

The background features a vibrant rainbow gradient from yellow at the top to blue at the bottom. It is decorated with several semi-transparent circles of various sizes and colors (orange, red, blue, purple) and a central white circle. Small white specks are scattered throughout, resembling a starry sky.

Reimagining Imago Dei in our LGBTQ+ Siblings

Laura Zhang Choi

My First Born / 1st Grandchild/ 1st Great-Grandchild



**What is the price we
are willing to pay for
our child's sense of
wholeness?**

**OR Is that what
we're willing to
sacrifice for our own
"rightness?"**

What are you afraid might happen if you choose LOVE instead?



Reimagine Genesis 1

Genesis 1:26-27

26 Then God said, “Let us make humans in our image, according to our likeness, and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over the cattle and over all the wild animals of the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth.”

27 So God created humans in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.

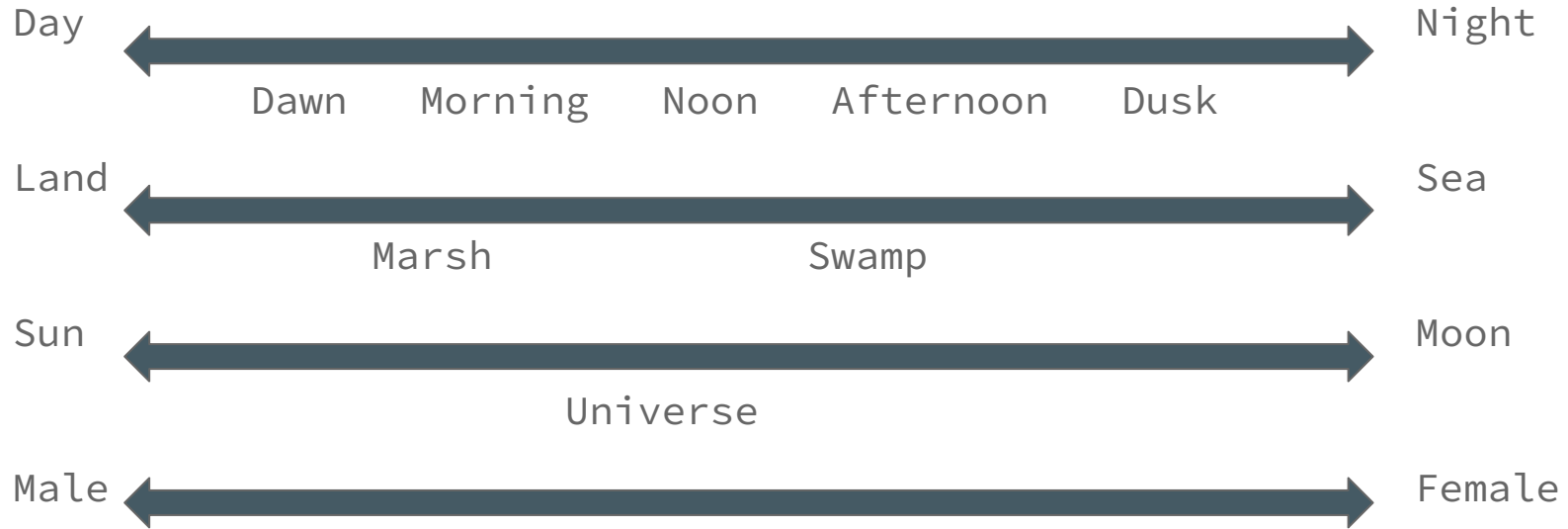
Being created in God’s image, Imago Dei. That’s YOU, ME, each one of us here, just as we are; and EACH of our LGBTQ+ siblings, just as they are. None of us are created to BE sin. All of us are created to be LOVE, as a reflection of God, as Imago Dei.

Namaste: I honor the God in me that is in you. Not polytheistic, but acknowledging one another as the Image of God, whether the other knows it, but honoring the Creator of the one who embodies the very essence of God.

Embodiment: Incarnation.

Created in love, with love, by the One who IS Love. Do not insult the Creator by regarding someone AS sin.

ALL CREATION ON A SPECTRUM... REIMAGINING GENESIS 1



GOD SAW EVERYTHING THAT GOD HAD MADE, AND INDEED, IT WAS VERY GOOD.

ALL CREATION ON A SPECTRUM... REIMAGINING GENESIS 1

Gender: How one identifies oneself **vs.** Presentation



Sexuality: Attraction



Sex: Biological / "As assigned at birth"



3 Distinct Concepts - *the reason and problem of separating these three*

1 | Sex

- ❖ Biological sex: based on genitalia, chromosomes, hormones, primary & secondary sex characteristics
- ❖ Assigned sex at birth, based on what?
- ❖ Binary? Male, female, and ?

2 | Gender

- ❖ One's internal, personal sense of being
- ❖ Socio-cultural construct of roles, behaviours, activities, and attributes
- ❖ Binary vs spectrum
- ❖ Gender identity: internal perception
- ❖ Gender expression: external display

3 | Sexuality

- ❖ One's interest in and attraction to others
- ❖ Sexual orientation vs sexual/intimate behaviors
- ❖ Physical attraction vs romantic/emotional attraction

**Think about when you became aware of
girl/boy expectations about
yourself/others...**

**Is it more important to conform to socially
constructed norms?**

Or to conform to the heart of Christ?

7 Episodes Podcast Series

Radiolab Presents: Gonads plunges into the
mysterious world of human reproduction.

Unlimited

God

- Imagination, creativity
- Infinite love, mercy, grace
 - Wisdom - Isa. 55
 - Inclusion - Jesus
- Beyond boundaries - Jonah
 - Beyond cultures - Babel
- Beyond languages, gender, status
- Beyond our own understanding

Limited

Human

- Language
 - Pronouns, translations, interpretations
 - "Homosexuality" 1946
 - Culture
- Definitive boundaries for "who's in" & "who's out"
- By policies/law/practices

Courageous Reflections/Questions

- What are the boundaries defined by my culture? By society? By my church/church culture? By my family?
- Do they increase my capacity to practice LOVE or do they keep “outsiders out and insiders in?”
- Rules/Policies/Laws – Who benefits/included? Who is harmed/excluded? Who decides? Who’s at the table?
- What has been my pattern when something new I learned no longer fits my paradigm?

Intersectionality w/ People of Color

- **Lack of representation and visibility in American history, media representation, etc.**
- **Racism, internalized racism, anxiety, hopelessness**
- **Lack of representation and MISrepresentation cause others to FEAR or DISMISS people of color**
- **Know their stories.**
- **Get close. Get proximity. Get to know their stories.**

Intersection of LGBTQ+ & Mental Health

45% Youth seriously considered attempting suicide last year

55% LGBTQ+ Youth of Color / “Cultural Tax”

40% ALL youth exp. Housing instability/homelessness id as LGBTQ+

- 50% Having JUST ONE affirming adult decreases suicide attempts



Anecdotal stats: 60-75% LGBTQ+ Students

Stats from The Trevor Project, National Network for Youth

Tayliss' Stories

**National Coming
Out Day 2015/16?**

Safe Space

**Coming Out Day
April 2017**

Mental Health Crisis

**Trump and
Twitter**

Learning/Unlearning

Community

Activism

Run for School
Board

NJ Transgender Student Policies

NJ BOE Policy #5756

*District site → Board of Ed → Policies → Search 5756/Transgender Student Policy

NJDOE Guidance

Definitions - Approach - Confidentiality - Records - Activities - ENTITLED to Facilities

LGBTQ+ Support and Resources

LOTS of Facebook Support Groups, most private - Serendipitydodah, New Jersey Parents of Transgender Children, sub-groups and resources

Inclusion of LGBTQ+ stories and achievements, passed 2019

Recent controversies over revised Health & PE Standards, homo/transphobic backlash and book bans, revised 2020, delayed implementation

Triggers of Depression/Anxiety

Name/Pronouns

Fear of Rejection

**Fear of Housing
Insecurity**

**Inaccessible
Facilities**

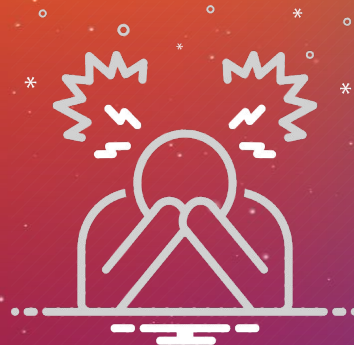
Bullying

Fear of Violence

**Fear of Loss - family,
relationships, safety**

**Homophobia/
Transphobia -
jokes, language**

**Exclusive
policies**



**Fear of Rejection
by GOD**

**Physical
changes/Puberty**

Book Bans

Lack of access to care

Undo Harm

Correct Systems of Oppression

Name/Pronouns - honor the Imago Dei Practice Inclusion

SUPPORT / LOVE

Goal: Affirmation, NOT Acceptance

*Explicit/Expressive support - pins, flags, stickers, frames, etc.

Believe them

Be OPEN to learning, changing, growing.

Challenge unjust policies

Mutual Transformation

Learn their stories

Help find their people

Share their stories

Find YOUR People

Mental Healthcare:
Therapy / Medication

Err on the Side of LOVE

We all make errors in our theology; you and me both.
So my recommendation is to err on the side of love.

Why?

Because... God is not doctrine. God is not denomination.
God is not war. God is not law. God is not hate. God is
not hell... God is Love.

Brian Zahnd
THEHAPPYGIVERS.COM

I'd rather err on the side of
loving too much than loving
too little; being radically
inclusive than exclusive;
being too merciful than too
righteous.

BE AWARE:

**NOT a linear straight
path. Obstacles ahead.**

(but you need not walk it alone).

Trust God / Your Kid / Yourself / Community

Trust the Spirit to show you next step

My Recent Sermons

August 28, 2022 - Old Greenwich Presbyterian Church,
scripture reading and sermon begins around 15:30 mark,

<https://youtu.be/z5EtTuVhmlk>

May 22, 2022 - Kingston Presbyterian Church,
scripture/sermon @ 22:00 mark,

<https://youtu.be/IJVUhf17ILc>

February 27, 2022, Transfiguration Sunday - First Presbyterian of Easton
Scripture/Sermon @ 24:30 mark.

<https://youtu.be/fcCB1C7-Pjc>

The Atlantic article I was interviewed about challenges of raising young adults:

https://www.theatlantic.com/family/archive/2022/09/parenting-advice-adult-children/671304/?fbclid=IwAR3G05fzPhvgTK802h8YMMr8-EBPN1YW_Pkmf5CFpz6uLfBMH5pfEIz183w

- LGBTQ+ Affirming Books
- More Light Presbyterians
 - Mission: "Following the risen Christ, and seeking to make the Church a true community of hospitality, the mission of More Light Presbyterians is to work for the full participation of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, and asexual (LGBTQIA+) people in the life, ministry and witness of the Presbyterian Church (USA) and in society."
 - Become an individual More Light member!
 - Become a More Light Church!
- Covenant Network of Presbyterians
 - Mission: "Confident in God's hopeful future and grateful for the ever-widening welcome of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), the Covenant Network of Presbyterians seeks an equity still not fully realized for LGBTQIA+ people in church and society, by
 - Engaging the church to invite all of God's children into safe and welcoming congregational spaces of affirmation, healing, dignity and purpose;
 - Educating the church to expand our welcome of LGBTQIA+ people, to affirm their gifts for ordained office, and to uphold marriage equality for all; and
 - Equipping the church to bear witness to justice through advocacy and activism at the international, national and local church levels; speaking a prophetic word in anxious and divided times; and standing with others in fighting hate and oppression against any of God's children.
 - The Covenant Network of Presbyterians calls the church to bear a unified witness to generous hospitality and faithful justice."
 - Become or Find a Covenant Church!

SO MANY RESOURCES!

- Austen Hartke, author of Transforming and [Transmission Ministry Collective](#)
 - [Video series and Bible Studies](#)
- Father Patrick Cheng, Episcopalian priest, lawyer, theologian, professor, <http://www.patrickcheng.net/>
- Mama Bears and ALL the RESOURCES! <https://www.realmamabears.org/resources>
- Susan and Robert Cottrell, <https://www.freedhearts.org/>
- Celebrating LGBTQ+ Youth of Faith, <https://www.belovedarise.org/>
- Queer Theology, <https://www.queertheology.com/>
- So many many more...

Thanks for having me!



Do you have any questions?
Continuing conversations...

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