

Milestones Circle: Sharing Our Lives Now

August 23, 2026: Gender and Gender Identity - What is it and what does it mean to you?

Facilitated by Jeanne Murphy

Opening Words and Chalice Lighting:

We light this chalice, symbol of our purpose to bring more love and justice into the world.

~By Jennifer Gracen

Check in:

Without cross-talk, please state briefly how you are doing now.

Song: "When I Was a Boy," by Dar Williams

<https://music.youtube.com/watch?v=57BwHKcrO5o&si=cGIXyyvxL9Bqhuef>

Verse 1]

I won't forget when Peter Pan
Came to my house, took my hand
I said I was a boy; I'm glad he didn't check
I learned to fly, I learned to fight
I lived a whole life in one night
We saved each other's lives out on the pirate deck

And I remember that night when
I'm leaving a late night with some friends
And I hear somebody tell me it's not safe
Someone should help me
I need to find a nice man to walk me home

When I was a boy
I scared the pants off of my mom
Climbed what I could climb upon
And I don't know how I survived
I guess I knew the tricks that all boys knew
And you can walk me home
But I was a boy too

[Verse 2]

I was a kid that you would like
Just a small boy on her bike
Riding topless, yeah, I never cared who saw

My neighbor came outside to say
"Get your shirt," I said, "No way -
It's the last time. I'm not breaking any law"

And now I'm in this clothing store
And the signs say less is more
More that's tight means more to see
More for them, not more for me
That can't help me climb a tree in ten seconds flat

When I was a boy
See that picture? That was me
Grass-stained shirt and dusty knees

And I know things have gotta change
They got pills to sell
They got implants to put in
They got implants to remove
But I am not forgetting
That I was a boy too

[Verse 3]
And like the woods where I would creep
It's a secret I can keep
Except when I'm tired
'Cept when I'm being caught off guard
And I've had a lonesome, awful day
The conversation finds its way
To catching fireflies out in the backyard

And, and so I tell the man I'm with
About the other life I lived
And I say, "Now you're top gun
I have lost and you have won"
And he says, "Oh no, no, can't you see

When I was a girl
My mom and I we always talked
And I picked flowers everywhere that I walked
And I could always cry
Now even when I'm alone I seldom do
And I have lost some kindness
But I was a girl too.

And you were just like me
And I was just like you.

Reading #1:

Gender refers to the social and cultural roles, behaviors, and expectations associated with being a man or a woman. Gender is based on assumptions that society has formed about what men, women, boys, and girls should be like. Gender Identity is an individual's internal, deeply felt sense of their own gender - such as being a man, a woman, a blend of both, or neither - which may or may not align with the sex assigned to them at birth.

- *From the American Association of University Women website*

Reading #2:

Most of us were raised to believe that gender is a dichotomy: male and female. But underneath this foundational “fact” lies a complexity we’ve been trying to untangle. The modern discourse on transgender people and on gender more broadly has already been elevated beyond duality. But what *is* gender? Rather than having an answer for this basic question, we are left with even more questions. What is a man? What is a woman? And why does this matter?

- *From Nonbinary - Memoirs of Gender and Identity, edited by Micah Rajunov and Scott Duane*

Reading #3

A 2024 study found that major textbooks used by most introductory biology classes in U.S. high schools contain overly simplistic and misleading language when describing sex and gender. This could foster prejudice toward people who don’t fit gender norms, scientists say. The study also turned up problems with how the books taught about traits linked to genes. The textbooks tended to focus on so-called “either/or” traits - discrete genetic characteristics that you either have or you don’t - but such traits are actually rare. Most traits reflect the impact of many different genes, and how those genes interact with the environment.

- *From Science News*

Questions to consider:

1. Does the song “When I Was a Boy” bring up any feelings or ideas for you?
2. When you were growing up, did parents or others have expectations for you based on gender?
3. Is gender an important part of a person’s identity? Why or why not?
4. Are some gender differences inherent?

Meditation/Quiet Reflection: We will take a few minutes in silence to reflect on the readings, and on the questions to consider. If you wish, use the back side of this paper to jot down your thoughts.

Sharing/Listening round our Circle. Choose one or more questions to answer or choose to speak on a related topic. We will first go around our Circle to ensure that everyone gets an equal opportunity to speak. Please be cognizant that this is not the time for “crosstalk.”

Sharing part 2: Thoughts and Questions: You are invited during this time to *verbalize the questions or comments* in your heart and mind that may spark discussion on our monthly theme. Participants may speak in no particular order and respond to each other, respectfully.

Sharing part 3: Possible further information? As time allows, please share your recommendations of books, movies, writers, websites, etc. that offer more on today’s theme.

Check Out: This is the time to share a last word or to make a request of the Circle friends for tangible care from one another.

Closing Words and Extinguishing the Chalice:

Feel that?
Each breath, every inhale, exhale
We are living, breathing, connected.
We are the whole, complete, beautiful selves
that we were born to be.
Feel that?

~ By Gwen Matthews