

Talking without Microaggressions

Preventing Harm and Providing Welcome for LGBTQ+ People

Pastor Nathan Pratt – February 7, 2026 – Together in Mission – Greater Milwaukee Synod

Agenda

10:00-10:05 – Agenda and Opening Expectations

10:05-10:15 – **Definitions and Misunderstandings**

10:15-10:20 – *Questions?*

10:20-10:30 – **Common Examples and Better Alternatives**

10:30-10:35 – *Questions?*

10:35-10:45 – **Strategies for Intervention**

10:45-10:50 – *Questions?*

10:50-11:10 – **Practicing Scenarios Together**

11:10-11:15 – Closing Commitments and Resources

Opening Expectations

Seeking First to Understand

Listening without Judgment

Respecting Confidentiality

Speaking with Bravery

Focusing on the Topic at Hand

Embracing Teachability

Prioritizing People over Labels

Definitions and Misunderstandings

Overt Discrimination

**direct,
obvious,
and intentional
discrimination
against members of a marginalized group**

Microaggression

indirect,
subtle,
or unintentional
discrimination
against members of a marginalized group

Sex at Birth

DNA and sexual organs

what your body contains

**female (XX), male (XY), intersex (XXY, X, mosaic of XX and XY),
gonadal dysgenesis, adrenal hyperplasia, androgen insensitivity, etc.**

Gender Identity

who you are

not defined by your sex at birth

cisgender, transgender, queer, nonbinary, Two-Spirit, genderfluid, etc.

Sexual Orientation

to whom you are sexually attracted

not necessarily romantic

heterosexual, homosexual, queer, lesbian, gay,
bisexual, pansexual, asexual, demisexual, etc.

Romantic Orientation

to whom you are romantically attracted

not necessarily sexual

heteroromantic, homoromantic, queer, gyneromantic, androromantic,
biromantic, panromantic, aromantic, demiromantic, etc.

Gender Expression

how who you are is presented to the world

appearance, wardrobe, demeanor, etc.

feminine, masculine, queer, androgynous, gender nonconforming,
transfeminine, transmasculine, genderfluid, etc.

LGBTQIA+

Lesbian (orientation)

Gay (umbrella, orientation)

Bisexual (orientation)

Transgender (identity)

Queer/Questioning (umbrella, identity, orientations, expression)

Intersex (sex)

Asexual/Aromantic (orientations)

+ encompassing further gender identities, sexual orientations, romantic orientations, gender expressions, and HIV+ people

“Why can’t the A stand for allies?”

Common Examples and Better Alternatives

Assumptions about Identity and Relationships

“What’s your husband’s name?”

“What’s your spouse’s name?”

“You don’t look gay!”

“I like your outfit!”

Assigning Ambassadorship

“Explain this whole transgender thing.”

“What has your experience been like?”

“Why do people like you watch that RuPaul show all the time?”

“I’ve never seen that show, but I like watching Jeopardy!”

Using Language that Excludes

“You can be our pastor whether you’re a man or a woman.”

“We would welcome anyone with pastoral gifts to serve this congregation.”

“Ladies and gentlemen...” “He or she...” “Brothers and sisters...”

“Friends in Christ...” “They...” “Children of God...”

“I didn’t mean it that way.”

Strategies for Intervention

Respond in the Moment

Be brave and **interrupt**.

“Stop. That language is harmful, and you cannot speak like that.”

If it was **unintentional** and they apologize, empower them.

“It’s going to be okay. Now you know not to say that. In the future, you could...”

If it was **intentional** and they apologize, hold them to it.

“It’s going to be okay. From now on, don’t say that again.”

If it was intentional and they **do not apologize**, set a boundary.

“We cannot tolerate harmful language in this space. You must be silent or go elsewhere.”

Care in the Aftermath

Affirm and **support** the afflicted person.

“I’m so sorry this happened. They shouldn’t have said that. How can I help?”

Follow up in a day or two when they’ve had time to process.

“How are you doing? How can I help?”

Bring the incident to the attention of your **leadership**.

“Something happened last week that wasn’t okay. How can we work to prevent it?”

Respect the potential choice for the afflicted person to go **elsewhere**.

“I understand that this space isn’t safe for you. Could I help you find somewhere else?”

Educate in the Meantime

Start with doing **your own work**.

“What book could I read? What podcast could I listen to? What video could I watch?”

Practice inclusive language on your own, especially if it is unfamiliar.

“I’ll practice using they and them as singular pronouns. I’ll practice saying LGBTQIA+.”

Prioritize inclusive language in **your community**.

“This translation doesn’t use inclusive language. That prayer could be emended.”

Find opportunities to **listen**, to **share**, and to **learn**.

“Could we have an adult forum? Could we have a book study? Could we listen at Pride?”

“I just need LGBTQIA+ people to teach me.”

Practicing Scenarios Together

Scenario #1

A gay couple has been visiting your congregation for a few weeks.

**This is the first week they come to coffee hour,
and you help show them to the fellowship hall.**

**When they get their coffee and treats, to whom and how
do you introduce them to others sitting at an available table?**

Scenario #2

A member of your council has a compassionate heart for the LGBTQIA+ community.

But for the life of her, she just can't say all the letters in the right order.

“LGT-er—LBGQ-um—oh whatever, you know what I mean.”

How can you help her become fluent in language that is welcoming, so that she doesn't come across as disingenuous to queer visitors?

Scenario #3

At an outdoor work day, one of the volunteers (a big donor, let's say) makes a remark about "transgenderism taking over our culture."

No trans person is around, but that language is nonetheless harmful.

How do you respond in the moment?

Closing Commitments and Resources

What is the Next Right Step?

Is this pretty new to you?

The work may be your own understanding.

Are you personally familiar with this?

The work may be in your faith community.

Are you and your community all in on this?

The work may be in your neighborhood.