

Church of England to Host Public Ceremonies to Affirm Transgender Worshipers

Transgender members of the 85-million-strong Anglican faith community will now have the support of the Church of England, after it released guidelines on Tuesday for ceremonies to welcome them.

The Church of England, where the Anglican tradition originated, has in recent years moved towards greater acceptance of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT+) people, including addressing homophobic bullying in schools.

The public ceremonies aim to affirm the new identity of trans worshippers, according to guidelines published on the Church's website on Tuesday.

Julian Henderson, head of the committee that produced the guidelines, said the decision was "rooted in scripture".

The new guidelines say ministers should address trans members by their chosen name, though some traditionalists in the Church of England argue that gender cannot be changed as it is assigned by God.

The wider Anglican body has been divided since 2003 over arguments about gender and sexuality between liberal member churches in the West and their conservative counterparts, mostly in Africa.

Though the Church voted against blessing same-sex marriages last year, Canada's Anglican Church has been doing so since 2002. The Episcopal Church, its United States branch, ordained Gene Robinson as its first gay bishop in 2003.

The new guidance was devised after the legislative body of the

Church voted last year to welcome transgender people into the Anglican community.

Only about 14 percent of Britons now identify themselves as Church of England, the British Social Attitudes survey found this year, down from 31 percent 15 years ago. {eo}

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