

I See You: A Reflection on Trans Visibility Day

Rev Dr Urzula Glienecke (she/her)

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Just yesterday somewhere in the depths of the social media I saw a conversation between a mother and her trans son. It went something like this:

- Happy belated Trans Visibility Day!
- Yeah mom, it was last week
- 🙄
- Mom, that's not how you use this emoji!
- I wanted to say "I see you, son!"

It moved me to tears. I don't know if it was a conversation that really happened, but that doesn't really matter. What matters is that it could have been and (according to the famous German author Erich Kästner) that makes it true enough. I have learned that being seen for who one truly is, being listened to can be one of the most important and profound human experiences. So, here's a message to say "I see you!" I have also been listening to stories: real life-stories of real non-binary and transgender people about their joy, suffering, identity.



On the 31st of March we celebrated Trans Visibility Day at the Augustine United Church. There were agnostics, atheists, shamans, pagans, Christians and those who "hadn't been to church since they were 10" in glorious, colourful, celebrating, vulnerable and powerful diversity.

I gathered impressions, prayers and reflections by some of the people who were there. Here they are:

Maxwell who led the event:

“Vigil: Transgender Day of Visibility 31 March 2023

Transgender Day of Visibility was started in 2009 by trans activist, Rachel Crandall from Michigan as a reaction to the lack of LGBTQI+ recognition of transgender people. It is observed on the 31 March every year.

Thankfully, transgender people are becoming more recognised as members of the LGBTQI+ community. This has been an important shift. The advent of Trans Pride events throughout the UK is a sign of the increasing visibility of the trans community.

This year, for the first time ‘Our Tribe’, the LGBTQI+ ministry at AUC that works in partnership with Metropolitan Community Church, decided to celebrate the day.

So, on Friday we held a Vigil. We worked hard to invite as many people as possible – and it paid off, there were nearly 60 people who came to the event, including many trans young people.

We invited speakers from the cross-section of the trans community to tell us why trans visibility is important in the world today and to reflect on what inspired them about the trans community. Having visible role models and out trans people who can inspire is vital to enable people of all ages to recognise themselves and be able to come out. Solidarity in the trans community is important along with supporting one another. Listening to the speakers was very moving and hearing the lived experience of trans people and our allies was inspiring and encouraging.

We had the opportunity to take part several rituals.

We decorated hearts and stars to hang on light trees.

We dropped stones into a pool of water.

We wrote our names on canvas, to mark our visibility.

Rev Elder Maxwell Reay offered individual glitter and oil blessings.

All these rituals encouraged us to feel more visible as members of the trans community and as allies.

The Vigil ended with a prayer, written by Lewis.

A little goes a long way – a little love, a little hope, a little joy, and a little glitter!

Anointing

A little goes along way!

Water, Oil, Glitter.

Anoint your heart saying:

Blessed is my heart that can love and be loved unconditionally.

Anoint your body saying:

Blessed is my body that travels each day with you.

Anoint your surroundings saying:

Blessed is this space that it may be a safe haven for all

Anoint those who you love saying:

Blessed are our connections.

Anoint your ministries and work for social justice saying:

Blessed by the spirit through all that we do.

We are all anointed.

Water, oil, glitter

A little goes a long way.

Written by Maxwell Reay for Transgender Day of Visibility
2023

Prayer for Transgender Day of Visibility 2023

Liberating One, you know each one of us by our names.

*Our gender identities are a gift from you, which we
celebrate.*

*You called us out and have enabled us to live a true, whole
life.*

You made us and from our first moment You knew who we are.

*We know we are precious to You and that You care about our
lives.*

*We know that there have been trans, non-binary and gender non-
conforming people throughout history.*

Help us find these ancestors and learn from them.

*Thank You for the trans people who are visible in our society.
Support us in our vulnerability.*

*Let us take Pride in our lives and in the lives of the trans
and non-binary communities.*

We thank you for the freedoms we have in Scotland,

but we know there is still much to do.

Give us hope that we will see our efforts come to fruition.

*We ask that the Gender Recognition Reform Bill will become
Scottish law.*

Give us strength to rebuff the transphobia that we experience all around us.

Give us courage to face the impact of transphobia in our daily lives.

We ask for safety for all trans and non-binary people.

For those who have been hurt or assaulted, we ask for healing of body and mind. Bring us wholeness through Your Love.

For those who battle with discrimination and oppression, bring them endurance for the task ahead.

We have reflected and celebrated our lives and the life of the transgender community.

We ask for peace that is unshakable and hope that will not burn out.

In the name of Wonder, Liberation and Wisdom bring us peace. Amen."

Written by Lewis Reay for Transgender Day of Visibility 2023.

Jo:

"When I was a child I didn't know anyone like me. I thought I was the only one in the whole world. And this deepened my feelings of fear and shame. So one thing I really like about being visible is that I can be a role model to others... and, in a way, help and comfort my younger self".

Christian:

"Maxwell facilitated the meeting and invited some trans people and Fiona to talk about what they find inspiring about

trans/nonbinary and gender non-conforming people and why they feel it's important to be visible. All the speakers were very hopeful and encapsulated the message that trans people are an important part of society, fully loved by God and bring unique perspectives on what it means to be human. Maxwell invited everyone to draw and write on wooden hearts and stars, it could be anything about trans people or the queer community that inspires them or they appreciate, or anything they felt lead to write/draw. There was a whole beautiful array of colours and messages when the hearts and stars were hung on fairy light trees. The whole evening was celebratory and positive, and everyone seemed to really benefit from being there."

It was a joy and a privilege to be there, to listen, to celebrate, to see and to be seen!