

## **Knox College – Policies and Procedures**

Policy: Use of Language

Applies to: All students, faculty, and instructors

Approval: Academic Committee of the Board (3 October 2022)

### **Principles and Commitments – Mutual Respect**

- In all matters we shall strive to respect one another in our use of language in teaching, conversation, worship, and writing.
- In matters of race, gender, gender identity, and sexual orientation we shall seek to respect the wishes of each other in how we will address each other in teaching, conversation, worship, and writing.
- We shall recognise and respect the metaphorical nature of language that speaks of God and will strive to use a variety of ways of addressing God and speaking of God which reflects the variety of descriptors of God in Scripture.
- In public worship we shall strive to address God and speak of God in ways that are sensitive to diverse experiences of God and the world within our community.
- In public worship we shall strive not to address God only in a male gendered way, but rather in a diversity of ways both gendered and non-gendered that reflect the anthropomorphic limitation of human language for the Divine.
- We shall respect one another in our use of language for God in personal prayer and piety.

### **Policy:**

Following the principles of respect above, it is the policy of Knox College that inclusive language is to be used in teaching, public worship, class presentations, written assignments, and official communications. This means that:

- When referring to human beings in general, gender exclusive terms should be avoided or, in the case of pronouns, the sentence re-written so that gender-exclusive pronouns become unnecessary.
- Where possible will give preference to using terms such as spouse and sibling rather than gendered versions of family relationships.
- Images of and metaphors for God should reflect the variety found in Scripture
- A diminished use of masculine pronouns with reference to God, where grammatically feasible, in order to refrain from encouraging a false male image of God.”
- Where the integrity of an historical text requires that exclusive language be retained, commentary on those texts should use inclusive terminology.
- Any language which demeans or stereotypes others because of race, ethnicity, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, class, mental and physical characteristics, or age is unacceptable.

## **Glossary of Terms that are important to understand re: Gender diversity and sexual orientation :**

(The explanation below is an edited form of the Presbyterian Church USA brochure “Well Chosen Words” that can be found at <https://www.presbyterianmission.org/resource/well-chosen-words/> accessed September 13, 2022. This glossary represents an incomplete list of human experience and description.)

- a. **Asexuality** is the lack of sexual attraction to others, or low or absent interest in or desire for sexual activity. Some people who identify as asexual call themselves “ace.”
- b. **Gender-fluid** | According to the Oxford English Dictionary, a person who does not identify with a single fixed gender; or of relating to a person having or expressing a fluid or unfixed gender identity.
- c. **Gender identity** | One’s innermost concept of self as male, female, a blend of both or neither - how individuals perceive themselves and what they call themselves. A person’s gender identity can be the same or different from their sex assigned at birth.
- d. **Gender-nonconforming** | A broad term referring to people who do not conform to the traditional expectations of their gender, or whose gender expression does not fit neatly into a category.
- e. **Genderqueer** | People who typically reject notions of static categories of gender and embrace a fluidity of gender identity and often, though not always, sexual orientation. People who identify as gender queer may see themselves as being both male and female, neither male nor female or as falling completely outside these categories.
- f. **Gender transition** | The process by which some people strive to more closely align their internal knowledge of gender with their outward appearance. Some people socially transition, whereby they might begin dressing, using names and pronouns and/or be socially recognized as another gender. Others undergo physical transitions in which they modify their bodies through medical interventions.
- g. **Homophobia** | The fear and hatred of or discomfort with people who are attracted to members of the same sex in any expressed form.
- h. **Intersex** | An umbrella term used to describe a wide range of natural bodily variations. In some cases, these traits are visible at birth, and in others, they are not apparent until puberty. Some chromosomal variations of this type may not be physically apparent at all.
- i. **Lesbian** | Someone who identifies as a woman who is emotionally, romantically or sexually attracted to other women.
- j. **LGBTQIA+** | An acronym for “lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex and Asexual.” The plus sign refers to the expansive nature of the term to continually include all identities. The number 2 is sometimes added to identify the North American Indigenous Culture understanding of “Two Spirited” persons.
- k. **Living openly** | A state in which LGBTQIA+ people are comfortably out about their sexual orientation or gender identity - where and when it feels appropriate to them.
- l. **Nonbinary** | An adjective describing a person who does not identify exclusively as a man or a woman. Nonbinary people may identify as being both a man and a woman, somewhere in between or as falling completely outside these categories. While many also identify as transgender, not all nonbinary people do.

- m. **Outing** | Exposing someone's identity to others without their permission. Outing someone can have serious repercussions on employment, economic stability, personal safety, mental and emotional health, and religious or family situations.
- n. **Pansexual** | Describes someone who has the potential for emotional, romantic or sexual attraction to people of any gender, though not necessarily simultaneously, in the same way or to the same degree.
- o. **Queer** | A term people often use to express fluid identities and orientations. Often used interchangeably with LGBTQIA+.
- p. **Questioning** | A term used to describe people who are in the process of exploring their sexual orientation or gender identity.
- q. **Same-gender-loving** | A term some prefer to use instead of lesbian, gay or bisexual to express attraction to and love of people of the same gender. This term has its roots in the Black community and is generally used specifically by Black people.
- r. **Saposexual** | An orientation referring to people who are physically, emotionally, or mentally attracted based on expressions of intelligence
- s. **Sexual orientation** | An inherent or immutable, enduring emotional, romantic or sexual attraction to other people.
- t. **Transgender** | An umbrella term for people whose gender identity and/or expression is different from cultural expectations based on the sex they were assigned at birth. Being transgender does not imply any specific sexual orientation. Therefore, transgender people may identify as straight, gay, lesbian, bisexual, etc. The term also does not refer to nor imply any specific surgical procedures.
- u. **Transphobia** | The fear and hatred of, or discomfort with, transgender people in any expressed form.