

*“Let’s Talk About…” is a column in our monthly newsletter where we will learn one thing at a time about how we can love others the way they want to be loved. We will learn something each month that helps us understand and respect people who are different from us a little more deeply.*

### Let’s Talk About Pride Month

This month, instead of talking *about* a group of people, let’s listen to someone who’s part of that group! Specifically, let’s listen to what Terra Dabney, one of our trans Smoky Hill community members, would like us to hear:

Dear Smoky Hill community,

This month is Pride month, and unfortunately, it is a scary time to be a queer, trans, or gender-expansive person right now in the United States. While we have so much more awareness of our existence by the general public, not all of it is positive. There have been 491 anti-LGBTQ+ bills presented by state legislators in the 2023 legislative session as of May 24, 2023, continuing the upward trend in how many of these bills get introduced each year since 2020. Some people making maps to describe which states have protections and which have the worst anti-trans laws have added a new, worse category this year for Florida, simply labeled “Do Not Travel”. When I am traveling places, I have to be mindful of what states I am traveling through, and consider how open I want to be about my being trans, or if I can safely hold my fiancée’s hand there. Montana State Representative Zooey Zephyr, a trans woman in public office, was recently ejected from the floor for “violating decorum” when she spoke up about the people that even presenting these bills has killed—people that she knew personally. When people in your state government are considering laws that will make it harder or impossible for you to get healthcare there, it is hard to have enough hope that tomorrow will even be worth living, especially for a trans kid.

Something that gives me a lot of hope, however, is just how many people continue to speak out against these inhumane bills and the atrocious attacks on our rights. A recent Fox News poll had 61% of respondents saying that attacks on families with trans kids was a major problem. The ACLU continues to challenge the anti-LGBTQ+ legislation in court, and a majority of people in the United States support LGBTQ+ rights. But people must keep speaking up on our behalf, we must keep fighting for a world where it doesn’t matter who you love, it doesn’t matter who you are, you are part of our community and we will support you as a member of our community. We must keep fighting for love.

-Terra Dabney

So, what can we do to support trans and gender-expansive people in our community and around the country? Here are 3 action steps you can take to make a difference:

1. Put Aurora Pride on your calendar on August 5th! We have been the only church present at this gathering every year so far. Come enjoy the beach with us and give our LGBTQIA+ neighbors a taste of Smoky Hill’s welcoming community. Learn more about the event here: <https://www.aurorapride.com/>

2. Sign up to bring snacks for Fearless Future. This is a holistic (body, mind, and soul) empowering self-defense class for trans and gender-expansive folk in our area, meeting at the Center on Colfax this summer. Bringing snacks is a way to share God's love and get to know some more members of the LGBTQIA+ community in a personal way. You can learn more about Fearless Future here: <https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100091882656907> and sign up to bring snacks here: <https://www.signupgenius.com/go/409084FA5A62EA2FE3-snac>
3. Make a donation to the American Civil Liberties Union. The ACLU is going to court to fight many of the transphobic laws that have already been passed in states around the country. You can make a contribution directly here: <https://action.aclu.org/give/now?redirect=node/65102>

*Our "Let's Talk About..." column is one place where we can help one another learn how to be better allies for all our neighbors. If you have a question you'd like answered, or if there are things you wish others in our congregation better understood about your own marginalized identities or those for whom you are already a strong ally, please submit suggestions to <https://forms.gle/E9eRqZJGLgVagbDZ9> or email me directly at [virginiag@smokyhillumc.org](mailto:virginiag@smokyhillumc.org).*