

# QUEST CHURCH

## Q+ MINISTRY ASSESSMENT FRAMEWORK

### Reframing & Reclaiming Inclusion as A Taskforce for Cultivating 'Queer' Celebration & Advocacy in the Church

**The Purpose.** Q+, a ministry of Quest Church, seeks to create a more faithful Christianity, helping to move the leadership and people of Quest to faithfully and biblically reconcile with their LGBTQIA+ siblings in Christ; working in partnership with the Reconciliation Ministry and partnership organizations, this team will create resources, curate conversations, and provide training and leadership development opportunities throughout the year that centers and celebrates the diversity and intersectionality of LGBTQIA+ gender identity and sexuality.

**The Goal.** The goal of Q+ is to develop collaborative and authentic relationships that center our collective voices and strengthen a commitment to repairing broken systems together through bearing witness to the complex realities of living out a truly intersectional movement towards diversity, reconciliation, equity, and justice—so all people can thrive and reach their full, God-given potential.

## QUEERPLUS (Q+)

Rev. Dr. Patrick S. Cheng, in his book “Radical Love: An Introduction to Queer Theology,” defines the word Queer as: (1) an Umbrella Term, (2) an Transgressive Action, and (3) an Erasing Boundaries.

Queer, historically used in a negative way, is a term used socially by LGBTQIA+ people to name non-normative sexualities and gender identities within our community. When concerning categories of sexuality and gender identity, Queerism is disruptive to the status quo and seeks to reclaim and hold—in a proud embrace—“all that is transgressive or opposed to societal norms.” Finally, Queer is to interrogate, erase, and deconstruct the boundaries of essentialistic and heteronormative attitudes and biases concerning the categories of sexuality and gender identity.

QueerPlus (Q+), while acknowledging the reclaiming of the word Queer in theological, academic, and social contexts, note with a plus (“+”) the spaces of tension where the sounding of the word still carries a legacy of harm and exclusionary practice for many.

## LGBTQIA+: SEXUALITY, & GENDER IDENTITY

The acronym LGBTQIA+ is used to describe the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Gender (Queer), Intersex, and A-Sexual Community. LGBA, refers to issues related to sexuality, while TQI relates to issues concerning Gender Identity.

**Sexuality** is a person's enduring physical, romantic, and/or emotional attraction to another person.

**Gender Identity** specifically speaks to the internal experience and naming of a person's gender. It can correspond to or be completely different from the sex a person was assigned to at birth; it can also be in a state of “fluidity.”

Case in point: Transgender is a persons gender identity, it is never to be assumed that a Transgender person identifies as being “gay.” While Transgender persons can be considered lesbian, gay, bisexual, or fluid, it is completely normal for persons identifying as Transgender to describe themselves as a “straight” or “heterosexual” person when romantically involved with someone of the opposite sex.

## INCLUSION, BELONGING, AND RECONCILIATION

**Inclusion** can be legislated. It is the acknowledgment of difference within a community context that makes room. Inclusion is representational and embodies a posture of 'joining' from within the community that bends towards diversity, equity, and justice for the otherwise excluded, untapped, and marginalized minority groups already present in the church.

Conformity clauses out the window, **Belonging** is a radical and compassionate celebration of difference, shifting towards the affirmation of presence. "You make us better," is the posture of belonging. It is the redemptive work of Christ in a community context, where now included members who have joined themselves to the identity of the church, bringing with them gifts, treasure, and resources, now fully and authentically participate at the table and benefit from the collective work of the church. Orchestrated by the Spirit of God, belonging cannot be legislated—it must be collectively embodied.

*"According to Scripture—to be human is to be loved, to be created by God, and to be radically dependent on God for all things. God loves us because we have been invited to live with God and with one another. It's not what we are that counts, it's whose we are that counts. It matters who we belong to. The Christian community should be the place that affirms that the world is empty or radically different when you are not there. To belong is to be missed--there is a longing to have you there."*

*~John Swinton, "From Inclusion to Belonging," Lecture at SPU January 12, 2012.*

Belonging and Inclusion are prerequisites of **Reconciliation**. Reconciliation is the work of reparation; it is *"the ongoing spiritual process, involving forgiveness, repentance, and justice that transforms broken relationships and systems to reflect God's original intention for all creation to flourish"*

*~Brenda Salter McNeil, Roadmap to Reconciliation, pg.22).*



Towards our purpose and our goal of creating an intersectional movement toward a more loving, visible, and faithful Christianity—one that supports the flourishing of LGBTQIA+ people in the Church, throughout our community, our city, and our world—Q+ has adopted four pillars for our framework that will speak to how we will approach ministry-work at Quest and beyond: Inclusion, Belonging, Repair, and Healing:

### I. Cultivating Spaces for Inclusion & Belonging

Quest and her beloved LGBTQIA+ members are now joined together by a common purpose, a shared vision, *"To be disciples of Jesus who leave a multiplying impact for the flourishing of our community, our city, and our world,"* and a shared mission, *"to love people wholeheartedly, love God boldly, and make disciples faithfully."*

*Q+, therefore, seeks to build spaces for community and Queer+ visibility in order to cultivate spaces for their thriving at Quest Church. We will accomplish this by creating spaces for Queer+ joy and celebration, developing content for LGBTQIA+ discipleship and spirituality, empowering the voices and leadership of LGBTQIA+ members and friends of Quest Church, connecting our church to helpful resources to grow and deepen their understanding of Queer present days realities, and presenting possibilities for our community to have an active and consistently present posture in the broader LGBTQIA+ community.*

## II. Cultivating Spaces for Repair & Healing

Together, as a people who are “*complicit in a struggle towards liberation*” (“*Accomplice*,” defined by *Indigenous Action, 2014, para 5*), we seek to cultivate spaces that move us beyond words, to action—to be a people who put our bodies on the line to dismantle harmful structures of power, in the church and the world. Our “struggle” together is nested within our 5 core values: Soul, Community, Reconciliation, Justice & Compassion, and Local and Global Presence:

Together, we will build and foster relationships through our partnerships that extend our community beyond the walls of Quest Church; we will cultivate spaces to publically live out our devotion, in collaboration with the broader LGBTQIA+ Christian community and faith organizations; we will do the work to be a community that is poured out continuously to see justice and mercy at work in the lives of our LGBTQIA+ siblings; we will curate spaces for truth-telling, repentance, and forgiveness that center LGBTQIA+ narrative and brings public awareness to the harmful realities of the Church’s exclusion of their Q+ siblings; and, we will provide consultation and ongoing support for planned training and leadership development opportunities throughout the year for our church, for the individual, and for other organizations.



The following questions will be used by Q+ to evaluate annually how well the broader church, through efforts and support of the team, is living into its ongoing commitment to advocacy and reconciliation.

- Is Quest inviting our neighboring churches to join us on our journey to affirm, advocate for, and cultivate spaces of healing for LGBTQIA+ persons in the Church?
- Is Quest collaborating with local academic institutions to provide internship opportunities for LGBTQIA+ students, or those called to multi-ministry affirming of persons identifying as LGBTQIA+?
- Is Quest partnering with churches/organizations in the exchange of training and resources to develop and equip leaders to cultivate spaces of belonging and advocacy for LGBTQIA+ persons?

**Q+ Leadership Team Assessment Questions:**

The following questions will be used by the Q+ leadership team to quarterly evaluate how well the ministry is living into its ongoing commitment to celebration and advocacy for individuals identifying as LGBTQIA+.

- In what ways is Q+ working with the staff, deacons, elders, etc., to make spaces/experiences at Quest more inclusive and celebratory of LGBTQIA+ people?
- Is Q+ working with Quest leadership to create ‘courageous spaces’ at Quest to dive into the complex conversations of restoration for LGBTQIA+ realities NOT present at Quest? How?
- What are the systems behind these intersectional-related issues?
- How is Q+ working with Quest leadership to repair or make a dent in these systems as a Christian community?

Example:

	Desired Result	Community Indicator
Quest Church	Biblical Literacy	Participation in inclusive curriculum and discussions.
	LGBTQIA+ Affirming Statement	Transparency in church documentation and bi-laws/website.
	LGBTQIA+ Visibility and Power	LGBTQIA+ involvement and influence in leadership.
	Advocacy & Reconciliation	Presence “in” the margins—doing the work to restore.

**Measuring Q+ Ministry Progress:**

To assess the overall progress of Quest Church in engaging the work of belonging and advocacy for LGBTQIA+ persons, the following questions should be answered annually by the pastors, staff, deacons, and elder board:

**Welcome:** Has Quest Church created statements of welcome in its publications, newsletters, website to proclaim its affirmation of LGBTQIA+ persons? Is Quest Church taking intentional steps towards transgender welcome?

**Language:** Has Quest Church provided written guidelines for inclusive language for persons who participate in Sunday worship, who contribute to the church’s newsletter and website, and who steward other programming at the church (including ministers, lay leaders, guest speakers, and readers of announcements and readings)?

**Policy:** Are the policies of Quest Church, both, for staff and the broader community, inclusive of LGBTQIA+ persons with sensitivity to the various intersections of LGBTQIA+ gender identities and expressions?

**Presence:** Among those represented, is Quest Church actively creating space and possibilities for the authentic expressions, emotional straightforwardness, values, and abilities of LGBTQIA+ contribution and potential in a way that bears witness *“to the reality of our collective commitment to diversity, reconciliation, equity, and justice.”*

**Power:** Presence is to power, as power is to access. “Are the positions and structures of leadership (staff, elder board, and committees. etc.) occupied and influenced by the perspective and gifts of LGBTQIA+ persons?”

**Celebration:** Is Quest Church a place where LGBTQIA+ persons can thrive—spiritually and emotionally. Are we considering all of the diverse ways LGBTQIA+ and their families show up to and are present in, Sunday worship and community events?

**Advocacy:** Are LGBTQIA+ issues part of our worship at Quest Church? Do we hold space as a congregation to lament and wrestle, through our prayers and sermons, alongside the broader LGBTQIA+ community, for issues facing LGBTQIA+ persons in our community, city, and world? Do we hold vigil for LGBTQIA+ events such as Pride, Transgender Day of Remembrance, and National Coming Out Day, regularly including a diversity of families, sexual orientation, and gender identities in stories, readings, and other worship elements in a non-tokenized fashion? Are we showing action towards LGBTQIA+ justice? Are we building relationships with LGBTQIA+ groups and organizations in our area, using our resources and influence to support as needed?

**Purposeful Narrative:** “How are the stories of LGBTQIA+ persons being incorporated into Quest Church’s overarching history? How are these streams flowing together into one story moving forward?”

**Agency:** Are we hoarders? If Quest Church has established a solid foundation for LGBTQIA+ belonging and advocacy, what are the lessons we can share publicly with congregations and universities in our network to support those in process?

## **TERM DEFINITIONS (IN ALPHABETICAL ORDER)**

The following term definitions are not meant to be an exhaustive list. Instead, it should be considered as a helpful place to begin the journey toward understanding LGBTQIA+ identity and sexuality. Additionally, this list aims to enhance and not replace the ‘term definitions’ found in the Reconciliation Ministry Framework. For anyone engaging in the work of reconciliation and justice, we highly recommend getting acclimated to, both, the framework and terms as a supplement to Q+ ministry efforts. You can find the reconciliation ministry framework on the Quest Church website: [seattlequest.org/connect/reconciliation](http://seattlequest.org/connect/reconciliation).

**Androgynous** - partly male and partly female in appearance; of indeterminate sex.

**Asexual** - Someone who has little or no interest in sexual contact with other people. Also known as a person who is ‘Aromantic’.

**Binary** - The concept of dividing sex or gender into two clear categories (sex as male/female, gender as masculine/feminine).

**Bisexual** - A person who is sexually attracted not exclusively to people of one particular gender group.

**Cisgender** - A person whose personal and gender identity aligns with the sex they were assigned at birth.

**Gay** - A sexual orientation that describes a person who is emotionally or sexually attracted to people of their own gender; commonly used to describe men (the term ‘same-gender-loving’ is sometimes used among Black “gay” men as a way of sexually identifying).

**Gender** - Gender is different from Sexual Orientation. Gender is a socially constructed system of classification that ascribes qualities of masculinity and femininity to people. Gender characteristics can change over time and are different between cultures. Source: UC Berkeley, Center for Educational Justice & Community Engagement

**Gender(Queer)** - Indicative of theologies in which sexuality and gender are discussed in ways that reject static, conventional categories of gender and embrace fluid ideas of gender (and often sexual orientation). They are persons whose gender identity can be both and, neither or, or a combination of both male and female (Also includes Gender-Neutral or Expansive).

**Gender equality** - The different behaviors, aspirations, and needs of women and men are considered, valued, and favored equally. It does not mean that women and men have to become the same, but that their rights, responsibilities, and opportunities will not depend on whether they are born male or female.

**Gender Expression** - "The way we communicate our gender to others through such things as clothing, hairstyles, and mannerisms. It also includes how individuals, communities and society perceive, interact with, and try to shape our gender." Source: [genderspectrum.org/articles/understanding-gender](https://genderspectrum.org/articles/understanding-gender)

**Gender Identity** - "Gender identity is our internal experience and naming of our gender. It can correspond to or differ from the sex we were assigned at birth." Source: [genderspectrum.org/articles/understanding-gender](https://genderspectrum.org/articles/understanding-gender)

**Heteronormativity** - A cultural bias that considers heterosexuality (being straight) the norm.

**Heterosexism** – Discrimination or prejudice against gay people on the assumption that heterosexuality is the normal sexual orientation: issues of sexism and heterosexism.

**Heterosexual Privilege** - Refers to the societal advantages that heterosexuals get which LGBTQIA+ people don't.

**Intersectionality** - "A tool for analysis that takes into account the simultaneously experienced multiple social locations, identities, and institutions that shape individual and collective experience within hierarchically structured systems of power and privilege." Source: Grace Ji-Sun Kim and Susan M. Shaw, *Intersectional Theology*, pg.2

**Intersex** - Persons born with sex characteristics such as genitals or chromosomes that do not fit the typical definitions of male or female.

**Lesbian** - a woman who is emotionally or sexually attracted to other women.

**LGBTQIA+** - *Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Gender(Queer) or Questioning, Intersex, Asexual/Agender. The plus seeks to be inclusive of the entirety of Queer identity and sexuality (i.e., pansexual, gender-non-conforming, and non-binary)*

**Nonbinary** - An individual who does not identify exclusively as male or female. Also known as an individual who is 'agender'.

**Power/Privilege** - "A societal structure that provides people with more or less influence and conditions for influencing society and their own lives. The opportunities and conditions a person have are related to financial standing, sex, and ethnicity, for example." Source: *Intersectionality Toolkit*

**Questioning** - This is suggestive of a person who is figuring out their sexual orientation or gender identity. Questioning does not mean 'closeted' and neither should it be attributed to a person on the 'down low.'

**Queer** - An umbrella term for anyone who is none cis-gender or heterosexual. The term is also a slur, one that has been reclaimed by many LGBTQIA+ persons and affinity groups (The preferred term to be used in correspondence with LGBTQIA+ people is "LGBTQ+." Please only use Queer when a person has introduced themselves as Gender(Queer) or when referencing QueerPlus).

**QTPOC** - "Queer and/or Trans People of Color." Inclusive reference for people with visibly darker skin such as African Americans, Caribbean Americans, Asian Americans, Japanese, Koreans, Pakistanis, Pacific Islanders, Native Americans, Latinos/Latinas. This term may not be preferred by everyone; therefore, one should ask for preferences when possible.

**Representation** - The fact of including different types of people, for example in movies, politics, or sports, so that all different groups are represented. Source: *Cambridge Dictionary*

**Sex** - Refers to a person's biological status and is typically categorized as male, female, or intersex. There are a number of indicators of biological sex, including sex chromosomes, gonads, internal reproductive organs, and external genitalia.

**Sexuality** - “The components of a person that include their biological sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, sexual practices, etc.” Source: *University of California*

**Sexual Orientation** – How a person’s identity (I am gay), in relation to their gender and behaviors (I am sexually involved with a person of the same gender), align with their attractions (I am attracted to the same gender). This is not always an accepted term among LGBTQIA+ persons and community organizers as it implies “preference” and “choice.”

**Social Gender** - “Inclusive of gender expression, Social Gender includes gender roles and expectations and how society uses those to try to enforce conformity to current gender norms.” Source: [genderspectrum.org/articles/understanding-gender](http://genderspectrum.org/articles/understanding-gender)

**Tokenism** - Making only a perfunctory or symbolic effort to do a particular thing, especially by recruiting a small number of people from under-represented groups in order to give the appearance of full inclusion or diversity.

**Trans** - The overarching umbrella term for various kinds of gender identities in the “**transgender**” community.

**Transgender** - A person whose gender identity differs from the sex they were assigned at birth. You can be transgender without undergoing sex reassignment surgery or hormonal treatment to change their body to match their gender.

**Transexual** - A person whose gender identity differs from the sex they were assigned at birth, AND who takes medical steps such as sex reassignment surgery and hormone therapy to change their body to match their gender.

## RESOURCES:

The resource list below, while not exhaustive, aims to center LGBTQIA+ academia and scholarship in ways that uplift and honor the diverse contributions made towards a positive LGBTQIA+ Biblical witness, one that bears witness to God’s desire for the Church and all human beings to belong and thrive. These resources should be used to help Guide church leadership and the people of Quest, also, as communities of faith and parents in process, towards a theological and Biblically sound witness of inclusion and belonging that creates room for their LGBTQIA+ siblings:

### Historical Context

1. *Walking the Bridgeless Canyon: Repairing the Breach Between the LGBTQ Community and the Church*, Kathy Baldock, Canyonwalker Press, 2014 (Spanish translation available)

### Biblical Examinations (General)

2. *Bible Gender Sexuality: Redefining the Church’s Debate in Same-Sex Relationships*, James V. Brownson, William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2013
3. *God and the Gay Christian: The Biblical Case in Support of Same-Sex Relationships*, Matthew Vines, Convergent Books, 2015
4. *Torn: Rescuing the Gospel from the Gays-Vs-Christian Debate*, by Justin Lee, Jericho Books, NY, 2012
5. *Unnatural: Spiritual Resiliency in Queer Christian Women*, Rachel Murr, Resource Publisher, 2014
6. *Queer Theology: Beyond Apologetics*, Linn Marie Tonstad, Cascade Books, 2018
7. *Scripture, Ethics & Possibility of Same-Sex Relationships*, Karen R. Keen, Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2018
8. *Oriented by Faith: Transforming the Conflict Over Gay Relationships*, Tim Otto, Cascade Books, 2014
9. *UnClobber: Rethinking Our Misuse of the Bible on Homosexuality*, Coby Martin, Westminster John Knox Press, 2016 (Spanish translation available)
10. *What the Bible Really Says About Homosexuality*, Daniel A. Helminiak, Alamo Square Press; Millenium edition, 2000 (Spanish translation available)

### BIPOC Biblical & Theological Examinations

11. *Our Lives Matter: A Womanist Queer Theology*, Pamela R. Lightsey, Pickwick Publications, 2015



12. Rainbow Theology: Bridging Race, Sexuality, and Spirit, Patrick S. Cheng, Seabury Books NY, 2013
13. Does Jesus Really Love Me?: A Gay Christian's Pilgrimage in Search of God in America, Jeff Chu, HarperCollins Publisher, 2013
14. Radical Love: An Introduction to Queer Theology, Patrick S. Cheng, Seabury Books, NY, 2011

#### **Transgender Biblical & Theological Examinations**

15. Transforming: The Bible and the Lives of Transgender Christians, Austen Hartke, Westminster John Knox Press, 2018

#### **Doctrines of Inclusion**

16. The Gospel of Inclusion: Reaching Beyond Religious Fundamentalism to the True of God and Self, Bishop Carlton Pearson, Atria Books: A Division of Simon & Schuster, Inc., 2008
17. Where the Edge Gathers:: Building a Community of Radical Inclusion, Bishop Yvette Flunder, Pilgrim Press, 2005

#### **Parents In Process**

18. Embracing the Journey: A Christian Parents' Blueprint to Loving Your LGBTQ Child, Greg and Lynn McDonald, Howard Books, 2019

#### **Partnership Organizations**

\* Q+ leadership is currently working on a list of partner organizations we work with. We will update our framework once the list is finalized. For questions, please write to: [q-plus@seattlequest.org](mailto:q-plus@seattlequest.org) and a member of our team will be in touch with you.

#### **Human Sexuality, Gender, Class, Abilities, & Race Studies**

19. Sexuality and the Black Church: A Womanist Perspective, Kelly Brown Douglas, Orbis Books, Maryknoll, New York, 1999
20. God, Sex, and Gender: An Introduction, Adrian Thatcher, Wiley-Blackwell Publishing, 2011
21. Ancient Laws and Contemporary Controversies: The Need for Inclusive Biblical Interpretation, Cheryl B Anderson, Oxford University Press; 1st edition, 2009
22. Black Queer Studies: A Critical Anthology, E. Patrick Johnson and Mae G. Henerson, Duke University Press, Durham and London 2005

#### **Intersectionality**

23. Intersectional Theology: An Introductory Guide, Grace Ji-Sun Kim and Susan M. Shaw, Fortress Press 2018
24. Intersectionality Toolkit, The International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer & Intersex (LGBTQI) Youth and Student Organization (IGLYO), 2014

#### **Online Course(s) & Websites**

25. The Biblical Case for LGBTQIA+ Inclusion, Matthew Vines, <https://reformationproject.org/courses/the-biblical-case-for-lgbtq-inclusion/#details>.
26. Redwood Center for Spiritual Care & Education, Karen Keen, <https://www.redwoodspiritualcare.com/>
27. Queer Theology, Father, Shannon TL Kearns and Brian G. Murphy, <https://www.queertheology.com/about/>
28. Transmission Ministry Collective, an online community dedicated to the spiritual care, faith formation, and leadership potential of transgender and gender-expansive Christians, <https://www.transmissionministry.com/>

#### **Documentaries**

29. Pray Away, Ryan Murphy, 2021, Netflix - "Ex-leaders and a survivor of the so-called "conversion therapy" movement speak out about its harm to the LGBTQ+ community and its devastating persistence."
30. 1946 Movie, Daniel Karslake, Jason Ikeler, and Sharon "Rocky" Roggio, "1946 is a revolutionary new film that chronicles how the misuse of a single word changed the course of modern history." (coming soon)

\*For resources relative to the ministry of reconciliation at Quest Church, please review the framework alongside the list of resources compiled and available here: [seattlequest.org/connect/reconciliation](http://seattlequest.org/connect/reconciliation).

**Books I'm Currently vetting (DO NOT INCLUDE IN FRAMEWORK RESOURCE LIST)**

1. The ABC's of LGBT+, Ashley Mardell, Mango, 2016 (For Youth)
2. Gender Identity, Sexuality and Autism: Voices Across the Spectrum, Eva A Mendes and Meredith R Mardney, Jessica Kingsley Publishing, 2019 (Abilities)
3. The Color of Law: A Forgotten History of How Our Government Segregated America, Richard Rothstein, Liveright, 2017