

Frequently Asked Questions

What do the letters LGBTQ mean?

If you are not familiar with the meanings behind LGBTQ, here are some definitions. Many people use other terms they find more comfortable, or no terms at all. Some move from one term to another as they learn more about themselves.

L: Lesbian is a woman who is primarily attracted to other women.

G: Gay refers to men who are attracted to men, but many women use this term as well. It can be a general term meaning anyone attracted to their own gender. If someone identifies as gay, it does not necessarily mean they are in a same-sex relationship; they may just use it to describe their orientation, not their behavior.

B: Bisexual women find themselves attracted to both men and women. This is usually a consistent pattern for their lives, not generally one random episode of same- or opposite-sex attraction.

T: Transgender describes a person whose sense of personal identity and gender does not correspond with their sex at birth.

Q: Queer is becoming more common, and can refer to either sexual orientation or gender identity or both (or neither). It is an umbrella term that covers many different situations.

What is North Star's connection to The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints?

While North Star wholly supports the doctrines and values of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, including principles outlined in "The Family: A Proclamation to the World" and Church teachings regarding gender and the appropriate bounds of sexual expression, it is not affiliated with the Church.

North Star is wholly independent of the Church, does not receive funding or direction from the Church, and site content is the sole responsibility of North Star and/or the authors and should not be interpreted as official statements of Church doctrine, belief, or practice.

Our mission is to serve the greater Latter-day Saint community with issues related to sexual orientation or gender identity, but all views expressed or errors made are the sole responsibility of North Star contributors.

What is North Star's position on “reparative” or “conversion” therapy or other sexual orientation change efforts (SOCE)?

North Star takes no official position on the origin or mutability of homosexual attraction or gender dysphoria but supports all efforts consistent with the gospel that help individuals live in more full harmony with their baptism and temple covenants and attain greater peace, fulfillment, and sense of individual worth. The focus of North Star’s education and support resources is not on changing sexual orientation but rather on helping individuals grow spiritually and in a holistic sense of health and well-being.

North Star does not endorse the idea that everyone should seek professional therapy to address issues related to homosexuality or gender identity, or that any particular therapeutic effort is going to be helpful or effective for everyone, and we do not recommend or endorse any particular form of therapy for addressing sexuality or other mental or emotional health issues.

For those who are looking for therapeutic help, or for mental health professionals looking for resources to help provide ethical therapy for those who desire to live a life in harmony with LDS doctrines and practices, we recommend consulting the “Principles and Practices for Mental-Health Professionals Helping Latter-day Saints Respond to Same-Sex Attractions.” This document of “best practices” was prepared by the Reconciliation and Growth Project, a group of mental-health practitioners who represent diverse perspectives—from LGBT-affirmative to religious conservative—who have worked together to establish a mutually agreed-upon, inclusive and comprehensive therapeutic approach.

When individuals affiliated with North Star speak about their personal experiences with reconciling their same-sex attraction with their personal beliefs, which we welcome them to do, it must be understood that these individuals are speaking for themselves, of their own personal experiences. They are not propounding an “official,” proscribed method of dealing with these issues. This is true even of individuals in prominent leadership positions. We recognize that different approaches will work better for different people, and that North Star can best serve its audience by bringing together the widest possible diversity of experiences within the umbrella of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

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Is North Star an “Ex-Gay” organization?

No. North Star takes no official position on the origin or mutability of homosexual attraction or gender dysphoria, understands that individuals do not choose their sexuality, and respects the difficult choices individuals make in how they respond to their sexuality.

As fundamental principle, North Star does not claim or promote the idea that an individual has to eliminate homosexual attractions in order to be happy or healthy person or a faithful Latter-day Saint. The message and position of North Star is only that it is possible for those who experience same-sex attraction or gender dysphoria (i.e., transgender individuals) to live in joy and harmony within our covenants, values, and beliefs as members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

What are your beliefs about using terms such as same-sex attraction, LGBTQ, etc.?

How people incorporate their attractions or their general experience of sexuality into a self-identity is a very personal matter around which North Star takes no official position. There are individuals in the North Star community who prefer a variety of terms and self-identities. We respect the preferences of those who do not identify as LGBTQ as much as we respect the choice of those who do identify as such.

Sexuality and romantic love, including sexual identity, are much more layered, complex, and diverse than often understood or acknowledged in popular culture. North Star understands the importance of distinguishing between feelings of attraction, sexual orientation, sexual and romantic behavior, and labels or identity. We also understand that there is wide variability among both individuals’ experience of sexuality and their personal sense of identity.

Is North Star a therapeutic organization?

No. North Star is a peer-led, lay religious support ministry. Our focus is to support members as they seek to align their lives with gospel principles and as disciples of Jesus Christ. At our annual conference or other events we may hold workshops on general themes of spirituality, engagement with the Church, and health and wellness, but those workshops focus on holistic well-being and personal growth and on helping individuals find their own answers, not sexual orientation change efforts (SOCE). North Star has never advocated any specific therapy, including reparative or “conversion” therapy.

Does North Star endorse or promote “mixed-orientation marriages” (heterosexual marriage in which one partner experiences homosexual attraction)? Don’t Church leaders discourage heterosexual marriage for those who experience same-sex attraction?

North Star supports the doctrines and teachings of the Church related to the appropriate bounds of sexual expression as outlined in “The Family: A Proclamation to the World.” We do not encourage or discourage marriage generally. We believe the individuals must carefully and prayerfully make that decision for themselves.

In the context of individuals who experience homosexual attraction, Church leaders have suggested that “Marriage should not be viewed as a therapeutic step to solve problems such as homosexual inclinations or practices” (Gordon B. Hinckley, “Reverence and Morality,” *Ensign*, May 1987). Elder Jeffrey R. Holland stated, “We are all thrilled when some who struggle with these feelings are able to marry, raise children, and achieve family happiness,” but he also noted that we should “recognize that marriage is not an all-purpose solution” and that “same-gender attractions run deep, and trying to force a heterosexual relationship is not likely to change them.” Some attempts at marriage, he said, “have resulted in broken hearts and broken homes” (“Helping Those Who Struggle with Same-Gender Attraction,” *Ensign*, October 2007).

Elder Dallin H. Oaks has said, “persons who have cleansed themselves of any transgression and who have shown their ability to deal with these feelings or inclinations and put them in the background, and feel a great attraction for a daughter of God and therefore desire to enter marriage and have children and enjoy the blessings of eternity—that’s a situation when marriage would be appropriate.”

Finally, Elder D. Todd Christofferson said, "To declare the fundamental truths relative to marriage and family is not to overlook or diminish the sacrifices and successes of those for whom the ideal is not a present reality. Some of you are denied the blessing of marriage for reasons including... same-sex attraction... Even so, everyone has gifts; everyone has talents; everyone can contribute to the unfolding of the divine plan in each generation. Much that is good, much that is essential—even sometimes all that is necessary for now—can be achieved in less than ideal circumstances. So many of you are doing your very best. And when you who bear the heaviest burdens of mortality stand up in defense of God's plan to exalt His children, we are all ready to march. With confidence we testify that the Atonement of Jesus Christ has anticipated and, in the end, will compensate all deprivation and loss for those who turn to Him. No one is predestined to receive less than all that the Father has for His children." ("Why Marriage, Why Family," General Conference, April 2015)

We agree with and support this wide range of counsel.

Does North Star sponsor support groups?

No, we don't. In keeping with our commitment to diversity, North Star recognizes that different support groups have different purposes and goals. Not everyone will be helped by existing support groups. We encourage these individuals to form their own support group, according to their own vision for the kind of support they want, within the framework of the gospel of Jesus Christ, and to share that vision with other potentially like-minded individuals.

Those affiliated with North Star, including leadership, may choose to refer individuals seeking in-person support to local support groups that they are aware of and that they personally, not speaking for North Star, believe are supportive of our mission and goals, but this does not constitute and endorsement of those groups, nor should they be referred to as "North Star support groups."

What is North Star's position on political issues? Does North Star participate in political activism?

North Star exists to help people concerned about issues related to sexual or gender identity deepen their personal relationship with our Savior, Jesus Christ, and to support them in their desires to live according to the teachings and covenants they have made as members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

We understand that political issues are of great importance to many people who make up or are influenced by our organization. In our function as a support organization whose core focus is on the spiritual needs and overall health and wellness of our members, we have determined as an organization not to officially endorse political causes or to join political coalitions, including those officially sanctioned by the institutional Church.

There is often a wide array of perspectives and opinion regarding the best application of personal values to public policy, and conversations regarding political agendas often become heated or emotional. As we keep abreast of influential current events, North Star encourages the application and engagement of each member's free agency in light of and in congruence with the doctrines of the Church and principles of the gospel.

Meanwhile, within our community's discussion groups, we encourage our members to focus on the personal implications of supporting each other through what could be divisive and painful conflicts. We encourage questions such as, "How should we handle our hurt feelings at Church if people on either side of a political debate say things that seem mean-spirited or ignorant during discussions of a political nature?" or, "Is it possible to have policy disagreements and still show forth love as we come together as the body of Christ to build bridges of understanding and bring more people to Christ?"

What kind of resources do you have for men and women who desire, are in, or who affirm same-sex romantic/sexual relationships? What about those who experience gender dysphoria (i.e., transgender) and who desire to socially or surgically transition? And what about those who experience Intersex conditions, or disorders of sex development (DSDs)?

North Star's mission is specifically to serve those who desire to live fully within the framework of gospel teachings regarding marriage and sexual expression. While North Star is the best and most thorough resource for those who want to live within the framework of Church teachings, we may not be best suited to serve those who are either pursuing or in a same-sex relationship, whether or not they desire to remain active in the Church. Other organizations, such as Affirmation, may be better suited to serve those who are in same-sex relationships.

With regard to gender dysphoria or transgender feelings, because Church leaders and resources have spoken very little to these issues outside of some general policies concerning "elective transsexual operations," North Star seeks

to provide resources for all individuals who desire to deepen their relationship with the Savior and pursue all blessings associated with the gospel, including sacred covenants associated with both baptism and the temple.

Concerning those with Intersex conditions, North Star currently has no resources that address disorders of sex development (DSDs), but those who do experience such conditions are welcome at any of our events or in any of our groups that would otherwise feel relevant or beneficial.

What is North Star's connection to other LDS-related groups such as Mormons Building Bridges, Circling the Wagons, Affirmation, etc.?

North Star operates completely independent of any other group or organization with connections either to cultural Mormonism or to the institutional Church of Jesus Christ, whether they are supportive or critical of the Church and its positions on issues related to homosexuality or gender identity. North Star leadership has occasionally elected to participate in events sponsored by other groups as a means of contributing our perspectives and stories to the broader conversation on SSA and LGBT issues.

In addition, in its calendar, North Star may provide reference to activities or events sponsored by other organizations or groups we have reason to believe are explicitly and exclusively supportive of the doctrines and/or behavioral standards of the Church, but these references should not be interpreted as official or implied connection to or endorsement of such groups. One exception is the 2013 Reconciling Faith and Feelings Conference, of which North Star became an official co-sponsor in conjunction with the Association of Mormon Counselors and Psychotherapists (AMCAP) and the Foundation for Attraction Research (FAR).