

Dear Friends,

What does it mean to be created in God's image? The "Traditional" focus is in the 2<sup>nd</sup> creation story, God created Adam (Human) out of Dam (Humus/Soil) and then created Eve from Adam's rib who became the Mother of all living things. Even if we take the 1<sup>st</sup>, that God created the world in 7 days, and on the 6<sup>th</sup> day, God said, "Let us create humankind in our image... male and female God created them." In this mythology, God is up in heaven on the throne with a big white beard and looks like a powerful king. When we, the humans, didn't know much science, thought the sun revolved around the world and knew nothing about atoms, chemicals, and the universe; had simple categories for all things including humans: "male/female, slave/free, Jew/Gentile, rulers/peasants."

But as the human race has progressed and our knowledge has increased, we have discovered the mysteries and complexities of the universe, of our planet, and of ourselves. We are not just black or white, male or female, straight or mentally ill. We are a diverse group of people, yes all of the same race and all loved by God. We are left-handed and right-handed, ambidextrous; blue, brown, green eyed; white hair, curly hair, no hair; all sorts of different body-types and shapes; autistic, dyslexic, neuro-normal; and all the different hobbies, jobs, families, and communities. The diversity of humanity is truly staggering and, I believe, is truly awesome and amazing, worthy of praising God our Creator.

The greatest commandment is to love God, love neighbor as we love ourselves. There are guidelines like the 10 commandments and the fruit of the Spirit which is goodness, kindness, patience, faithfulness, self-control, love, joy, peace, and gentleness. However, what we are dealing with in the LGBTQAI+ community really has no prohibitions or laws against (7 scriptures in 66 books of over 1,000 pages). We live in a world where soil in South Dakota is healthy if it has over 24 species of ants in the prairie, not one type dominating and keeping out the others. We have diversity with healthy forests and lakes with all working towards a sustainable eco-system. We have diversity in the Bible in Matthew

19 where Jesus says there are eunuchs (non-binary, non cis-gendered) who are created and made for the sake of the kingdom of heaven, not the shame or against God's kingdom.

That is why I believe our community of friends and God's children should be able to walk, march, live, and love with PRIDE.

Peace,

Pastor Enno