautiful part of what makes you amazing!



LET'S TALK ABOUT GENDER

Two terms that come up a lot when we talk about gender diversity are sex and gender.

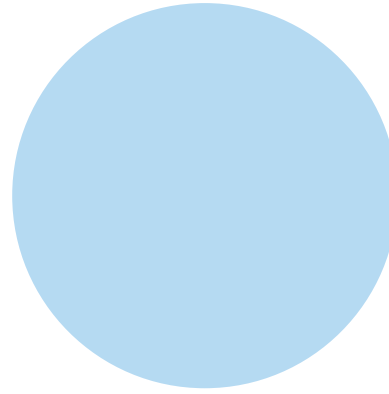
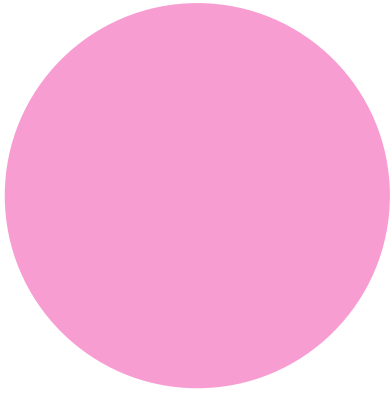
When we use the term **sex**, we're talking about a medical term that refers to genetic, biological, hormonal, and/or physical characteristics. This includes genitalia. All of these are used to assign someone as male, female, or intersex at birth.

When we use the term **gender**, we're talking about a socially constructed way to categorize people in an effort to explain the world around us. Think of the idea that girls should wear pink and boys should wear blue. Society built and reinforces those ideas. Other examples you might find are based around what chores or jobs women or men are expected to do. As we learn about gender identity, it's important to know that our gender is not determined by our sex.

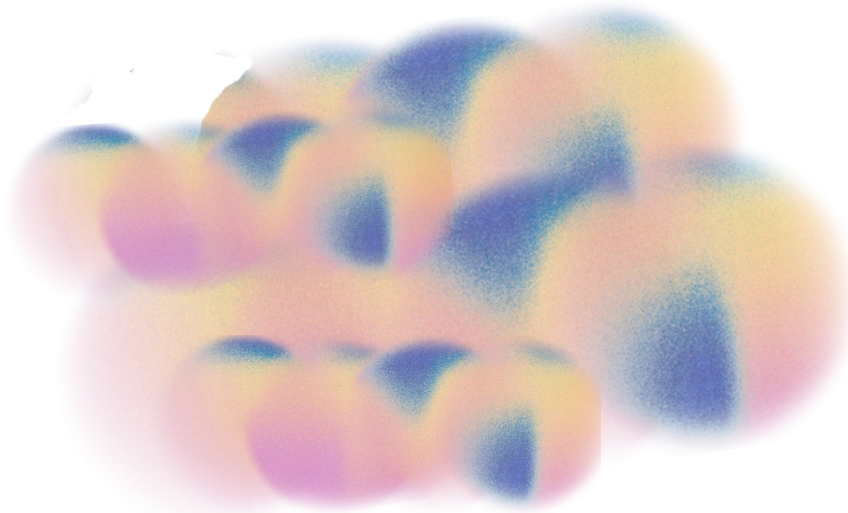
If a person's gender matches what they are assigned at birth, they are **cisgender**. If a person's gender does not match the sex they were assigned at birth, they are **transgender** and/or **non-binary**. Some Indigenous people who have a spiritual and gender identity outside of male or female may identify with the umbrella term **Two Spirit** (see more resources on page 9). Some Two Spirit people consider themselves part of the 2SLGBTQ+ community, while some do not.



The **gender binary** is the idea that there are only two fixed genders, those being female and male.



But the gender spectrum can look a lot more like this:



SOME QUESTIONS TO ASK YOURSELF IF YOU'RE QUESTIONING YOUR GENDER:

- How do you feel about the gender you were assigned at birth?
- Do the clothes you wear align with how you want the world to see you?
- Are there clothes, accessories, or hairstyles that are “only for boys” or “only for girls” but that you want to try?
- When someone addresses you with a gendered term like “son” or “daughter,” how does that make you feel?
- If there were no societal expectations or judgments, how would you feel most comfortable expressing yourself through what you wear?

LET'S TALK ABOUT NAMES AND PRONOUNS

Names and pronouns are an important part of our identities. Most transgender people change their name and start using new pronouns as part of their transition. For example, a trans woman may come out and ask her loved ones to refer to her as she/her.

Many non-binary people decide to use they/them pronouns because they/them is considered gender neutral. Some people also use what are called **neopronouns**. Neopronouns are pronouns like xe/xem or ze/hir. Some people use more than one set of pronouns, like he/they or someone who uses any pronouns like she/he/they

People, trans or cisgender, may change their names for a variety of reasons. Even people in the Bible like Abraham, Sarah, and Paul changed their names!

If you want to use a new name or different pronouns, you are allowed to try things out. If it sticks, that's great! If it doesn't, that's okay too - you were open to exploring yourself more and understanding your identity, and that takes courage. You don't have to tell everyone you know unless you want to.

If you're changing your name/pronouns, you can use phrases like:

- "I'm trying out using they/them pronouns and I would appreciate it if you'd use them for me moving forward."
- "I now go by (name). Could you please make that change on our class list?"

You can correct the people around you if they use the wrong pronouns for you if you feel safe doing so. If you want more support or want to learn more about pronouns, check out the links below.

[Learn more about pronouns](#) by MyPronouns

[Inclusive language](#) by MyPronouns

[How to They/Them](#) (book) by Stuart Getty

[Why are pronouns important?](#) by Getty

[Why my pronouns matter](#) by CBC News



LET'S TALK ABOUT SEXUAL ORIENTATION

Sexual orientation or **sexuality** describes who we are attracted to. You may also hear the term **romantic orientation**. Sexual orientation describes who we are attracted to sexually, and romantic orientation describes who we are attracted to romantically. Most people have the same romantic and sexual orientation (though some do not!), and include both of these orientations in the word “sexuality.”

If you are questioning your sexuality, it is important to know that you do not need to have all the answers right away. You also do **not** need to date someone of the same or opposite gender to know whether or not you are attracted to them.

Some questions to ask if you're questioning your sexual orientation:

- Who have you had crushes on in the past? How did those crushes make you feel?
- If you imagine your future in a romantic relationship with someone else, what gender are they?
- Do you have the desire to be in a romantic relationship someday?

You may not know all the answers to these questions yet, but they can be a helpful starting point to explore who you really are. You are a beautifully complex individual. There are countless things that make up the bigger picture of who you are. No matter the labels or no labels at all, you are loved, celebrated, and created in the image of a loving Creator. You are enough and worthy of love!



If you are questioning your gender identity, sexuality, or just want to know more, you can look through these links to hear from 2SLGBTQ+ voices and their experiences finding their identities:

[What does Two Spirit mean?](#)

[Ma-Nee Chacaby talks about Two Spirit identities](#)

[I think I might be lesbian](#)

[I think I might be gay](#)

[I think I might be bisexual or pansexual](#)

[I think I might be transgender.](#)

[How do I know I'm non-binary?](#)

[What does intersex mean?](#)

[I think I might be asexual](#)

[Aromantic FAQ](#)



2SLGBTQ+ AND FAITH

Can I be a 2SLGBTQ+ Christian?

Well, the short answer is: YES, you can be both 2SLGBTQ+ and Christian! God rejoices in who you are, exactly as you are! You are a beloved child of God. We believe that God is love (1 John 4:16), and that you are a reflection of God's love. God is at work making unique, beautiful things in the world, and that is evident through you and your life.

In fact, there are countless people around the world who are both 2SLGBTQ+ and Christian. They include leaders in The United Church of Canada like past moderators the Very Rev. Gary Paterson and the Very Rev. Jordan Cantwell; ministers serving in local churches; youth ministers, choir directors, Sunday School teachers, lay leaders, and chairs of church boards and councils. 2SLGBTQ+ people have always been a part of the Christian story and have had a massive impact on our faith.

You're not a contradiction. You're a complete and multifaceted person, just like everyone else. Living out faith and identity can look very different for everyone. Sometimes we need affirmation over and over and to hear it from a lot of different people. Many 2SLGBTQ+ Christians have a life's worth of negative messaging to overcome, so that makes sense. We're here to be one of those voices of affirmation.

Even if we know that God is love, it can sometimes be difficult to feel like God loves us. So much of Christianity has claimed that 2SLGBTQ+ people are living in sin or not living as God would want them. So, what do we do with all of that noise?



WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY ABOUT BEING 2SLGBTQ+?

The Bible actually doesn't say much about being queer. It certainly doesn't mention opposition to same-sex marriages or being a transgender person. In fact, it also doesn't say much about heterosexual marriages or being cisgender, the way we understand these concepts today.

The Church has not been a loving place to 2SLGBTQ+ communities for most of its modern existence, and this has been backed by misinterpretation of scripture. There are six phrases from scripture often cherry-picked to try and prove God's disapproval of 2SLGBTQ+ people, and these are commonly called the "clobber passages."



Like all scripture, the "clobber passages" have to be read in context. A lot of scripture can be taken out of context to say something that God never meant. The clobber passages have been misinterpreted, read through our contemporary lens and not from the perspective of the people living 2,000 - 4000 years ago. When you look at the historical contexts and social cultures of scripture, the clobber passages didn't describe what same-sex relationships and identities are today. The cultural context tells us that these scriptures were condemning the practice of wielding abusive power over others: a theme that keeps popping up in scripture.

The anti-2SLGBTQ+ interpretations of these scriptures have been popularized since 1946 with the release of a new Bible translation, where the term "homosexual" incorrectly entered the Bible in English for the first time. This new interpretation has been divisive and painful for many people for 80 years now, but God's enduring message of love is eternal.

The Bible also has scripture that can be interpreted as being in favour of 2SLGBTQ+ communities! The Bible depicts many different kinds of people and different kinds of love in a positive light. This includes people and love which may be considered queer if they lived in our context today. Most importantly, the Bible emphasizes God's unconditional love for all of us.

LINK: [LGBTQ Affirming Scripture](#)

It can be hard to focus on your Christian journey and on your growth as an 2SLGBTQ+ person when Christian communities misinterpret God to be discriminatory and displeased. We know these voices can be really loud.



But we also want you to know that you aren't alone. There are also really loud voices fighting back, co-creating a more loving and Christ-like world where 2SLGBTQ+ people can flourish. The United Church of Canada is one of these voices. Some others include:

- Justin Lee, who wrote [The Bible and Homosexuality](#) and started [gaychristian.net](#), which contains a variety of resources for 2SLGBTQ+ Christians and their families.
- Jeff Chu, author of [Does Jesus Really Love Me?](#) and co-founder of the [Evolving Faith](#) community.
- Kittridge Cherry, an author and retired minister whose website [qspirit.net](#) offers many resources and recommendations for books with 2SLGBTQ+ Christian themes in a variety of genres.
- The Student Christian Movement of Canada, who provide [queer Christian resources](#) amongst other social justice initiatives.
- [Queer Theology](#), a podcast that provides many resources like books and workshops on their website.

CAN I BE 2SLGBTQ+ AND BELONG TO THE UNITED CHURCH OF CANADA?



The short answer is YES! The United Church of Canada seeks to be as welcoming and open as Jesus was, regardless of age, race, class, gender, orientation, identity, or ability. In 1988, our General Council (the national decision making body of the church) made a decision that ALL people regardless of sexual orientation can be full members as well as ministers in the United Church.

In 2012, language in this ruling was updated to explicitly include people of all gender identities, and in 2025 the United Church of Canada offered an [official apology to 2S and LGBTQIA+ People and Communities](#). ***It is important to our denomination that all of God's people have full inclusion in every aspect of church life.***

Not all United Churches are the same, but many communities of faith have gone through a process to become “Affirming” congregations – this means that they have done a lot of work to consider what it means to be public, intentional and explicit about their welcome of all people. Watch for the Affirming logo on church websites and buildings if you are looking for an affirming congregation, and check out Affirm United for more information.



You can find an Affirming congregation near you here: <https://www.affirmunited.com/affirming>

To learn more about the history of the UCC and 2SLGBTQ+ inclusion, read about it here: [Gender, Sexuality and Orientation](#)

MENTAL & SPIRITUAL HEALTH

You're an important part of God's story of love. But it can be hard to believe that God treasures you if your community doesn't feel loving. We know the Church and the world are not perfect. There's no excuse for bigotry. We are deeply sorry for how the Church and the world are not yet ready for you. We hope we can create a more loving and just world for all people, including you!

In North America, the season we now know as Pride commemorates the start of a movement: a riot over injustices facing the queer and trans communities of New York City. It's part of our history to fight for each other, to stand with each other, and to speak up. Fighting injustice is hard work. Just living with injustice is hard work. It can be overwhelming, frightening, and saddening, especially at times when Two Spirit and LGBTQ+ people are under threat.

No matter where you are in this journey, your mental health is important. It's vital to take care of yourself because you matter.

Loving ourselves can be a difficult task sometimes. We know there are spaces that don't always show us the love and acceptance we crave and deserve. It can be even more difficult and scary if you live in a place with laws against the Two Spirit and LGBTQ+ community. You are doing amazing things to love and advocate for yourself. The small steps always add up, and reading this guide is one of those steps. Exploring your identity on your own can feel overwhelming. If you are in a space where you feel like no one else understands, remember there are others out there who do.

Remember there are online affirming communities created with you in mind. Remember there will be a day where you will be able to fully choose who you are and how you choose to live. Groups and organizations like [The Trevor Project](#) and [It Gets Better Canada](#) are here to support you. You are not alone.

There are many resources online to help you navigate any season. You are worthy to be seen, heard, and unconditionally loved, and sometimes we need extra support to make that happen. Often that just means reaching out to a friend or trusted adult but sometimes we need to reach out to a professional. A counselor or therapist could be a great guide on your journey of healing and growth.

- Make sure that your counselor or therapist is 2SLGBTQ+ affirming before you start working with them. Note that [conversion therapy is illegal in Canada](#), and any therapist who says that you can be “healed” from being your true self is not trustworthy.

You can also seek help without parental involvement. Some people aren’t comfortable with a parent being involved with their mental health needs, especially if they’re just beginning to explore their 2SLGBTQ+ identities. Hopefully you can find a loving adult to share with, but you do have rights to patient privacy.

It can be really hard to talk about mental health. If you are thinking about suicide, we strongly encourage you to reach out to one of the resources below. There are people there ready to help you immediately.

Here are some quick numbers to call or text

- [Kids Help Phone](#) – text “CONNECT” to 686868 or dial 1-800-668-6868
- [LGBT Youth Line](#) – Dial 1-800-268-9688, Text 647-694-4275, or live chat at their website www.youthline.ca (Ontario only)
- [Translifeline](#) call (877) 330-6366
- [It Gets Better Canada](#) - Contains a list of helplines and resources for each province and territory.

You can read more about 2SLGBTQ+ healthcare here: [LGBTQ+ Inclusive Healthcare in Canada](#)

COMING OUT

No matter where you are in your journey, your story is yours.

There is no one else that you are required to tell. You do not have to share anything you do not want to share, even if someone has made it clear that they will accept you. Your journey is still yours to share and tell when and if you want.

So, what does it mean to “come out”? Coming out (or “coming out of the closet”) refers to the process that people who are 2SLGBTQ+ go through as they share their identity openly with other people. Coming out is extremely personal, and it looks different for everyone. For some people it’s easy, and for others it’s difficult. Coming out is often framed as a single large event, where everyone a person knows finds out they’re queer. In reality, coming out is often ongoing. A person may come out to some people but not others. Different people will have different reactions. Not coming out doesn’t mean you’re living a less brave or authentic life.

If you do decide to come out to someone, it’s natural to be nervous. Some very normal questions include: *Will they still love me? Will they kick me out? Will they make me talk with someone? Will they think I’m wrong or “confused”? Will things change between us?*

While we hope the only thing you receive from your loved ones is unconditional support, even our loved ones are only human. Sometimes they disappoint us, even if they have good intentions.

What you deserve to hear is: *Great! Tell me more. I love you! I’m excited for you! How can I support you? What do you need from me?*

But they may not be there yet. So it's important for you to make a plan.

Here are some resources to help you consider what you might want and need. Remember it should be your choice about when and what to share with your loved one/s.

[**Coming Out to Your Parents**](#) by Strong Family Alliance

[**The Coming Out Handbook**](#) by The Trevor Project

[**How Do I Come Out?**](#) by EGALE Canada



RESOURCES TO SHARE WITH LOVED ONES

If you are in space to share more with those you love and support you, take a look at some of these resources listed below. These are materials that can help people find ways to learn more, better understand you, and help create a supportive environment for all 2SLGBTQ+ individuals.

Remember, you are not alone and we are here to support you.

Good materials to share with those who want to journey with you:

- Egale Canada [**Resources for Adults Supporting 2SLGBTQ+ Youth**](#)
- [**PFLAG Canada**](#)
- [**How to Support LGBTQ+ Children**](#)
- [**Parenting Transgender Children: A Guide to Keeping Your Family Strong by Strong Family Alliance**](#) (book)
- [**Unconditional: A Guide to Loving and Supporting Your LGBTQ Child by Telaina Eriksen**](#) (book)

WHEN YOU'RE LOOKING FOR RESOURCES

Thanks to the internet, our world is more connected than ever. This makes it easy to find information, but it's just as easy to find **misinformation** and **disinformation**.

When you are looking for resources online, prioritize reliable sources. A reliable source should **always** be willing to share where they got their information from. You should be able to find the same information in multiple places

WHAT ABOUT AI?

Generative AI has become increasingly popular, and many people have turned to places like ChatGPT, Character.ai or similar chatbots for a variety of purposes. We strongly advise **against** using AI to find resources or support for mental health.



Generative AI finds information from all corners of the internet. This includes both reliable and unreliable sources. Unlike a person, AI cannot discern what is reliable. AI also lacks context, especially when it comes to a topic that may be divisive, such as the acceptance of 2SLGBTQ+ people in the church. Mental health professionals have also found generative AI sources to reinforce bias and encourage delusional and suicidal thinking when users have sought mental health advice. You can read more here: [AI and Mental Health in Canada](#)

WHAT TO WATCH OUT FOR ONLINE

Social media allows individuals to gain large followings to share information and interact closely with their audience. Social media also allows online communities to form. A safe person or community online should **not**:

- **Make you feel badly about yourself**
- **Make you feel like you have to share private/personal information**
- **Encourage you to do something that can harm you.**

If you have a question for someone online, you should be able to ask it publicly in a place like the comments section or through an email address connected to a reliable organization. An adult you have never met should not be contacting you online in private messages.

If you see a source or person online who uses the phrase “LGB community” or “LGB without T,” they are excluding transgender, non-binary, and two-spirit peoples. Gender diverse peoples have always been part of the queer community.



The most important thing is to use discernment. If you're unsure about a person or source, you can ask your friends or a trusted adult their opinion. You deserve access to safe and reliable information and resources.

CONNECT FURTHER

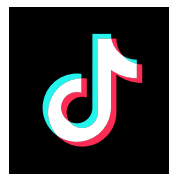
Living Skies Region Youth and Young Adult Ministries shares the information in this toolkit as a resource to guide you as we all learn and grow together. We have included resources we believe to be helpful for our journey together.

This is a working document. We'll add resources as they're developed, and if you come across something that would be great to add please be in touch at livingskiesyaya@united-church.ca

If you have additional questions or you're looking for something that isn't here, let us know! Thanks so much for being here and for being YOU.



Isyayac



yayac.22



GLOSSARY

Aromantic - A person who experiences little to no romantic forms of attraction to others.

AI/Artificial intelligence - the capability of computer systems or algorithms to imitate intelligent human behavior

Asexual - A person who does not experience sexual attraction, and/or who has little to no interest in sexual activity. When used as an umbrella term, it encompasses identities reflecting a range of experiences and degrees of interest in sexual intimacy, including demisexual and graysexual.

Bisexual - A person who experiences attraction to both people of their own gender and people of gender different from their own.

Cisgender - A person whose gender identity corresponds with what is socially expected based on their sex assigned at birth (e.g. A person who was assigned male at birth and identifies as a man).

Gay - A person who experiences attraction to people of the same gender as themselves. It can be used by individuals of any gender but is often used to refer specifically to men who are attracted to the same or similar genders.

Generative AI - artificial intelligence that is capable of generating new content in response to a submitted prompt by learning from a large reference database of examples

Indigiqueer (or Indigequeer) - Coined by Plains Cree filmmaker TJ Cuthand, this contemporary term is used to describe the unique experience of living at the intersection of Indigeneity and queerness. It is becoming an increasingly popular term, particularly among younger LGBTQI Indigenous people who do not necessarily identify as Two Spirit.

Intersectionality - A term coined by Kimberlé Crenshaw that describes the ways race, gender, sexuality, ability, and other aspects of identity intersect to shape one's experience of privilege and/or discrimination.

Intersex - A person whose chromosomal, hormonal, or anatomical sex characteristics fall outside of the conventional classifications of male or female.

Lesbian - A person who identifies as either woman or nonbinary and who experiences attraction to the same or similar genders.

Non-binary - A person who experiences their gender as not exclusively man or woman. When used as an umbrella term, it encompasses identities reflecting a range of gender experiences, including agender and genderfluid.

Pansexual - A person who experiences sexual and/or romantic attraction to others, regardless of gender.

Queer - An umbrella term that may variously describe 2SLGBTQI communities, one's relationship to a particular community, or an individual identity. It can denote same-gender attraction or reflect more complex dynamics between one's sex, gender, and attraction experiences.

Transgender - A person whose gender identity does not correspond with what is socially expected based on their sex assigned at birth. It can be used as an umbrella term to refer to a range of gender identities and experiences.

Two Spirit - An umbrella term for the many Indigenous traditional identities forcefully suppressed by colonization. The term honours the fluid and diverse nature of gender and attraction and its connection to community and spirituality. An individual may choose to use this term instead of, or in addition to, identifying as LGBTQI.

*All definitions are subject to change as times evolve. People in different times and places may use different words to describe themselves or their identity. A few sentences can't give full insight into everyone's identities and experiences.

All definitions are from EGALE Canada with the exception of AI and Generative AI which are from the Merriam-Webster dictionary